

Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



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WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, April 7, 2006

**Proclamation 7995—To Extend
Nondiscriminatory Treatment
(Normal Trade Relations Treatment)
to the Products of Ukraine, and For
Other Purposes**

March 31, 2006

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

1. Ukraine has demonstrated a strong desire to build a friendly and cooperative relationship with the United States and has been found to be in full compliance with the freedom of emigration requirements under Title IV of the Trade Act of 1974 (the “1974 Act”) (19 U.S.C. 2431 *et seq.*).

2. Pursuant to section 2(a) of Public Law 109–205, 120 Stat. 313 (19 U.S.C. 2434), and having due regard for the findings of the Congress in section 1(a) of said law, I hereby determine that chapter 1 of title IV of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2431–2439) should no longer apply to Ukraine.

3. Section 2103(a) of the Trade Act of 2002, 19 U.S.C. 3803(a), authorizes the President, under certain circumstances, to proclaim such modification of any existing duty as the President determines to be required or appropriate to carry out an agreement entered into in accordance with section 2103(a). The United States, a major producer and exporter of multi-chip integrated circuits, applies duties to imports of multi-chip integrated circuits of less than 5 percent *ad valorem*. On January 17, 2006, the United States entered into an agreement to cut to zero applied duties on certain multi-chip integrated circuits.

4. Section 604 of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2483), as amended, authorizes the President to embody in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule (HTS) of the United States the substance of relevant provisions of that Act, or other

acts affecting import treatment, and of actions taken thereunder.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, acting under the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including but not limited to section 2(a) of Public Law 109–205, section 2103(a) of the Trade Act of 2002, and section 604 of the 1974 Act, do proclaim that:

(1) Nondiscriminatory treatment (normal trade relations treatment) shall be extended to the products of Ukraine, which shall no longer be subject to chapter 1 of title IV of the 1974 Act.

(2) The extension of nondiscriminatory treatment to the products of Ukraine shall be effective as of the date of signature of this proclamation.

(3) In order to implement the agreement on multi-chip integrated circuits, the HTS is modified to provide for application of zero duties to goods entered under tariff item 8543.89.96.

(4) The modification to the HTS made pursuant to paragraph 3 of this proclamation shall be effective with respect to goods entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after April 1, 2006.

(5) All provisions of previous proclamations and Executive Orders that are inconsistent with the actions taken in this proclamation are superseded to the extent of such inconsistency.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this thirty-first day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirtieth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:06 a.m., April 3, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 4. This item was not

received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Proclamation 7996—To Implement the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement With Respect to Honduras and Nicaragua

March 31, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

1. On August 5, 2004, the United States entered into the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement (Agreement) with Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua (Agreement countries). The Agreement was approved by the Congress in section 101(a) of the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (the “Act”) (Public Law 109–53, 119 Stat. 462) (19 U.S.C. 4001 note).

2. Section 201 of the Act authorizes the President to proclaim such modifications or continuation of any duty, such continuation of duty-free or excise treatment, or such additional duties, as the President determines to be necessary or appropriate to carry out or apply Articles 3.3 and 3.28, and Annexes 3.3 (including the schedule of United States duty reductions with respect to originating goods) and 3.28 of the Agreement.

3. Consistent with section 201(a)(2) of the Act, each Agreement country is to be removed from the enumeration of designated beneficiary developing countries eligible for the benefits of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) on the date the Agreement enters into force with respect to that country.

4. Consistent with section 201(a)(3) of the Act, each Agreement country is to be removed from the enumeration of designated beneficiary countries under the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (CBERA) (19 U.S.C. 2701 *et seq.*) on the date the Agreement enters into force with respect to that

country, subject to the exceptions set out in section 201(a)(3)(B) of the Act.

5. Consistent with section 213(b)(5)(D) of the CBERA, as amended by the United States-Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act (CBTPA) (Public Law 106–200), each Agreement country is to be removed from the enumeration of designated CBTPA beneficiary countries on the date the Agreement enters into force with respect to that country.

6. Section 604 of the Trade Act of 1974 (the “1974 Act”) (19 U.S.C. 2483), as amended, authorizes the President to embody in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (HTS) the substance of relevant provisions of that Act, or other acts affecting import treatment, and of actions taken thereunder.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, acting under the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including but not limited to section 201 of the Act, section 301 of title 3, United States Code, and section 604 of the 1974 Act, and the Act having taken effect pursuant to section 107(a), do proclaim that:

(1) In order to provide generally for the preferential tariff treatment being accorded under the Agreement to Honduras and Nicaragua, to provide certain other treatment to originating goods for the purposes of the Agreement, to provide tariff-rate quotas with respect to certain goods, to reflect the removal of Honduras and Nicaragua from the enumeration of designated beneficiary developing countries for purposes of the GSP, to reflect the removal of Honduras and Nicaragua from the enumeration of designated beneficiary countries for purposes of the CBERA and the CBTPA, and to make technical and conforming changes in the general notes to the HTS, the HTS is modified as set forth in Annex I of Publication 3845 of the United States International Trade Commission, entitled *Modifications to the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States to Implement the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement With Respect to Honduras and Nicaragua* (Publication 3845), which is incorporated by reference into this proclamation.

(2) In order to implement the initial stage of duty elimination provided for in the Agreement and to provide for future staged reductions in duties for originating goods for purposes of the Agreement, the HTS is modified as provided in Annex II of Publication 3845, effective on the dates specified in the relevant sections of such publication and on any subsequent dates set forth for such duty reductions in that publication.

(3)(a) The amendments to the HTS made by paragraphs (1) and (2) of this proclamation shall be effective with respect to goods entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after the relevant dates indicated in Annex I and Annex II to Publication 3845.

(b) Except as provided in paragraph (3)(a) of this proclamation, this proclamation shall be effective with respect to goods entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after April 1, 2006.

(4) Any provisions of previous proclamations and Executive Orders that are inconsistent with the actions taken in this proclamation are superseded to the extent of such inconsistency.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this thirty-first day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirtieth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:06 a.m., April 3, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 4. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

April 1, 2006

Good morning. As tax day approaches later this month, many American families are now finishing their tax returns. And as you do, an important debate is taking place in Washington that will affect the amount you will pay in the years ahead.

I believe our economy grows when you're allowed to keep more of your hard-earned

money and make your own decisions about how to save, spend, and invest. So, working with Congress, we've provided tax relief for all Americans who pay income taxes. We lowered tax rates to let workers keep more of their paychecks. We doubled the child tax credit and reduced the marriage penalty, and we put the death tax on the road to extinction. We also cut taxes on dividends and capital gains and expanded incentives for small businesses to invest so they could grow and create new jobs.

Since 2001, the tax relief we delivered has left \$880 billion in the hands of American workers and small businesses and families like yours, and you've used that money to help produce more than 4 years of uninterrupted economic growth. Last year, our economy grew at a healthy 3.5 percent, faster than any other major industrialized nation.

One politician in Washington said in 2003 that our tax cuts were "ruining our economy and costing us jobs." The truth is that since August 2003, America has added almost 5 million new jobs. Our unemployment rate is now 4.8 percent—lower than the average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Real after-tax income is up 8 percent per person since the beginning of 2001. More Americans now own their own homes than at any time in our history, and minority homeownership is at record levels. Consumer confidence is at its highest level in nearly 4 years. Productivity has grown strongly over the past 5 years, and our small-business sector is thriving.

The evidence is overwhelming: The opponents of tax cuts were wrong. Tax relief has helped to create jobs and opportunities for American families, and it's helped our economy grow. By maintaining our progrowth economic policies and practicing spending restraint in Washington, we can keep our economy growing and stay on track to meet our goal of cutting the budget deficit in half by 2009.

The problem is that the tax relief we passed is set to expire over the next few years. Some Democrats in Washington are insisting that we let that happen—or even repeal the tax cuts now. In either case, that would weaken our economy and would leave American families with a big tax hike that they do not

expect and will not welcome. Because America needs more than a temporary economic expansion, we need more than temporary tax relief. To keep our economy growing, to keep our businesses investing, and to keep creating jobs, we need to ensure that you keep more of what you earn. So Congress needs to make the tax relief permanent.

Making tax relief permanent includes extending the tax cuts on dividends and capital gains. These tax cuts have been vital to our economic growth. By lowering the cost of capital, this tax relief has given businesses an incentive to invest and expand, and that has helped create jobs and opportunity. I urge the Congress to extend these progrowth tax cuts, so our businesses can plan with confidence and keep creating jobs for American workers.

The debate in Congress over taxes ultimately comes down to this: Who knows best how to use your money, politicians in Washington or you? I believe the money we spend in Washington is your money, not the Government's money. I trust you to make the best decisions about what to do with your hard-earned dollars, because when you do, your family is better off, our economy grows, and prosperity and opportunity spread throughout our great land.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:15 a.m. on March 31 at the LeBlanc Spa and Resort in Cancun, Mexico, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 1. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 31 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Meeting on Health Care Initiatives and an Exchange With Reporters

April 4, 2006

The President. America needs a health care system that empowers patients to make rational and smart decisions for themselves and their families, a health care system in which the relationship between the patient and the provider are central, not a health

care system where decisions are made by the Federal Government.

So we've been having a discussion here today about how to make sure our health care system meets certain objectives: one, empowering the patients; two, how do we have a system that helps control rising costs in health care?

And one of the interesting and innovative ways to do that is through health savings accounts. Health savings accounts are good for the uninsured; they're good for small businesses; they're good for larger corporations. And people around the table here have been sharing their experiences with how folks are saving money through health savings accounts. And I would urge the small-business owner or the individual who is concerned about his or her health care to take a look at a health savings account.

We talked about the importance of cost savings through these important products, but we also talked about how we can work with the United States Congress to strengthen them, to make them more appealing, to give people more choices in the marketplace, to say to the American people, "We trust your judgment; we trust you to make the right decision for you and your families."

And so I want to thank you all for coming for this most interesting discussion. And I'll be glad to take a couple of questions.

Nedra [Nedra Pickler, Associated Press].

Tom DeLay

Q. Yes, sir. Thank you. I'm wondering if we can get your reaction to Tom DeLay's resignation? Do you think it hurts the Republican Party or your ability to get work done in Congress?

The President. I had a talk last night on my way back from the ball game with Congressman DeLay. He informed me of his decision. My reaction was, it had to have been a very difficult decision for someone who loved representing his district in the State of Texas. I wished him all the very best, and I know he's looking forward to—he's looking to the future.

My own judgment is, is that our party will continue to succeed because we're the party of ideas. And one of the most important ideas is to make sure that health care is available

and affordable for the citizens of this country. One way to do so is to trust the patients, trust the American people when it comes to making rational decisions for health care for them and their families. And that's exactly what we've been discussing here at the table.

Caren [Caren Bohan, Reuters].

White House Staff

Q. Thank you, sir. Your new Chief of Staff takes over soon, and I'm wondering, is there likely to be far-reaching changes in the staff at the White House? And is Secretary Snow expected to stay on?

The President. Secretary Snow is here at the table. He's been a part of this discussion. I'm glad you brought him up. He has been a valuable member of my administration, and I trust his judgment and appreciate his service.

I've, as you know, accepted the resignation of Andrew Card, my long-time friend, a person who will go down in the annals as one of the really fine Chiefs of Staff in the history of the White House. I've asked Josh Bolten to take his place. Josh has served us very well as the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. I told Josh that he is—will organize the White House in such a way that he is comfortable with and that meets my needs. And my needs are to have good, crisp information so I can make decisions on behalf of the American people.

And I look forward to Josh's recommendations as to how to get this White House to—for the last 2½ years of my administration, to continue to function in an effective way, and it functioned very effectively under Andy Card, by the way. I'm most proud of his administration and proud of the team that he assembled.

Dick [Richard Stevenson, New York Times].

Iraq

Q. Mr. President, the situation in Iraq continues to be fraught with violence. You have expressed impatience in recent days of the progress towards forming a coalition government. Do you think, as some people on the ground there are saying in the Iraqi political firmament, that it's getting very close to the point of no return?

The President. I believe that people ought to pay attention to the fact that 3 months ago, or a little over 3 months ago, 12 million people went to the polls and said, "I want to live in a democracy." And there is a group of folks in Iraq that want to stop the advance of democracy, and therefore, they're willing to use violence to do so. The one way to help bring confidence to the Iraqi people that those few will not be able to determine the future of that country is for there to be a unity government that steps up and says, "I'm willing to lead."

And so I sent Secretary Rice to Iraq with that message. And the message is, is that the people of Iraq have voted, and now it's time for the elected leaders to stand up and do their job. So we look forward to working with them to put together a unity government, a government that will reject the sectarian violence, will reject the militias, reject Zarqawi and the terrorists that are trying to create enough chaos so that America loses nerve. And I'm not going to lose my nerve as the President, because we're doing the right thing in establishing a democracy in that country. And by establishing a democracy, we're laying the foundation for peace.

And that's what we want. We want there to be peace. We want our children not to have to grow up under the threat of violence coming out of the Middle East. And one of the lessons of September the 11th, 2001, is that—this sense of—that tyranny is okay, but underneath the surface there was resentment. And the way—and anger, that became the breeding grounds for these killers. And the best way to defeat that is with the light and hope of democracy. And you bet it's tough in Iraq, and it's tough because people are trying to stop the advance of democracy. And I'm convinced we're making progress there. But I do urge the folks on the ground to get that unity government in place, so that the Iraqi people have confidence in their future.

I thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:19 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

**Message to the Congress
Transmitting a Treaty Between the
United States and Uruguay
Concerning the Encouragement and
Reciprocal Protection of Investment**
April 4, 2006

To the Congress of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Treaty between the United States and the Oriental Republic of Uruguay Concerning the Encouragement and Reciprocal Protection of Investment, with Annexes and Protocol, signed at Mar del Plata, Argentina, on November 4, 2005. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report prepared by the Department of State with respect to the Treaty.

The Treaty is the first bilateral investment treaty (BIT) concluded since 1999 and the first negotiated on the basis of a new U.S. model BIT text, which was completed in 2004. The new model text draws on long-standing U.S. BIT principles, our experience with Chapter 11 of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the executive branch's collaboration with the Congress in developing negotiating objectives on foreign investment for U.S. free trade agreements. The Treaty will establish investment protections that will create more favorable conditions for U.S. investment in Uruguay and assist Uruguay in its efforts to further develop its economy.

The Treaty is fully consistent with U.S. policy towards international and domestic investment. A specific tenet of U.S. investment policy, reflected in this Treaty, is that U.S. investment abroad and foreign investment in the United States should receive national treatment and most-favored-nation treatment. Under this Treaty, the Parties also agree to customary international law standards for expropriation and for the minimum standard of treatment. The Treaty includes detailed provisions regarding the computation and payment of prompt, adequate, and effective compensation for expropriation; free transfer of funds related to investment; freedom of investment from specified performance requirements; and the opportunity of investors to choose to resolve disputes with

a host government through international arbitration. The Treaty also includes extensive transparency obligations with respect to national laws and regulations, and commitments to transparency and public participation in dispute settlement. The Parties also recognize that it is inappropriate to encourage investment by weakening or reducing the protections afforded in domestic environmental and labor laws.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Treaty and give its advice and consent to ratification.

George W. Bush

The White House,
April 4, 2006.

**Remarks on Immigration Reform
Legislation**

April 5, 2006

The United States Senate is debating a very vital issue for our country, and that is immigration reform. I urge the Senators to continue to work toward get a comprehensive bill; a bill that will help us secure our borders; a bill that will cause the people in the interior of this country to recognize and enforce the law; and a bill that will include a guest-worker provision that will enable us to more secure the border, will recognize that there are people here working hard for jobs Americans won't do, and a guest-worker provision that is not amnesty, one that provides for automatic citizenship.

This is a vital debate. I thank the Members who are working hard to get a bill done. I strongly urge them to come to conclusion as quickly as possible and pass a comprehensive bill.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:55 a.m. on the Colonnade at the White House.

Remarks in a Discussion on Health Care Reform in Bridgeport, Connecticut

April 5, 2006

The President. Thank you all. Darrell, thanks for the invitation. I think you're going to find this an interesting way to discuss a vital issue for our country, and that is, really, how do we stay competitive? How does the United States of America remain the pre-eminent economic leader in the world?

And one way you do so is you make sure you've got an environment where small businesses can thrive, where people can feel comfortable in having health care that's available and affordable. So thanks for coming and giving us a chance to discuss the issue. You notice I say "us"—there's nothing worse than a guy kind of blowing away in a lecture, so I've invited fellow citizens to come and share their experiences about an interesting way to approach affordability and availability in health care.

But before I do that, I want to thank you all very much for taking time out of your day to come and listen. I appreciate very much the Governor, Jodi Rell, joining us. Governor Rell is a—you know, I know something about Governors; I used to be one. She is really a dignified, classy woman who has done a fine job for the State of Connecticut.

I flew down today with Congressman Chris Shays. Shays is a very thoughtful person. He is a friend. He is an independent fellow—[laughter]—who speaks his mind. But he does so in a way that gets people to listen to him. And I appreciate his thoughtful approach to a lot of issues. And I appreciate your friendship as well. I'm looking forward to hearing your lecture on the way back to Washington. [Laughter]

Mr. Mayor, thank you for joining us. So Laura comes back and says, "I met the mayor of Bridgeport; he's a good guy." I say, "Well, that's great." I don't know what you did, Mayor, but you at least convinced the First Lady you're a good guy. [Laughter] And I appreciate your hospitality and your kindness to my wife who—you know, she's really not a politician. She is a really fine woman, great mother, great wife, thoughtful person. And I appreciate your kindness to her. She's also

obviously got good judgment—her Chief of Staff, Anita McBride, was raised right here in Bridgeport.

I appreciate other State and local officials who are here, thank all the business leaders. The challenge is whether or not this Nation is going to be a confident nation. Our economy is strong right now. GDP grew at 3.5 percent last year. We're adding jobs. The national unemployment rate is 4.8 percent. I think the unemployment rate here is something less than that, here in the State of Connecticut. People are working. Small businesses are flourishing. Productivity is up. And the fundamental question is, how do we keep it that way? What do we do? Do we lose our confidence and retreat, or do we create the conditions so that capital flows and the entrepreneurial spirit remains strong?

My attitude is that the United States is the leader of the world, and by putting good policies into place, we'll remain the leader of the world. And that's where we should be. And so here are some ideas as to how to do that.

One is to keep taxes low. I believe when people have more money in their pockets it helps the entrepreneurial spirit, causes the economy to grow. One reason we overcame the recession and the stock market collapse and the attacks on our country and the wars we've been through and the natural disasters we've been through is because people have got more money to save and invest and spend. And so I'm looking forward to working with Congress to keep the taxes low and, at the same time, be wise about how we spend the people's money.

I understand we've got an issue with energy. I know it probably came as a shock to some of my fellow citizens here in Connecticut when I stood up in front of the country and said, "We've got a problem; we're addicted to oil." And I meant it. We've got an economic problem being addicted to oil because when fossil fuels—demand for fossil fuels rise in other parts of the world, it causes our energy bills to go up. We've got a national security problem when it comes to oil. When you've got people in the world who don't like us, from which we get supplies of oil, it causes those problems to come into the Oval Office. And therefore, we have to deal with

the geopolitics of oil when it comes to securing this country. And we've got an environmental problem relying upon fossil fuels. And so I think there's a better way forward, and I look forward to working with Congress to keep us competitive in the world's stage by diversifying away from the use of oil.

And here are some ideas: Using ethanol in our automobiles is an idea, developing hybrid plug-in batteries so that we can drive the first 40 miles on electricity and not using gasoline, being wise about nuclear power, using solar power. There's a variety of things we need to do together to help us diversify away from hydrocarbons, and I'm intent upon doing that for the sake of the competitiveness of the United States of America.

Another idea I look forward to working with Congress on is to make sure that we are competitive when it comes to having the workforce of the 21st century, and we're going to make good progress on this with Congress. And that is to do something on the research and development tax credit, is double our commitment to the research in the basic sciences in Washington, DC, so that we're technologically competent, that we're on the leading edge of research when it comes to the world's economy, and then make sure our kids have got the skills necessary to fill the jobs by emphasizing math and science, particularly in junior high.

In terms of competitiveness, a big issue, of course, is health care. And in Washington, DC, there is a philosophical debate that rages. And that is how best to implement a health care strategy; what should it look like? And to simplify the debate, it basically says, "Government ought to be the decider. Government ought to drive demand, and Government ought to control supply," versus a system in which individuals are in charge of their own health care decisions. I recognize that it may be oversimplification, but, nevertheless, that's the crux of the debate.

And it's an important debate, and so I've got some ideas as to how this debate ought to go. And it starts with, one, a Federal commitment to certain people within our society, the poor and the elderly. The Medicare plan we passed modernized Medicare for the first time since Lyndon Johnson provided that—signed that bill. It is an important piece of

legislation. It is working; 27 million Americans have signed up. If you have not looked at the new Medicare opportunities for you, you ought to do so by calling 1-800-MEDICARE.

Interestingly enough, by providing competition into the system—in other words, giving our seniors choices—the estimated cost for Medicare is dropping significantly. I believe competition works. And I believe Government ought to trust people to make the right decision for their selves and their families. And that's what Medicare has done.

Another important way for health care to work is to expand community health centers. One of the things Shays told me was, he said you've got a good community health center here in Bridgeport. Community health centers are vehicles—places of opportunity for low-income citizens to be able to get primary care, so as to take the stress off of emergency rooms of your hospitals, for example.

We've expanded 800 of them over the years; we intend to expand or open 400 more over the next 2 years. These are wise use of taxpayers' money, to help keep a Federal commitment to helping the poor deal with health care.

And same goes to Medicaid. Medicaid is a very important program. I look forward to working with the Governors to make sure that the Medicaid system works more efficiently, most importantly for those who are getting Medicaid help.

Now, in terms of a lot of other folks, it seems like to me that we ought to be working toward the design of a system that makes health care available and affordable. And let me give you some ideas as to how to do that.

One, many small businesses are having trouble affording health care insurance. One of the reasons why is, they don't have the same pooling opportunity—pooling of risk opportunities that larger companies get. And so I think it makes sense to allow small businesses to pool risk across jurisdictional boundaries so they can afford the same kinds of insurance purchases that big companies get.

For example, a restaurant in Bridgeport ought to be allowed to pool risk with a restaurant in Texas so that there's economies of risk. Today, that can't happen. Association

health plans will enable small businesses to better afford insurance. I'm looking forward to working with Congress to get that out of the Congress.

Secondly, one of the cost-drivers for health care are these frivolous lawsuits that are running good doctors out of practice and forces doctors and hospitals to practice defensive medicine. When I first went to Washington I said, "Well, this is just a State issue," Governor. I thought it could be best solved at the State level, until I realized the defensive practice of medicine plus these liability increases through lawsuits costs us about \$28 billion a year to the Federal—cost the Federal budget \$28 billion. I said, that's a national problem, and it demands a national solution.

The House passed a bill. Of course, it's stuck in the Senate. It needs to get out of the Senate. In order to make health care more affordable and more available, we need comprehensive medical liability reform immediately. You know what's an amazing statistic is, there are 1,700 counties in our country that have no ob-gyn. They got run out of business. And that's not right, and it's not fair, and it's necessary for Congress to act.

The third area we need to work on is information technologies. I know there is a lot of hospital people here. But we've set the goal—and I think you understand what I'm talking about, is to make sure that health care is brought into the 21st century by using information technology in such a way as, on the one hand, we have medical records; on the other hand, we protect patients' privacy. And we can do so.

A classic example of the importance of information technology came down there with Katrina. A lot of veterans were displaced as a result of that hurricane, but they had medical electronic records because the Veterans Administration has begun to modernize. And therefore, they were able to take their medical electronics records to their destination—where they moved to and were able to get immediate health care. The records were there; they were available. The doc that they checked in with was able to access their records on a real-time basis and were able to—so there was no, kind of, loss of care;

there was no confusion about what was necessary.

We will save a lot of costs with information technologies, and we'll reduce medical errors with information technologies. And Secretary Leavitt, who is the head of HHS, has got a strong program to encourage the advance of information technology. Some estimate we save 30 percent in health care costs when information technology is spread throughout our society. And so we've got a Federal commitment, and we look forward to working with you to spread that commitment.

And finally, we're here to talk about what's called health savings accounts. It's a really interesting idea that Congress passed in the new Medicare law. It's an idea that it's really important for people—no matter what side of the philosophical debate you may be on—to at least pay attention to what's available. A health savings account addresses one of the major cost-drivers in our system, and that is, is that a lot of people get health care, but somebody else pays the bill. It's called a third-party-payer system.

And when somebody else pays the bill, sometimes you don't pay attention to the cost. You know, when you go out and purchase an automobile, somebody doesn't pay the bill for you—you pay it. And you tend to shop and you look and you try to find out what's best for you. The third-party payer system, which is, you know, an integral part of our health care system today, essentially says, "You sign up for a program, and if you get sick, somebody else will take care of it for you." And I believe that the more the consumer is involved in pricing, the more the consumer is involved in the decisionmaking, the more likely it is people will start making rational decisions for their own needs.

And one way to do that is through the advent of health savings accounts, which is, in essence, health savings account coupled with a high-deductible, catastrophic insurance plan. That's long-word talk for if you get sick, above a certain amount, your insurance pays for it. If not, you pay for it. But the savings, if you don't spend money, are tax-free. In other words, this is an interesting way of making sure the patient and the provider are the integral deciders in health care decisions.

If that's not clear enough, they'll help clear it up for me.

You know, LASIK surgery is an interesting—it's interesting to think about. LASIK surgery is a surgery that helps correct your eyesight. And I don't know how many years ago it was, but LASIK surgery was very expensive. But this happened to be a part of medical—medicine where there really was a market. More people began to provide LASIK surgery. People began to shop for LASIK surgery. And the cost for LASIK surgery has gone down dramatically, and the quality of LASIK surgery has improved dramatically.

A lot of that has to do with the fact that the consumer was the decider. The consumer actually began to look around and decide what was best for him or her in the marketplace. That stands in contrast to a system where somebody else pays the bills.

Health savings accounts really mean that the individual owns and controls their health care. Health savings accounts enable somebody to say, "Look, if I make the right decisions about smoking or drinking or exercising, that I'll end up saving money." Health savings accounts help small businesses more afford health care coverage. Many of the uninsured are people who work for small businesses. They are the working uninsured. And if we have product available for small businesses to better afford insurance, it will help this country remain competitive.

Health savings accounts would be good for young people. A lot of young people feel bulletproof. They don't feel like they need insurance; they don't think they're ever going to get sick. But if a young person starts saving now for future health care costs and the interest compounds on a tax-free basis, it's amazing how much money a person can save.

And so this is an interesting idea. It started off rather slowly. In the marketplace today, there are about 3 million citizens who have got health savings accounts. Interestingly enough, part of the debate in Washington is, they say, "Sure he wants health savings accounts; only the rich will access them." That's not what happened. The uninsured are accessing health savings accounts. Many of the health savings accounts owners are folks with their high school degree. A lot of

health savings accounts owners are people with not an extraordinary amount of income. You know, it kind of defies the concept that certain people can't make decisions on their own—you know, "If you don't have a Ph.D., you shouldn't be allowed to decide things." People are plenty smart when it comes to their own lives and coming to making decisions about health care needs. And I believe we ought to encourage more consumer activism, more involvement in making health care decisions.

So that's what we're here to talk about. And by the way, one other point is you can't make good health care decisions unless there's transparency in the marketplace. People need to see price. One of the things we're trying to encourage is, for health care providers to post their prices so people can choose, so people are able to—you know, "This kind of makes sense for me; this doesn't make sense for me." Nontransparency in pricing makes it awfully hard to achieve savings. And after all, one of the national objectives has got to be to have a health care system that is available and affordable. Availability means transparency in prices; affordability means—will be enhanced by transparency in pricing.

And so there's a competing vision from one that says, let's let the Federal Government make decisions. It's one vision I strongly support because I believe—I'm one of these kind of persons that believes that people are plenty capable of making rational decisions and choices.

We're here to talk about this—I mentioned the panel of folks. We'll start with Steven Glick.

Steven Glick. Yes, good morning, Mr. President. Welcome to Connecticut.

The President. Yes, it's good to be back here. Was born here, good to be back. [Laughter] Educated here. [Laughter]

Mr. Glick. We love that.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Glick. Before I make my remarks, I'd like to have my wife, Sally Glick, and partner in the business, stand up. She's in the middle of the row up there. Welcome.

The President. That's a pretty good move. Smart guy, you know? Welcome, Sally.

Mr. Glick. Next to her is my son, Aaron, who is finishing his second year of law school—hopefully. [Laughter] And next to her is my daughter, Jamie Lombardi. Jamie is part of our team at CIT, and we welcome her.

The President. Why don't you tell everybody what the CIT is.

[At this point, Steven Glick, administrator, Chamber Insurance Trust, made brief remarks.]

The President. Good job. Skip the dating service thing. Anyway—[laughter].

Mr. Glick. Do you know—

The President. No, I don't, believe me. [Laughter] Look, I'm the funny guy; you're the—[laughter].

Mr. Glick. Once in my life. [Laughter]

The President. One of the interesting things about society is there's—sometimes people resist change and part of the reasons I'm doing forums like this, and part of the reason Steve does what he does, is to help educate people about what's available.

I strongly urge small-business owners to find out more about health savings accounts. I urge young people to find out about health savings accounts. It doesn't hurt to learn. And I think you'll find these to be very interesting opportunities. And one person who knows a lot about them is Dr. Bill West, entrepreneur.

Bill West, Jr. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. Is that a true statement, "entrepreneur"?

Dr. West. Yes, absolutely.

The President. Good. Sometimes "doctor" and "entrepreneur" don't go hand in hand. [Laughter]

Dr. West. "Businessman/doctor," don't go hand in hand.

The President. What kind of doctor?

Dr. West. I'm a board-certified practicing ob-gyn, located in Redding, Pennsylvania. I'm actually a third generation—

The President. Have you got a health care crisis in ob-gyns in Redding?

Dr. West. Yes, we do.

The President. A leading question—I knew the answer before he said it. [Laughter]

Dr. West. We actually just lost eight more people practicing obstetrics in our hospital as of January 1.

The President. We've got a serious national problem. The Senate needs to get rid of all this, you know, politics, and focus on solving this problem. Different subject—go ahead. Sorry about that.

[Dr. Bill West, Jr., president and founder, First HSA, LLC, made brief remarks.]

The President. So, like, you're making the pitch, what do you tell people about HSAs?

Dr. West. They are not just for the healthy and wealthy; they work for everyone—including the chronically ill. They make total sense for everyone out there. It truly is consumerism.

The President. Tell people why.

Dr. West. Well, basically, you know, right now in the physician marketplace, there is no consumerism. People don't know what the cost of services are, and I don't know what the cost of services are. I might prescribe a drug that I have no clue it costs \$20 a tablet, and it's taken every 4 hours. A one-week prescription could cost \$600. Why don't I know that? Because I'm not paying for it. And usually the patient is not paying for it, because all they have is a co-pay.

That's the problem with the third-party system. We have a disconnect between the patient, the provider, and the true cost of those health care services. Health savings accounts reconnect the patient and the provider with the true cost. And we start to make wise decisions. We have increased use of generic medications. We shop around for services. Maybe an MRI costs a little bit more at this hospital versus that hospital. And we start to use—

The President. Just to make sure everybody understands—a health savings account is a combination of a high-deductible, catastrophic plan, and the deductible is a cash account that earns interest-free. And the cash account is—as you'll hear later on—can be contributed by the individual, contributed by the company, can be contributed a combination of the worker and the company, can be contributed all different ways. But the shopping around is for the cash portion of a person's account.

Dr. West. Absolutely. At First HSA, we provide a checking account which allows unlimited checkbook and Visa debit card access to the funds. Clients get monthly statements; they get the IRS reporting; they have 24-hour telephone banking. And they earn interest on the accounts, and those unused funds roll-over from year to year.

So if I had \$3,000 in my account and spent 1,000, 2,000 plus interest rolls into the next year, and I can put an additional 3,000 in the following year.

The President. What is important for people to understand is that when you combine the cash contribution plus the premium for the high-deductible insurance, it's less cost than the current insurance plans. That's important for people to understand. That's why we keep—I urge people to take a look. I mean, this is a cost-savings measure that has the additional benefit of connecting the consumer to the provider.

Dr. West. Absolutely. And the consumer benefits from healthy lifestyle choices, as you stated earlier, and they financially benefit from that. As a physician, many times patients will come to me to want to stop smoking, and I'll write a prescription to stop smoking. The first question they're going to ask me is, "Does my health insurance plan cover that?" If the answer is no, they hand the prescription back to me, because they're not financially incentivized to do that. In a health savings account, they take that prescription, they go get it filled, and they stop smoking, because they're the ones who are going to benefit from that healthy lifestyle.

The President. And they benefit because they don't spend—ultimately spend money on disease that would drain their savings account. The important thing for people to understand when they listen to the health savings account discussion is that the savings account is owned by the individual, and if a person changed jobs, for example, the savings account goes with the person. It's a part of a person's asset base. It is an integral part of a person's—and will be an integral part of a lot of people's future, to have this money stored up for health care needs, coupled with a high-deductible catastrophic plan in case something disastrous happens.

How's your business going?

Dr. West. It's been phenomenal. There's been exponential growth. I also wanted to let you know that we actually got a union to go 100-percent HSA as one of our clients, and they love the plan. They're really—our clients range from professionals to unions to formerly unemployed, uninsured workers, sole proprietors, entrepreneurs. We have them all.

[*Dr. West made further remarks.*]

The President. Information keeps people involved. Information is an integral part of consumers making rational decisions and choices.

Dr. West. Absolutely. We've developed a personal electronic health record, where they can take this health record with them from doctor to doctor, so they have improved quality.

The President. Explain to people what a personal health record is—an electronic personal health record.

Dr. West. Basically, online, what they have access to is, they can put in all their personal health care information—all their diseases, their medications, past family history, social history—all those things are in the health record. They then can print it out and take that with them or put it onto their PDA or whatever, and take that with them to the doctor's office. Many times, when we first come into the doctor's office, what do we do? We have to fill out a new form saying, here's all my medical—

The President. Unless you're not a very good writer.

[*Dr. West made further remarks.*]

The President. Things are changing. I think if you listen carefully to the doc, he's describing a different approach to health care that is consumer-centered. Now you've got to—in order to accept that as a rational way of approaching health care, you've got to trust people to make rational decisions. And I think our society should. I think the Federal Government should trust people to make good decisions. And, amazingly, what happens when that starts to happen is, you start seeing the rapid increase of price in health care begin to decline and people watching their—how they treat their bodies better.

So thanks, doc. Thanks for being——

Dr. West. Thank you very much.

The President. Thanks for coming, Greg?

Greg Gravel. Good morning, Mr. President. Thank you. My name is Greg Gravel. I'm the president and chief executive officer of the Whitney Center.

[*Mr. Gravel made brief remarks.*]

The President. The Whitney Center, like you told me earlier, Aunt Marge?

Mr. Gravel. Absolutely.

The President. My grandfather's sister was——

Mr. Gravel. We go back a long ways, sir.

[*Mr. Gravel made further remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Gravel. We front-ended part of the HSA plan for our employees and continue to do so today.

The President. Tell everyone what that means.

Mr. Gravel. We actually put money into their account. As long as the employee were to contribute a like amount, we put \$520 a year into their health savings account.

The President. Right, so in this case, the deductibility is 1,040——

Mr. Gravel. Correct.

The President. Cash into the account that will earn interest tax-free, be withdrawn tax-free, was 1,040, half of which you paid and half of which the employee paid.

Mr. Gravel. Correct. Correct.

[*Mr. Gravel made further remarks.*]

The President. What's the premium on the high-risk deductible plan?

Mr. Gravel. It's about \$4,500 for a single covered employee. The difference between 2004 and 2005, we were able to save \$78,000 in our premiums; 2005 to 2006, we saw a 1.8 percent increase—1.8 percent, not point—not one-eight—not 18 percent but 1.8 percent increase in our premium. When is the last time you have heard of your health care premium increasing by as little as that amount?

[*Mr. Gravel made further remarks.*]

The President. Good. Lin works with you?

Mr. Gravel. Absolutely.

Lin Onorato. My name is Lin Onorato. I am the assistant director of dining services at the Whitney Center. I am an HSA participant. I have a family plan.

[*Mrs. Onorato made brief remarks.*]

The President. Let me ask you something. People would say, well, you know, you can't possibly make rational decisions. I presume that, kind of, entering in the marketplace as a shopper, consumer is a little daunting at first——

Mrs. Onorato. Definitely.

The President. ——but when somebody is listening out there that says, "I wonder if I ought to try this," how would you encourage—I mean, obviously you're confident enough to talk about it sitting up here with the President—[*laughter*]—and you've gained a certain amount of experience in the process. What would you recommend to somebody who says, "Well, I don't think I've got the capacity to go out and find out what's available"?

Mrs. Onorato. It's real easy. You get from—we use ConnectiCare, and they give us their provider book, and you can go through, and you can ask your doctor questions and, "How much will this cost?" And you can call up different people and get the best price for your money without compromising quality.

The President. See, this is a—change is hard. The old system was, "Well, don't worry; somebody else will take care of it." There is a new opportunity that saves people money, actually earns people money. And I love the idea of Lin being able to say, "I own my account." Notice she emphasized the \$800 that was unspent in the cash portion of the account—say, "It's my money; I get to roll it over."

If something terrible were to happen, there is an insurance policy to take care—it's called the catastrophic aspect of this plan. She is in charge of making the decisions for her family. That bothers some people in Washington, DC. They don't believe she's capable of doing so. I do. But the benefit for society as a whole—this helps control costs and makes health care more available and affordable.

And so I want to thank you for having the confidence to share this with us.

Mrs. Onorato. Thank you for the opportunity.

The President. Thank you for being here. Good job.

Verna, are you ready?

Verna Moran. Sure am.

The President. Tell everybody what you do.

Ms. Moran. First of all, I'd like to thank you for allowing me to be here today, Mr. President. And my name is Verna Moran. I'm vice president of human resources for the Seitz Corporation.

[Ms. Moran made brief remarks.]

The President. Let me stop you right there, if you don't mind. Sorry.

Ms. Moran. Sure.

The President. A lot of business people, small-business owners, when they're confronted with a 25 percent increase on a relatively high base decide not to offer people insurance anymore. That's why a lot of our citizens who work for small businesses do not have insurance. It's the working uninsured—many of the working uninsured are employees of the small-business company.

What's important, however, is that 70 percent of new jobs in America are created by small-business owners. And therefore, if our small-business sector is weakened because of rising health care costs, it makes this country less competitive.

Sorry to interrupt.

Ms. Moran. Not at all. And with the 25 percent—you can interrupt any time. [Laughter]

The President. Maybe here but not at the house. [Laughter]

[Ms. Moran made further remarks.]

The President. The combination of the high-risk deductible—premium on the high-risk deductible, relative to their cost last year, enabled the savings from their cost last year to be—this company to contribute 100 percent of the cash portion of the health savings accounts for their employee.

Ms. Moran. Correct.

The President. It's a pretty strong benefit for a small company to be able to do.

[Ms. Moran made further remarks, concluding as follows.]

Ms. Moran. So a healthy employee could, in fact, at the end of the year, have their whole deductible be rolled over in a future year.

The President. And it's their money.

Ms. Moran. And it's their money.

[Ms. Moran made further remarks.]

The President. It's an amazing story, isn't it? One hundred seventy-five employees?

Ms. Moran. One hundred fifty employees, yes.

The President. One hundred fifty employees, I just increased it a little bit. [Laughter]

Ms. Moran. Well, that's all right, because we plan to increase, so that's okay. [Laughter]

The President. Oh, that's good. That's interesting. I bet you're more confident about expanding because all of a sudden, you've got a better handle on your health care costs.

Ms. Moran. Exactly.

The President. And I really strongly urge small-business owners to look at these products. And I find it amazing that Verna is able to describe a plan that is very innovative, employee-centered, and yet at the same time, she can say that we've saved money for the company.

Ms. Onorato. Absolutely.

The President. Good job.

Ms. Onorato. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. We've come to describe one way to approach health care. And it is to take care of the elderly and the poor and to encourage our fellow citizens to become directly involved in making health care decisions.

I urge the Congress to look at ways to strengthen health savings accounts by making the tax deductibility fair, by expanding the size of the contribution levels that people can make, by making sure that health savings accounts are as portable as they possibly can be so that the worker, if he or she chooses to change jobs, can take the full account—insurance plus the savings—with him or her to a new job.

The United States of America is constantly faced with different choices. And there are very important philosophical debates raging. And today you all heard one aspect of a very important part of a philosophical debate taking place, and that is how best to run the health care system. I've made my decision. I'm looking forward to continuing to have a consumer-driven system to be the heart of American health care.

And I appreciate you all sharing your thoughts, and thank you all for letting us come and visit with you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:01 a.m. at the Playhouse on the Green. In his remarks, he referred to Darrell Harvey, chair, Business Council of Fairfield County; and Mayor John M. Fabrizio of Bridgeport, CT.

Remarks on the War on Terror and a Question-and-Answer Session in Charlotte, North Carolina

April 6, 2006

The President. Thank you. Firoz, thanks a lot. So I said, "That's an interesting name." He said, "I've lived in seven countries," but he also said, he's proud to be an American. And we're proud you're an American. Thank you very much for inviting me.

You know, I was just standing here, listening to Firoz; one of the great things about our country is that you can come, and you can enjoy the great blessings of liberty, and you can be equally American if you've been here for one generation or 10 generations. I thought it was neat that somebody who has been—you've been here 27 years though, right? Yes. Well, seven countries, 27 years here, introducing the President, though. I think it says a lot about the United States of America. Thanks for having me.

I'm looking forward to sharing with you what's on my mind. I look forward to hearing what's on yours as well. First thing is, Laura sends her best to the folks of Charlotte. She sends her best, Tony, to you and your bride. Thank you for having us here, to Central Piedmont. I appreciate your involvement in education. I married well; she's a really patient person too. *[Laughter]*

I traveled down here with Congressman Robin Hayes, the Congressman from this district. Congressman, thank you for being here, appreciate it.

I've known your mayor for a long time. He's a man of accomplishment. I know he was particularly proud to land the NASCAR Hall of Fame. Pretty big deal, you know? It's a pretty big deal. Thank you all for coming. I want to thank the others who serve on the City Council who are here. The mayor was telling me a lot of the council members are here. I appreciate your service to your city.

I think one of the things I'd like to tell you about is why and how I made some decisions I made. My friends from Texas who, once they get over the shock that I'm actually the President—*[laughter]*—like to ask me what it's like to be President. And I guess the simple job description would be, it is a decisionmaking experience. And I make a lot of decisions. Some of them you see; some of them you don't see. Decisionmaking requires knowing who you are and what you believe. I've learned enough about Washington to know you can't make decisions unless you make them on principle. And once you make a decision based upon principle, you stand by what you decide.

In order to make good decisions, you've got to rely upon good people. People have got to feel comfortable about coming in the Oval Office and tell you what's on their mind. There's nothing worse than people walking in and say, "Well, I'm a little nervous around the guy; I think I'd better tell him what he thinks he needs to hear." You can't do the country justice, you can't make good decisions unless you've got a lot of good, competent people around you, and I do—Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State; Don Rumsfeld; Vice President.

These are people who have seen good times, and they've seen tough times. But in all times, they're capable of walking in and telling me what's on their mind. That's what you need as the President. And then once you make up your mind, they say, "Yes, sir, Mr. President, I'll get it done."

The biggest decision I've had to make since I've been your President is putting kids in harm's way. It's a decision no President wants to make. It's a decision I wish I did

not have to make. But I'd like to share with you why I made the decision I made.

First of all, war came to our shores on September the 11th, 2001. It was a war we did not ask for. It's a war we did not want, but it is a war that I intend to deal with so long as I'm your President. In order to deal with this war on terror, you've got to understand the nature of the enemy. And I'll share my thoughts with—about this enemy we face.

They're an enemy bound together by an ideology. These are not folks scattered around that are kind of angry and lash out at an opportune moment. These are people that are—believe something, and their beliefs are totalitarian in nature. They believe you should not be able to worship freely. They believe that young girls should not go to school. They've got a perverted sense of justice. They believe in the use of violence to achieve their objectives. Their stated objectives, their stated goals are to spread their totalitarian view throughout the Middle East. That's what they want to do.

They have made it abundantly clear that they believe folks who live in America are weak, that we don't have the will to compete with their philosophy. That's what they believe. I'm just telling you what they said. I think it's really important in a time of war for the President to take the words of the enemy very seriously. And I do.

They think that the use of violence will cause us to lose our nerve and retreat. And they have stated that they want safe haven from which to not only topple moderate governments in the Middle East but from which to launch attacks against the United States. Given that in mind, I'd like to share some of the lessons learned. One lesson is the nature of the enemy.

Another lesson is, is that we must defeat the enemy overseas so we don't have to face them here again. And that requires a strategy that is offensive in mind: press the enemy, find the enemy, bring the enemy to justice, never relent, never give them quarter, understand you cannot negotiate with these people, you can't rationalize with these people, that you must stay on the hunt and bring them to justice. This is precisely what we're doing.

One obviously immediate target is to dismantle Al Qaida. They hide in kind of the far reaches of the world. They plot and plan, however, from the far reaches of the world. They're good at communications. They're good at deception. They're good at propaganda. And they want to strike again. We have done a good job of dismantling the operating structure of Al Qaida—Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Ramzi bin al-Shibh—a series of these folks that have become the operating element of Al Qaida. Obviously, Usama bin Laden and his sidekick Zawahiri is still at large. We understand that. But we're looking, and we're listening, and we're working with allies like President Musharraf of Pakistan, President Karzai of Afghanistan to bring this—to bring the head of Al Qaida to justice.

The second lesson learned is that unlike previous wars, these folks—this kind of terrorist network that is ideologically bound needs safe haven. They need a place to hide. They need a symbiotic relationship with governments that will enable them to plot, plan, and attack.

So early on in the conflict, I not only vowed that we would use our fierce determination to protect this country by staying on the offense but that we would deny safe haven to these terrorists. And so I said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're equally as guilty as the terrorist." And one thing that I think is really important for our citizens to understand is that when the President says something, he better mean what he says. In order to be effective, in order to maintain credibility, words have got to mean something. You just can't say things in the job I'm in and not mean what you say.

And I meant what I said. And so we said to the Taliban, "Get rid of the Al Qaida." They chose not to. I made my first decision to send our kids into harm's way and liberate Afghanistan. The decision to liberate Afghanistan was based first and foremost on the need to enforce the doctrine that I thought was necessary to protect the American people. One of the benefits of sending our kids into harm's way was that we liberated 25 million people from the clutches of one of the most barbaric regimes known to the history of man.

Laura and I went over to that fledgling democracy. We went to see President Karzai. It was a remarkable experience. It's hard to describe. You know, I'm not such a good poet. Let me put it to you this way: My spirits were lifted to see people committed to democracy, recognizing that democracy stands in stark contrast to the life these people had to live under the Taliban.

The task now is to continue to fight off the Taliban and Al Qaida that would continue to try to disrupt the march of the new democracy, help this country survive and thrive and grow, and help the Afghan citizens realize the dreams of men and women that they can live in a free and peaceful world. Remember, these folks have voted for a President and voted for a Parliament. I'm proud of the progress we're making there. It's an historic achievement for our country and for our troops. And it was a necessary achievement to enforce the doctrines that we said were necessary to protect our people.

Another lesson—this is an important lesson for the country. It's one that, kind of, sometimes can get obscured in the politics of Washington, but it's one that I'm confident when I tell you it's necessary for this country to adhere to. It's going to be necessary for me or whoever follows me. When we see a threat, we have got to take the threat seriously before it comes to hurt us.

You know, growing up in Midland, Texas, we all felt pretty secure as a kid, mainly because we thought oceans could protect us. Now in my case, we were really far away from oceans too, but nevertheless, it's—when you think about it, though, if you're a baby boomer like me, you think about what it was like growing up. We knew there was a nuclear threat. Of course, we had put forth an interesting sounding strategy called “mutually assured destruction,” which provided an umbrella for security and safety.

But nevertheless, we never really felt anybody would invade us, did we? We never felt there would be another attack like Pearl Harbor on our lands. And yet September the 11th changed all that. More people died on September the 11th because of an attack by an enemy on our shore than died at Pearl Harbor. The biggest threat we face is when a terrorist network is able to acquire weapons

even stronger than airplanes. If the terrorist network were ever to get weapons of mass destruction, one of their stated objectives, our country and the free world would face a serious threat.

I saw a threat in Iraq. Not only did I see a threat in Iraq, the previous administration saw a threat in Iraq. Not only did the previous—which, by the way, passed a resolution in the United States Congress that said, we ought to have a regime change in Iraq. Not only did the previous administration see a threat in Iraq, members of both political parties, in both Chambers during my time as President saw a threat in Iraq. And the reason we saw threats is because the intelligence said that Saddam Hussein possesses weapons of mass destruction.

But it wasn't just U.S. intelligence that said that; there was—the worldwide intelligence network felt like he had weapons of mass destruction. After all, when I took the case to the United Nations Security Council, the Security Council voted 15 to nothing to say loud and clear, “Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences.” That's not what the United States said alone. This is what France and Great Britain, China, Russia, and members of the Security Council said, because the world felt like Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. And after 9/11 it was abundantly clear that a state sponsor of terror, which is what he had been declared by previous administrations, and the idea of weapons of mass destruction, and the fact that he was at least, at the very minimum, a stated enemy of the United States of America posed a serious threat for our country.

My biggest job is to protect the American people. That became abundantly clear on September the 11th. It's important to pass good reform for education; it's important to support the community college system; it's important to work for, you know, a Medicare plan that meets the needs. My biggest job is to protect you—at least that's how I see the job. Much of my decisionmaking, by the way, is based upon what happened on September the 11th. It had an effect on me, just like it had an effect on the country. I've never forgotten that day. I've never forgotten the lessons learned, and so when we saw a threat, we got to take it seriously. Oceans could no

longer protect us. The enemy was able to strike us and kill, and they were dangerous.

And before a President ever commits troops, you got to try diplomacy at all costs. I'm going to say to you what I said before: Putting those kids in harm's way is a tough, difficult decision. And nobody should ever want to do it, because I understand fully the consequences of the decision. And so as I told you, I went to the diplomatic route. I was hoping that when the world spoke with that one voice at the United Nations Security Council, Saddam Hussein would see the reason of the free world. But he didn't.

I felt all along the decision was his to make. He said—the world said, “Disclose, disarm.” In the meantime, I want you to remember, he was deceiving inspectors. It's a logical question to ask: Why would somebody want to deceive inspectors? I also told you earlier that when America speaks, we got to mean what we said. I meant what we said when we embraced that resolution that said, “Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences.” Words mean something in this world, if you're trying to protect the American people.

I fully understand that the intelligence was wrong, and I'm just as disappointed as everybody else is. But what wasn't wrong was Saddam Hussein had invaded a country. He had used weapons of mass destruction. He had the capability of making weapons of mass destruction. He was firing at our pilots. He was a state sponsor of terror. Removing Saddam Hussein was the right thing for world peace and the security of our country.

Iraq is now the central front on the war on terror. The war on terror is broader than Iraq, but Iraq is the key battlefield right now. And the enemy has made it so.

The advance of democracy frightens the totalitarians that oppose us. Mr. Zarqawi, who is there in Iraq, is Al Qaida. He's not Iraqi, by the way. He is there representing the Al Qaida network, trying to stop the advance of democracy. It's an interesting question, isn't it, why would somebody want to stop democracy? Like, what's wrong with democracy; Mister, why are you afraid of it? Are you threatened by the fact that people get to speak and you don't get to dictate? Are you threatened by the fact that people should be able to worship the Almighty free-

ly? What about democracy that bothers—I think it's a legitimate question we all ought to be asking.

But nevertheless, he's tough, and he's mean, and he'll kill innocent people in order to shake our will. They have stated, clearly stated—they being Al Qaida—that it's just a matter of time for the United States to lose its nerve. They recognize they cannot beat us on the battlefield; they cannot militarily defeat the United States of America. But they can affect our conscience. And I can understand why. Nobody likes to see violence on the TV screens. Nobody wants to see little children blown up when a U.S. soldier is trying to give them candy. Nobody likes to see innocent women die at the hands of suicide bombers. It breaks our heart.

The United States of America is an incredibly compassionate nation. We value human life, whether it be here at home or whether it be abroad. It's one of the really noble features of our country, I think. Nobody likes to see that, and the enemy understands that, however. They know that if we lose our nerve and retreat from Iraq, they win.

We've got a strategy for victory in Iraq. It's important for you to know that victory will be achieved with a democracy that can sustain itself, a country that will be able to defend itself from those who will try to defeat democracy at home, a country that will be an ally in the war on terror, and a country that will deny Al Qaida and the enemies that face America the safe haven they want. Those are the four categories for victory. And they're clear, and our command structure and our diplomats in Iraq understand the definition of victory.

And we're moving that way. We're moving that way. We've got a plan to help rebuild Iraq. You know, when we first went in there—by the way, every war plan or every plan is fine, until it meets the enemy. But you've got to adjust. You've got to be able to say on the ground, “Well, this is working; this isn't working.” The enemy is not a—they think differently; they make different decisions; they come up with different tactics to try to defeat us. And it's very important for us—for me to say to our commanders and our diplomats, “Devise that strategy on the

ground; keep adjusting, so that we achieve the victory that we want.”

So when we first got into Iraq, we went with big rebuilding projects. You know, “We’re going to help them do this and help them do that,” big electricity projects. And the enemy blew them up. And so what we’ve done now is we’ve gone to a more rational strategy to provide money for local folks, including our military, to help smaller projects, but projects that are able to connect with the people on the ground. You know, jobs helps a lot, if you’re trying to say, democracy is worth it.

Second aspect of our plan was to promote democracy. And I know 4 months in the way these news cycles work seems like a decade—at least it does to me at times, you know? [Laughter] Four months ago, 12 million people went to the polls. It was an amazing event, wasn’t it, I mean, really think about it. If you can project back to the amazement, surprise, exhilaration that happened when, given a chance to vote for the third time in one year, the Iraqi people having had suffered under the tyranny of Saddam Hussein said, “I want to be free. That’s what we want to be.” That’s what they said. Twelve million people, in the face of incredible threats and potential suicide bombers—and ugly words coming out of those who fear democracy—said, “Give me a chance.” It was an amazing experience. It was a—in my judgment, a moment that is historic.

Part of the task now is to say to the Iraqis’ leaders, “The people said something, now you need to get—you need to act. You need to get a unity government together.” And that’s what we’re watching right now. It takes a while for people to overcome the effects of tyranny, and there’s a lot of politics happening in Iraq. It’s a little different from what used to be the place. It’s a little different from other countries in that part of the world where one person makes a decision, and everybody kind of either likes it or doesn’t like it, but you keep your mouth shut if you don’t like it.

Here you’re watching people kind of edging for responsibility and working it, and we’re very much involved. I know you know Condi went over there the other day, and her message was, let’s get moving. The peo-

ple want there to be a unity government. The people want there to be a democracy, and it requires leadership, for people to stand up and take the lead. And so we’re working with them to get this unit government up and running.

And then there’s the security side. You can’t have a democracy unless the people are confident in the capacity of the state to protect them from those who want to stop the advance of democracy. The enemy for a while tried to shake our nerve. They can’t shake my nerve. They just can’t shake it. So long as I think I’m doing the right thing, and so long as we can win, I’m going to leave our kids there because it’s necessary for the security of this country. If I didn’t think that we could win, I’d pull them out. You just got to know that. I cannot sit with the mothers and fathers of our troops in harm’s way and not feel like victory is necessary and victory will be achieved.

Part of my decisionmaking process about whether they’re there is based upon whether or not the goal is necessary and attainable. It’s necessary to protect this country—I’m going to talk about it a little later—and it is attainable. It’s attainable because the Iraqis on the political side have said, “You bet. Give us a chance.” They wrote a Constitution; they ratified the Constitution. Twelve million went to the polls. That’s a high voter turnout, by the way. On the security side, our goal, our mission is to let the Iraqis take the fight. And as I—I’ve always been saying, “They stand up; we stand down.” That means, we train the Iraqis to take the fight to those who want to disrupt their country.

And we’re making good progress on the military side. By the way, we had to change our tactics. When we first got there, we said, why don’t we train us an army that will be able to protect from an outside threat. It turned out there wasn’t much of an outside threat compared to the inside threat. And so now the training mission has adapted to the tactics of the enemy on the ground. We’re embedding our guys with the Iraqi Army. They’re becoming more efficient. There’s over 200,000 trained, and we’re constantly monitoring the quality of effort. And as the quality of the forces improves, they take over more territory. The idea is to have the Iraqi

face in front, making the—helping the folks get the confidence in their Government.

We lagged in police training. And so General Casey, as he—who is our general on the ground there, told me, he said, “You know, this is going to be the year of training the police so they can bring confidence to people.”

The enemy shifted its tactics, as you know, and has tried to create a civil war. And they blew up the—one of the holiest sites in Samarra, trying to get the Sunnis to get after the Shi’a, and vice versa. This has been an objective for awhile. First it was, go after coalition troops. There is still danger for our troops, don’t get me wrong. But they really tried to incite a civil war. And what was interesting to watch is to watch the reaction for the—by the Government. The Government, including many of the religious leaders, stood up and said, “No, we don’t want to go there; we’re not interested in a civil war.”

The Iraqi troops did a good job of getting between some mosques and crowds, and they got in between competing elements and stood their ground. And as I put it awhile ago, they said, the Iraqi people looked into the abyss and didn’t like what they saw. And it’s still troublesome, of course. There’s still sectarian violence. You can’t have a free state if you’ve got militia taking the law into their own hands.

Now remember, this is a society adjusting to being free after a tyranny. And Saddam Hussein’s tactics to keep the country in check was to pit one group of people against another and say, “I’m the only stabilizing force for you.” He was brutal on Shi’a; he destroyed, with chemical weapons, many Kurds; and he was tough on Sunnis too. But he created a kind of—this sense of rivalry.

And so you can understand why there’s revenge after years of this kind of tension he created. Our job and the job of rational Iraqi leaders is to prevent these sectarian reprisal attacks from going on. And it’s tough work, but I want you to know, we understand the problem. More importantly, General Casey understands the problem.

We’re adjusting our tactics to be able to help these Iraqis secure their country so that democracy can flourish. They want democracy. That’s what they’ve said. The troops,

time and time again, have shown that they’re better trained than before. And we’ve got more work to do on that, I readily concede. There’s a lot of debate and a lot of questions about what’s happening, I understand that.

Again, I repeat to you, I know what violence does to people. First of all, I’m confident—people are saying, I wonder if these people can ever get their act together and self-govern? The answer is, I’m confident they can if we don’t lose our nerve.

One of the decision—principles—a principle on which I made decisions is this: I believe that freedom is universal. America was founded on the natural rights of men and women, which speaks to the universality of freedom. And if you believe in the universality of freedom, then you have confidence that if given a chance, people will seize that opportunity. No question the Iraqis need help after living under the thumb of a tyrant.

But freedom is embedded, I believe, in the souls of men and women all over the Earth. You know, you don’t demand freedom just—more than Methodists demand freedom, let me put it to you that way. I’m a Methodist. *[Laughter]* There’s an interesting debate: Is it imposing one’s values to encourage others to live in freedom? I argue the answer to that question is: Absolutely not, if you believe in the universality of freedom.

And so while thrilled to see the vote, I was—I wasn’t shocked. People want to be free. I know you’re thinking about, “Well, when’s he going to get our troops out of there?” There’s a debate going on in Washington, DC, which it should, and it’s an important debate about our troop levels. Here’s my answer to you: I’m not going to make decisions based upon polls and focus groups; I’m going to make my decisions based upon the recommendations of our generals on the ground. They’re the ones who decide how to achieve the victory I just described. They’re the ones who give me the information.

I remember coming up in the Vietnam war, and it seemed like that there was a—during the Vietnam war, there was a lot of politicization of the military decisions. That’s not going to be the case under my administration. They say, “Well, does George Casey

tell you the truth?" You bet he tells me the truth. When I talk to him, which I do quite frequently, I've got all the confidence in the world in this fine general. He's a smart guy; he's on the ground; he's making incredible sacrifices for our country. And he—if he says he needs more troops, he'll get them, and if he says he can live with fewer troops because the Iraqis are prepared to take the fight, that's the way it's going to be.

There are some in Washington, DC, and around the country who are good folks, legitimate, decent folks, saying, "Pull the troops out." That would be a huge mistake. It would be a huge—[*applause*—]hold on a second—it would be a huge mistake for these reasons: The enemy has said that they want us to leave Iraq in order to be able to regroup and attack us. If the American people—the American Government, not the people—were to leave prematurely, before victory is achieved, it would embolden the enemy.

Now, I recognize some don't see the enemy like I do. There's kind of a different view of the enemy. That's a good thing about America, people can have different points of view, you know. And people should be allowed to express them, which is great.

I see an enemy that is totalitarian in nature, that's clearly stated they want to attack us again, and they want safe haven from which to do so. That's why they're trying to stop democracy in Iraq. If we were to pull out our troops early, it would send a terrible signal to the Iraqis. Twelve million people said, "I want to be free." And they need our help. We're helping the Iraqis achieve freedom. They watch these deals. They listen carefully to the debate in America. They need to watch, by the way, they need to watch this debate, which is good. It's what free societies do, they debate. But they're also listening very carefully about whether or not this country has got the will necessary to achieve the objective.

Thirdly, if we left before the mission was complete, what would it say to our troops and the families, particularly those who have lost a loved one? I spend—let me say this about our military—the volunteer army is a necessary part of our society. We need to maintain the volunteer army. It is a really—we've got a magnificent group of men and

women who serve our country. Do you realize most people who served, are serving today, volunteered after 9/11? They saw the stakes, and they said, "I want to join the United States military." The retention rate is high, which means we've got people serving in uniform who not only volunteered and saw the stakes but have been involved in this conflict and said, "I'd like to stay in the military."

It is a—the military is a vital part of securing this country in the war on terror. Now, if you don't think we're at war, then it probably doesn't matter that much. I not only think we're at war; I know we're at war. And it's going to require diligence and strength and a really—and a military that's well-paid, well-housed, well-trained, where morale is high. And pulling out before the mission is complete would send a terrible signal to the United States military.

I welcome the debate, but I just want people here to know, we're going to complete the mission. We'll achieve victory. And I want to say this to the Iraqi people: We want to help you achieve your dreams. And the United States of America will not be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

I got one more thing to say, then I—[*applause*—]I got one more thing to say. I know I'm getting a little windy. I want to talk to people about why it's important for us to succeed in Iraq—and Afghanistan, for that matter. I told you there's a short-term reason: Deny safe haven and help get allies in the war on terror to prevent this totalitarian movement from gaining a stronghold in places from which they can come hit us.

There's a longer term reason as well, and that is, you defeat an ideology of darkness with an ideology of hope and light. And freedom and liberty are part of an ideology of light. Our foreign policy in the past has been one that said, well, if the waters look calm in parts of the world, even though there may not be freedom, that's okay. The problem with that foreign policy is below the surface there was resentment and anger and despair, which provided a fertile ground for a totalitarian group of folks to spread their poisonous philosophy and recruit.

The way to defeat this notion of—their notion of society is one that is open, that is

democratic, that is based upon liberty. This doesn't have to be an American-style democracy. It won't be. Democracy has got to reflect the tradition and the history of the countries in which it takes hold. I understand that. And nobody in the Middle East should think that when the President talks about liberty and democracy, he's saying you got to look just like America or act like America. Nobody is saying that.

I am saying, though, trust your people; give them a chance to participate in society. I believe a society is a whole society in which women are free and are given equal rights. I believe there's a whole society in which young girls are given a chance to go to school and become educated. I believe it's a whole society when government actually responds to people not dictates to people. That's what I believe. And I believe that it's the best way in the long run to defeat an ideology that feels the opposite way. And we've seen it happen in our history before. It's happened in some of your lifetimes.

One of the ways I like to describe what I'm trying to tell you is about my relationship with Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. I say this all the time, as the press corps will tell you traveling with me—"When is he ever going to quit saying that?" Well, it's the best example I can give you about what I'm trying to describe is happening today during these historic times. My dad fought the Japanese as an 18-year-old kid—or 19—he went in at 18, I guess. But he was in combat. Many of your relatives fought the Japanese. It's hard to think back and kind of remember the bitterness that we had toward the Japanese. They attacked the United States of America and killed a lot of folks. And we want to war with them, and a lot of people died, and it was a bloody war.

After the war—and by the way, it ended with an old doctrine of warfare, which is, destroy as many innocent people as you can to get the guilty to surrender. That's changed, by the way, with the precision nature of our military, and the way we're structured, and the way our troops think, is we now target the guilty and spare the innocent. That's another subject if you got a question. But anyway, today, my friend in keeping the peace is Prime Minister of Japan.

Amazing, isn't it? Maybe you take it for granted. I don't. I think it's one of the really interesting parts of—one of the interesting stories of history, that 60 years after we fought the Japanese, I can tell you that I work with Prime Minister Koizumi on a variety of issues. It's amazing, I think. I know 60 seems like a long time. If I were six or seven, it would seem like a long time. At 59, it seems like a long time. [*Laughter*] Maybe when I'm 60, it will seem like a short time.

Anyway, so what happened? What was it that caused something to change, an enemy to become an ally? I believe it's because the Japanese adopted a Japanese-style democracy. And I appreciate the fact that one of my predecessors, Harry S. Truman, had the foresight to see the capacity of freedom, the universal right of people to change the world, to make it so that, eventually, an American President would be able to say, we're working together to keep the peace. They're no longer an enemy; they're a friend. Democracies don't war.

Europe is whole and free and at peace for a reason. We lost thousands of troops on the continent of Africa—on the continent of Europe since World War I. Thousands and thousands of young men and women lost their lives during that war. And today, there's peace. And the reason why is because democracies don't war with each other.

I believe that one day an American President will be talking about the world in which he is making decisions or she is making decisions, and they'll look back and say, "Thank goodness a generation of Americans understood the universality of liberty and the fact that freedom can change troubled parts in the world into peaceful parts of the world."

Is it worth it in Iraq? You bet it is. It's worth it to protect ourselves in the short run, but it's necessary and worth it to lay the foundation of peace for generations to come. And that's what's on my mind these days.

I'll be glad to answer questions. Yes, ma'am.

Federal Budget/National Economy

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Good.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Good. You're welcome here. [Laughter] This is not a political convention. [Laughter]

Q. But more importantly, I'm an American, and my husband and I are proud parents of four children and five grandchildren, and I care very deeply, as you, about our future as a country and our place in the world.

The President. Good.

Q. I agree with you completely, that when war came to our borders, that we needed to defend our country against Al Qaida and was completely with you there. I agree that Saddam Hussein is a tyrant, as many are across the world. But I am more concerned about the deficit that we are incurring in this country and the effect that that will have on my children and grandchildren and our present. My colleagues here on the city council and I were just talking about how we can't afford after-school enrichment opportunities for the children of Charlotte because of cut-backs in the community development block grant. And I just—

The President. That's a great question. Thank you.

Q. —think we need to secure our borders, to protect our ports, and to invest in the people of Charlotte and this country—

The President. Good.

Q. —for a real national—

The President. I got your question, thank you. It's a good question. She basically—no seriously, it's a legitimate question. What are you doing about the deficit? You know. There are two types of deficits that I want to describe to you. One is the current account deficit. It's the deficit that—that we're on plan to cut in half by 2009. There's an interesting debate in Washington about how do you deal with a current account deficit.

By the way, we—and the area where we're able to affect the deficit the most is through some of the programs you described called discretionary spending. There's also discretionary sending and mandatory spending. Mandatory spending is a formula-driven spending that happens based upon conditions, not based upon, necessarily, legislation, although you can change mandatory spending through formula adjustment. Mandatory spending in Social Security, mandatory

spending Medicare, mandatory spending Medicaid, programs like that; farm program is mandatory spending. Discretionary spending is some of the education programs you described. Discretionary spending is also military spending.

We—I'm going to put this in a little larger context. I promise to answer your question. We were confronted with a series of hurdles to economic growth that we had to deal with in Washington. We had a stock market correction—a quite significant stock market correction, and we had a recession early in '01. And then the enemy attacked us, which hurt our economy. Obviously, my decision to go to war—people don't—you know, war is an unsettling thing. I fully understand that. Sometimes it's not conducive to risking capital during a time of war. We had a major natural disaster. All of this affected our economy.

I made the decision to cut taxes, as you know. It was a decision based upon the principle that if people had more money in their pocket, they're likely to spend it, save it, or invest it. And therefore, I felt like the best way to address these economic hurdles was to stimulate our economy through progrowth economic policies, starting with a tax cut—and a tax cut, by the way, for everybody. Everybody who paid taxes should get a cut. It's a tax cut that helped our small businesses. I firmly believe by cutting taxes on dividends and capital gains, it stimulated investment.

And our strategy has, I think, been proven by the numbers. We're growing at 3.4 percent—3.5 percent last year. The national unemployment rate is at 4.8 percent, 5 million jobs in 2½ years. I mean, I could go on—housing is up. There's a lot of positive economic news. And no question, however, we've been running a deficit.

One reason we're running a deficit is because I'm going to make sure our troops have what it takes to do their job. In the harm's way—when they're in harm's way, you've got to be able to say to their families that we're going to give them all they got. You know, we want to help them.

One of the interesting things about, for this war, is that we're saving a lot of lives through a health care system that is phenomenal, and we're pulling these kids off the

battlefield and sending them to Walter Reed or Bethesda as quickly as possible, sparing no expense to save lives. But no question, it's been costly.

Katrina—we're up to \$100 billion on Katrina. I don't know if you've been over there. You know, it just breaks your heart to see the devastation done in the gulf coast of Mississippi and inside New Orleans. It's a gut-wrenching experience to see the devastation that went on, and the Federal Government has made a strong commitment to provide that money.

That's background for—no question, we have a current account deficit. I have submitted a budget that says we can cut it in half by 2009. Now, there is a debate in Washington. Some of them are saying, "Raise the taxes in order to balance the budget." In all due respect, that's not the way Washington works. Washington will raise the taxes and figure out new ways to spend the money. So my attitude is, let's leave the progrowth economic policies in place, which by the way, yielded a \$100 billion-plus more money than anticipated last year, because a growing economy yields more tax revenues, and be tough on the spending.

And I understand it creates some of the conditions you said, and I appreciate you bringing those to my attention. We're now in another budget discussion in Washington. And I submitted another tough budget. Now, people said, "Why don't you veto the budgets?" I'd like to explain that to you. So we sit down from the executive branch and negotiate—we come up with a budget that we think is necessary to meet goals. The goal is to cut the current account deficit in half by 2009, and then we negotiate with the Congress. We say, "Here's the top line; here's what we want you to meet in order to meet the goals we think are necessary."

Thus far, they've hit the top line that we've suggested. Last year, as the councilwoman mentioned, the mayor pro tem mentioned, that there are some cutbacks in CDBG money. It's all aimed at trying to get this deficit under control. And the—and so Congress said last year, you're right. Here's the top line; we made it.

And so the size of the pie was what we thought was necessary to achieve an objec-

tive. And so therefore, I'm confronted with a choice. I may not like the slices of the pie, but I like the size. And if I vetoed bills because of the slices, but it met the size, what would happen during the next budget negotiations? They'd say, "Well, wait a minute; we hit your number; you vetoed the bills. How can we trust you in good faith?"

The job of the President is to set a goal, which is to reduce that deficit in half by 2009. And if people want me to be able to deal with slices of the pie, just give me the line-item veto. And I think that will help make sure that—[*applause*—let me talk about another thing. I'm sorry—this is a long answer to a very important question. I'm sorry I'm blowing on too much here, but the real deficit—I'll get you in a minute—the real deficit, another real deficit is the deficit inherent in Social Security and Medicare.

There is a massive amount of unfunded liability inherent in those two very important programs. And the reason why is, is that baby boomers like me are getting ready to retire. And there's a lot of us, and we're living longer than the program initially anticipated, and we've been promised greater benefits, and fewer people per retiree paying into the system. And the system is going to go broke, and a lot of people are watching whether or not the United States has the will to address this problem because if we don't, future Presidents and future Congresses are going to have to raise taxes significantly, reduce benefits significantly, or reduce other programs significantly. This is a significant problem facing a future generation of Americans.

As you know, I took the problem on last year. I might have been the only guy in Washington taking the problem on last year. [*Laughter*] My theory was, go out and explain to the American people we got a problem. And the people now understand, we got a problem, and the fundamental question is, how do you translate that to a program that Congress will act on?

And so my second strategy has been—remember, we're always adapting our tactics—was to put together a bipartisan group, which we're in the process of doing, of members from both political parties, from both Chambers, to come up with common ground so we can say to the American people, here is

a bipartisan approach to these very serious, unfunded liabilities that face future generations of Americans. It's a short-term account. It's very important—no question, Madam Councilperson. The long-term issue is equally, if not greater of importance, which is the unfunded liabilities inherent in Social Security and Medicare. I'm going to continue to take on the issue. It's a big issue, and I'm confident we can get it solved.

Okay. Yes, sir.

Freedom of Religion

Q. [*Inaudible*]
—I want to thank you for coming back to Charlotte again. We certainly enjoyed your wife here a few weeks ago. Okay, thank you. But I just wanted not to ask a question but just to offer you a message of encouragement. I know many men and women in this room and around our region, both Democrat and Republican, continue to pray for wisdom and encouragement for you and strength during these times. So we just want to continue to encourage you.

The President. Thank you. Appreciate you.

I'd like to say one thing about religion—religion and politics, if you don't mind. The United States of America must never lose sight of this beautiful principle: You can worship or not worship, and you're equally American. You're equally American if you're a Christian, Jew, or Muslim, atheist, agnostic. We must never lose sight of that. That's what distinguishes us from the Taliban.

Having said that, I cannot thank you all enough for the prayers. It means a lot to me and Laura. One of the most amazing aspects of the Presidency is to meet total strangers and they say, "I pray for you." They don't say, "I need a road or a bridge." [*Laughter*] The mayor might have said that—[*laughter*]—or a museum. They say, "I pray for you, Mr. President." Thank you.

Let's see. Yes, ma'am.

The Presidency

Q. A lot of people were betting that I wouldn't get a chance to ask you questions.

The President. Why is that?

Q. Just because there would be, you know, you might not choose me. [*Laughter*] Thank you very much.

The President. Don't bet against yourself is lesson one.

Q. Right. And I wanted to say to you, Mr. President, that on the war on terror, Social Security, the tax cuts, Dubai Ports, immigration, you have shown immense political courage. And I really think that you will be vindicated on all of those positions, as Ronald Reagan was, for example. And also I wanted to know what else would it take for me to get my picture taken with you? [*Laughter*]

The President. My attitude is, about this job, is just do my job. Say what you think is right. There's an interesting sense about whether this poll or that poll—I'm just going to tell you something about the Presidency. You cannot make decisions based upon polls. [*Applause*] You've got to stand—I'm not trying to elicit applause here; I'm just trying to share with you what it's like, as best I can, to be your President, at least why I do what I do.

And I am—I'm the kind of fellow that—it's like the Social Security issue. You know, they say, "Well, you shouldn't have brought it up," you know. I can't live with myself if I see a problem and not willing to address it. I want, after 8 years, to be able to walk out of that office and say, I did what I thought was right.

Now, you talk—an interesting thing is, I'm reading a lot of history these days, and it's—I've got some books to recommend, if you like them, you know. [*Laughter*] In contrary to what some of them think back there, it's not big print and pictures, either. [*Laughter*] Yes. Yes, I got you; thank you. [*Laughter*]

I read three books on George Washington. I think it's really interesting, isn't it? Historians are still analyzing the first President of the United States. And history is—sometimes history doesn't record the immediate effects of a Presidency. And you just do what you think is right, and you don't have to—you can't worry about it, you know. If they're still writing about Washington, you know, who knows how long I will be gone before they're writing about me in a way where there's enough time between the day—the Presidency—and an objective look of what takes place.

You heard me quoting Harry Truman. I bet you when Harry Truman made the decision to help the Japanese become a democracy, there was some editorialization basically saying, how dare you work with an enemy. You know, I bet there was some of that. I bet there was a lot of skepticism, and I can understand that, you know. I can understand why people are skeptical about whether or not a democracy can take hold in a part of the world like the Middle East. My only point to you, it's necessary for the peace. It has worked in the past, and it's necessary. And we cannot lose confidence in—in these universal values.

Let's see here. Yes. Yes. No, wait a minute. You're second. Excuse me. [*Laughter*] I beg your pardon.

Voluntarism

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Young people involved—thank you for that. That's a good question. She asked, what can young people do to get involved? First of all, the fact that you asked the question is an encouraging sign.

I like to tell people that the true strength of America is the hearts and souls of our people. You know, our military might is strong; our wallets are fatter than anybody else's in the world, on an individual—per capita basis. But the true strength of our country is the fact that neighbors love neighbors.

De Tocqueville saw this when he came to the United States in 1830s. He was a traveler, and he came and said, "I'm coming to the land of the rugged individualist." And he discovered something interesting way back in 1832, I think it was, when he wrote his book. He discovered that Americans have a penchant, the desire to form voluntary associations to help a neighbor. And it's that spirit of helping a neighbor that Presidents should foster and encourage, because it really is the strength of the United States of America.

When you really think about the community of Charlotte, in spite of the fact that the Federal Government has got influence or the city council has got influence, there are thousands of your fellow citizens teaching a child to read. And it doesn't require one law. There are people feeding the hungry. I bet you've got some of the great food pantry pro-

grams in the United States of America here. There are people providing shelter for the homeless. There are thousands of acts of kindness. The Boy Scout troops are active, I bet—the Girl Scouts. These are—the Little League programs, you know, the basketball programs. They—there's thousands of acts of kindness taking place on a daily basis.

To answer your question, involvement can mean a lot of things. It can mean serving in the military; it can mean teaching a child to read; it can mean getting your classmates to volunteer to help feed the hungry. There's thousands of ways to contribute, and the fact that we have millions of Americans doing that is really a remarkable aspect of our country.

One of the principles that has guided me is, to whom much is given, much is required. That's why I'm very proud of our Nation's effort to help lead the effort to solve the HIV/AIDS issue, particularly on the continent of Africa. We're an abundant nation. We're a blessed people in many ways, and yet there's a pandemic raging across the continent of Africa that's literally having the potential effect of wiping out a generation of people. And the stories are heartbreaking, and they're devastating to a civilization in many places. And yet, our Nation has made the commitment to spend \$15 billion over a 5-year period of time to help provide antiretroviral drugs, to help provide prevention, to help the orphans who've been left alone. The program is being administered by the U.S. Government.

And one aspect—there's a Global Fund as well. Another aspect—but the people on the ground, the foot soldiers, many are from the faith community, who have said, "I want to help; what can I do to help a neighbor?" The neighbor could be right around the corner, or the neighbor could be on the continent of Africa, in this case. We are a generous, compassionate people, and it's our true strength.

Let's see here. Yes, sir. Yes, please.

Support for the President

Q. Yes, sir. Actually, I'm bringing a statement to you for a friend. Sahara Bozanis a young Iraqi woman who just came to America last year. She grew up under Saddam, and she actually worked for the U.S. forces

during the war as an interpreter. I talked to her this week. She wanted to make sure that she knew—that you knew that her family that's still there is grateful, that she thinks that even though there may be terrorists still going on, that they are safer now than they ever were before. And her goal is to one day meet you to thank you in person, because you have changed their lives. Even though we might not see that in the press, their lives are much better today than they were 3, 4 years ago.

The President. Thank you, sir.

Q. So she wanted to thank you.

The President. Say, wait a minute, I—I will keep my word here. Oh, there you are. Yes, sorry. You thought I forgot, didn't you? I beg your pardon; I did forget. [Laughter] You know how guys near 60, they begin to kind of—[laughter].

International Support for the War on Terror

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. A civics teacher, great, thank you. Thank you for teaching.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. No, I appreciate—that's a very good question. First of all, thank you for teaching. By the way—as you grow up, the lady behind you—the girl behind you—as you grow up, one way to contribute is to teach, by the way.

The global war on terror requires a global response, and inherent in this woman's question was: What are you doing to make sure that others join the United States, recognizing that we cannot do this alone? And I appreciate the question a lot.

There is a lot of cooperation going on now. One of the great myths is that the United States is alone in the war on terror. Take, for example, Afghanistan. No question, we've got Special Forces there. No question, we've got a viable element of our military there to fight off Al Qaida or Taliban as they either sneak across the border or come from different provinces to try to do harm, but NATO is very actively involved there as well.

The NATO presence is in the lead in many of the provinces. There's what's called Provincial Reconstruction Teams. It's kind of along the lines that I talked about earlier,

about localizing the reconstruction efforts on a provincial basis. This is what's happening in Afghanistan, and there's reconstruction—Provincial Reconstruction Teams run by different countries. Germany has got a presence there. France has had—has presence in Afghanistan. In other words, there is a global network there.

In Iraq, as well, there's a lot of coalition forces, some small, some large. Great Britain, of course, is large. The Japanese had a thousand troops there. It's an amazing commitment by Prime Minister Koizumi when you think about the aftermath of World War II. The South Koreans have got a significant force there. The Poles have had a significant force there. There's a big international presence there. Many of the—and the NATO mission, by the way, is present in Iraq, as well, all aimed at helping train. They're very much involved in the training mission to give the Iraqi troops the skills necessary to do their jobs.

The global war on terror is fought on more fronts than just the military front. For example, one of the really important parts of this war on terror is to share intelligence, is to be able to say, "If you hear somebody or see somebody coming that you tell a counterpart in another agency—another intelligence service." And so we spend a lot of time, John Negroponte, for example, or Porter Goss, spends a lot of time with their counterparts constantly figuring out how best to share information.

Again, in old war, people could measure movement by the enemy from—by watching ships and tanks move across plains. Now we're dealing with people that are kind of moving around stealthily. And we've got to be in a position where we can share that intelligence.

The third aspect of the global war on terror is to cut off their money. It turns out terrorists need money—just like the Federal Government spends money. And it's a—so we're—our Secretary of Treasury, John Snow, and others are constantly working to make sure that *hawalas*, for example, which are kind of a money transmitting entity, doesn't—includes terrorist financing. Or we worked with the Saudi Government to make

it clear that the financing of terrorist activities are not in our interest, obviously, or their interest.

By the way, the Saudi Government has been very active in the war on terror. They've got a list of Al Qaida potential killers, and they're bringing them to justice. Pakistan has been a strong ally in the war on terror. You might remember that President Musharraf was one of three countries—or that Pakistan under President Musharraf was one of three countries that had recognized the Taliban. And so needless to say after September the 11th, he was—made a choice. Colin Powell did a wonderful job of talking to President Musharraf in a very respectful and dignified way, and basically said, “Who are you with?” And he has been an ally in the war on terror.

The interesting thing about President Musharraf is, the enemy has tried to kill him four times. There have been four assassination attempts on him by Al Qaida, which causes him to be a strong ally in the war on terror. [*Laughter*]

And so it's a great question. I'm constantly working to remind people about the stakes. I knew one of the real dangers after 9/11 was that people would tend to forget the lessons learned. And that's normal. And frankly, if you're the President of the United States, you want normalcy. You want people to go back to their life as quickly as possible.

And so it's—my job is to travel the country, like I'm doing a lot of, and saying, “Here are the stakes. Go ahead and live your life and risk capital and raise your families—let us worry about it.” And it's such a different kind of war that we're constantly having to work with our allies, as well, to remind them about the stakes.

The enemy has reminded them about the stakes. Remember that ours isn't the only country that's been attacked. There were attacks in Madrid; there were attacks in London; attacks in Egypt; there's been a series of attacks around the world—Jordan. They go up—Al Qaida goes in and blows up a wedding. These are coldblooded killers, now. These are people that will stop at nothing to achieve their objectives.

And so—no, that's a great question. And the coalition is—it's been a large coalition, and we're constantly working it. Some coun-

tries feel comfortable about helping in Afghanistan; some—that same country may not feel comfortable about Iraq. But either way, we're talking about this war on terror on a regular basis.

Yes. Sir.

Progress in Iraq/Lessons Learned

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Okay, yes. Squeaky wheel? Okay, hold on. [*Laughter*] It'll work.

Q. Mr. President, my name is—

The President. I went with the tall guy first. [*Laughter*]

Q. It's an honor to stand here in front of you and ask you this question. You talked a little bit about your decisionmaking ability, and you've been steadfast as it relates to the global war on terror, which I think is commendable. Another thing I look for in a leader is their ability to look in hindsight and their ability to be—a degree of humility. And maybe wondering—what could have been done differently? I wonder if you look back and go, maybe I should have done this differently? I'd just be curious to hear that.

The President. I appreciate that. I'm constantly looking back to see if things could be done differently or better. A classic example—first of all, I meant what I said on the strategic objective in Iraq. I said in the '04 campaign; I'm going to say it to you again: Knowing what I know today, I'd have made the same decision.

The tactics of going in—one of the interesting questions—you know, for example, the training of troops. We started training a military from ground one, Iraqi military, as if there was going to be a threat from outside its borders, which, in retrospect, we could have done better. After all, the threat was not from outside the borders; the threat was inside the borders as a result of Zarqawi coming in—coming in the country.

The police training has now begun in earnest in '06. The fundamental question is, could we have sped that up; could we have done a better job? The strategy, I'm convinced, is right, which is to give the Iraqis the opportunity to defend themselves. The question is, are the tactics—in order to achieve that, could we have done a quicker

job and expedited the idea of having the Iraqis standing up and us standing down?

I mentioned the reconstruction projects. Again, these are all necessary to look back to make sure that, as we head out into the future, that we're able to adjust quicker and better. And I spent a lot of time reviewing decisions made.

There's a—you know, there's a debate in Washington about the strategic objective, however. That's different from the tactics on the ground. I strongly believe what we're doing is the right thing. If I didn't believe it—I'm going to repeat what I said before—I'd pull the troops out, nor if I believed we could win, I would pull the troops out.

There is a—the military are constantly taking a real-time analysis based upon previous decisions and what they anticipate the needs to be. And so they themselves are constantly evaluating what could have been done differently.

Obviously, one classic case that hurt us that I wish were done differently was Abu Ghraib, the prison. What took place there and the pictures there just represented everything we didn't stand for. And it hurt us. It hurt us in the international arena, particularly in the Muslim world, where they said, look—it gave the enemy a fantastic opportunity to use it for propaganda reasons. "Look at the United States of America. Look what they're doing to these people. They're disgracing—they don't believe in the dignity of each person," and, in fact, we do. I wish that could be done over. It was a disgraceful experience. However, I'm proud to report that the people who made that decision are being brought to justice, and there was a full investigation over why something like that could have happened.

And so, yes, I do. Look, I fully understand there is—I guess, my reputation is, he sticks to his guns and—it's a very legitimate question, do you ever kind of understand that maybe—that you've got to be somewhat flexible?

I'm not flexible in my principles. I think if you're flexible in your principles, you end up not making sound decision. But I do agree with your question that a President has got to be capable of looking back and learning

from how things could have been done differently. Great question. Thank you.

Okay, squeaky wheels. There's three of you up there. Is this like a chorus? *[Laughter]* Would you please decide among yourselves?

Terrorist Surveillance Program

Q. I've got the mike.

The President. Okay, yes, very good. *[Laughter]* Good move.

Q. You never stop talking about freedom, and I appreciate that. But while I listen to you talk about freedom, I see you assert your right to tap my telephone, to arrest me and hold me without charges, to try to preclude me from breathing clean air and drinking clean water and eating safe food. If I were a woman, you'd like to restrict my opportunity to make a choice and decision about whether I can abort a pregnancy on my own behalf. You are——

The President. I'm not your favorite guy. Go ahead. *[Laughter]* Go on, what's your question?

Q. Okay, I don't have a question. What I wanted to say to you is that I—in my lifetime, I have never felt more ashamed of nor more frightened by my leadership in Washington, including the Presidency, by the Senate, and——

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. No, wait a sec—let him speak.

Q. And I would hope—I feel like, despite your rhetoric, that compassion and common sense have been left far behind during your administration, and I would hope from time to time that you have the humility and the grace to be ashamed of yourself, inside yourself. And I also want to say, I really appreciate the courtesy of allowing me to speak what I'm saying to you right now. That is part of what this country is about.

The President. It is, yes.

Q. And I know that this doesn't come welcome to most of the people in this room, but I do appreciate that.

The President. Appreciate——

Q. I don't have a question, but I just wanted to make that comment to you.

The President. I appreciate it, thank you. Let me—I'm going to start off with what you first said, if you don't mind. You said that

I tap your phones—I think that’s what you said. You tapped your phone—I tapped your phones. Yes. No, that’s right. Yes, no, let me finish.

I’d like to describe that decision I made about protecting this country. You can come to whatever conclusion you want. The conclusion is, I’m not going to apologize for what I did on the terrorist surveillance program, and I’ll tell you why. We were accused in Washington, DC, of not connecting the dots, that we didn’t do everything we could to protect you or others from the attack. And so I called in the people responsible for helping to protect the American people and the homeland. I said, is there anything more we could do?

And there—out of this national—NSA, came the recommendation that it would make sense for us to listen to a call outside the country, inside the country from Al Qaida or suspected Al Qaida in order to have real-time information from which to possibly prevent an attack. I thought that made sense so long as it was constitutional. Now, you may not agree with the constitutional assessment given to me by lawyers—and we’ve got plenty of them in Washington—but they made this assessment that it was constitutional for me to make that decision.

I then, sir, took that decision to Members of the United States Congress from both political parties and briefed them on the decision that was made in order to protect the American people. And so members of both parties, both Chambers, were fully aware of a program intended to know whether or not Al Qaida was calling in or calling out of the country. It seems like—to make sense, if we’re at war, we ought to be using tools necessary within the Constitution, on a very limited basis, a program that’s reviewed constantly, to protect us.

Now, you and I have a different—of agreement on what is needed to be protected. But you said, would I apologize for that? The answer—answer is, absolutely not.

Palestinian Elections/Israel

Q. Mr. President—[inaudible]—I was raised on a ranch in New Mexico, and my heroes have always been cowboys.

The President. There you go. Thank you, yes. [Laughter] I’m not sure I qualify as a cowboy. [Laughter]

Q. Thinking about our children’s children, if the all-powerful granter of the Presidential request were to visit you this evening and give you one of these three: of ongoing economic growth and security for America, ridding the world of the security threat now posed by North Korea and Iran, or establishing peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians, which one—

The President. Whew. [Laughter] Back to back, you know? [Laughter] I don’t—that’s not the way life works. You can do more than one thing at one time. We can achieve peace with the—we can win this war on terror if we’re steadfast and strong. It’s not going to happen on my watch. It’s going to take awhile. We can spread liberty and freedom to create peace. And we can work on the Palestinian-Israeli issue at the same time. I am the first President to have articulated two states living side by side in peace.

And I’m also a President who believed that the Palestinians needed to have elections. There’s an interesting debate in Washington, is do you wait for the conditions to be perfect before elections, that the institutions be in place before there are elections, or do you have elections as a step toward a civil society and a democratic society? As you know, I’ve taken the latter rather than the former, and encouraged the Palestinian elections.

And what was interesting about those elections is that—and since then, by the way, the Israelis have had elections. The Palestinian elections—let me just step back. I think the Palestinians have been a long-suffering people that deserve better government. The former leadership turned out to be corrupt—like, stole money. And as a result of his leadership, we never got very close to peace. There wasn’t a lasting—there weren’t lasting institutions in place. I believe democracies don’t war.

And so the election was really an interesting one, I think, recently. Guess what the election was based on? Corruption. This is the Palestinian elections. Anticorruption campaigns, “Vote for me; we’re not going to steal your money. Vote for me; we’ll help educate your kids and provide health care.”

The dilemma we're in—it's not a dilemma. I made the decision that if you believe in two states living side by side in peace, then one of the parties in the state—one of the parties cannot declare their intentions to destroy the other party. That's not peaceful. That is warlike.

And so our posture at this point in time is to say to the Palestinians, Hamas, get rid of it; get rid of that platform. It's not a peaceful platform. It's a warlike platform. We want there to be two states side by side in peace.

We've also said, we'll help the people but not the Government. You know, somebody said, "Well, you support elections." I said, yes, I do. I don't necessarily have to like who wins. But I do think it was a necessary part of the evolution of the state to have the Palestinian people be able to say, "We're sick of it. We're sick of the status quo. We want something differently. We want a Government that's honest, and we want a Government that listens to our demands." I thought it was a positive development. And now, I would strongly urge the Hamas Government to change their tune and their rhetoric about Israel and advocate the peace and work toward a civil society that will yield a lasting peace.

Again, this is an issue where I'm—progress is being made, but it requires a steadfast support of our belief that democracies will yield to peace.

I've got to go. I appreciate you. Yes, one last question. Yes, ma'am, I promised you. I'm sorry.

Alternative Fuel Sources

Q. Thank you. Thank you, very much, Mr. President. I am Wilhelmenia Rembert. I serve as vice chair of the Board of County Commission here in Mecklenburg County. I'm joined by my colleague, Commissioner Dumont Clarke, and we welcome you to Mecklenburg County.

The President. Thank you.

Q. I defer my own question to ask you a question of one of my students at Winthrop University, where I'm a professor of social work, asked me to bring to your attention. And that is, what can you, Mr. President, and what will you do to help control the rising cost of fuel which is really affecting the ability

of many students to travel and the rest of us—not just students—to travel back and forth to work and to school? Thank you.

The President. I appreciate that. I wish I could wave a wand and say, we need more gasoline relative to demand. I don't have the capacity to control the market. I do have the capacity to start leading this country away from dependence on oil. And I believe that we need to promote—vigorously promote alternative sources of energy, starting with ethanol, which could help the farmers around here, by the way. There's a lot of ethanol—ethanol basically right now is produced from corn. In the Midwest, a lot of people are using more ethanol—and to promote technologies such as plug-in hybrid batteries. We're close to some significant breakthroughs. By the way, this is where Republicans and Democrats are working together in Washington, DC, to provide the funding necessary for technology to help lead us away from dependency upon oil.

And so this isn't going to help your person tomorrow—I readily concede. But it is going to—it's going to, in the relatively near future, be able to enable people to plug their car in and drive the first 40 miles on battery, as opposed to using gasoline.

And so there is a real need—that's why I put this in the State of the Union—a real need for us to diversify away from fossil fuels, not only to protect the environment, Mister, but also for national and economic security reasons. And the—we're making progress.

I was able to make a decision right after Katrina that helped deal with the—what could have been a—even stronger rise in the price of gasoline. I was able to suspend EPA rules because of the natural disaster that took place. And by suspending the blended rules, that can create disruption as these—as the seasonal change, there's a disruption in supply. By suspending those rules, it enabled us to import more European gasoline. And that, in turn, provided stability in the marketplace. And so we didn't have significant spikes.

I fully understand the effects of gasoline price raises on people who are working. It's like a tax. Every time it goes up at the pump, people are, like, paying a tax. And the long-term solution is to get off oil. And we are aggressively doing so.

Thanks for your time. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. at Central Piedmont Community College. In his remarks, he referred to Firoz Peera, chair, World Affairs Council of Charlotte; P. Anthony Zeiss, president, Central Piedmont Community College, and his wife, Beth; Mayor Patrick McCrory of Charlotte, NC; Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, senior Al Qaida leader responsible for planning the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack, who was captured in Pakistan on March 1, 2003; Ramzi bin al-Shibh, an Al Qaida operative suspected of helping to plan the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack, who was captured in Karachi, Pakistan, September 11, 2002; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; Ayman Al-Zawahiri, founder of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and senior Al Qaida associate; President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and former Secretary of State Colin L. Powell.

Remarks on Immigration Reform Legislation in Charlotte, North Carolina

April 6, 2006

I'm pleased that Republicans and Democrats in the United States Senate are working together to get a bipartisan comprehensive energy bill—let me start over. I'm pleased that Republicans and Democrats in the United States Senate are working together to get a comprehensive immigration bill.

I want to thank the efforts of those involved in the process. I appreciate their understanding there needs to be a comprehensive immigration bill. I recognize there are still details to be worked out. I would encourage the Members to work hard to get the bill done prior to the upcoming break.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:36 p.m. at the North Carolina Air National Guard base at Charlotte-Douglas International Airport.

Remarks Honoring NCAA Championship Teams

April 6, 2006

Thank you all. Welcome. Please sit down. Thanks for coming. It's an honor to welcome outstanding athletes to the White House. I welcome the athletes and their coaches. We offer our congratulations, and we're thrilled to call you national champs.

I'd like to say, Champions Day is also National Student Athlete Day. It's a chance for us to honor those who excel on the field as well as those in the classroom. I'm especially pleased to welcome the Members of the United States Congress here, Senators and Congressmen from the States that we're honoring. Thank you all for coming. Proud you're here. I know you'll want to congratulate the coaches and the team members after these brief remarks. We want to welcome the school officials who are here.

Today is the day we recognize that millions have competed in the NCAA, but only a few become champs. And the first champs we honor are the mighty Florida Gators, ably coached by Billy Donovan. People are making hand gestures back there.

I want you all to recognize that the Gators started the season with 17 wins in a row, and they ended with 11 in a row—the most important 11 wins of the season. They have a following all over the country, including my brother. [*Laughter*] I'm pleased to welcome you here. I'm also pleased to remind the Gator fans the captain of your team, Adrian Moss, was from Humble, Texas. [*Laughter*]

We have three teams today from the great State of Maryland. Perhaps one theme of Champion's Day is: Fear the Turtle.

I want to welcome Brenda Frese and the University of Maryland women's basketball team. They are the NCAA's newest national champions. Less than 48 hours ago, they were cutting down the nets in Boston. Here they are soaking up the sun in the White House. We welcome you here. We marvel at your dramatic overtime win, and we thank you for being such fantastic athletes.

We also welcome the University of Maryland field hockey team. Missy Meharg is with us as well. These women were the number one seed in the NCAA tournament, and they

win the NCAA championship. We're proud you're here. It probably gave you a special delight to be able to beat your archrival, Duke.

We want to welcome Sasho Cirovski's University of Maryland men's soccer team. The men's soccer team won its first national championship in almost 40 years. I thought it was interesting that on Times Square, the NASDAQ ticker displayed a message that said, "Go Terps," in honor of the soccer team.

I want to welcome the University of Portland women's soccer team, coached by Garrett Smith. Portland came to celebrate the championship here in the year 2003. I think one of them said to herself, "You know, we'll be back, but I'm not sure if old George W. is going to make it." [Laughter] You're back, and so am I. [Laughter] I appreciate the fact that the Pilots dominated the season. They did not lose a single game. I appreciate what Father Beauchamp said—he's the university president—"They are Portland's team. They brought us together as a community." Congratulations, ladies, for the championship.

Jerry Schumacher of the University of Wisconsin men's cross country team is with us today. For 3 years in a row, Wisconsin finished second in the NCAA championships. This year, they broke the pattern, and they come to the White House as national champs. Congratulations.

I welcome Peter Tegen and the Stanford women's cross country team. Stanford won its second women's cross country national championship in the past 3 years. Lauren Centrowitz is with us. She asked me not to mention her name. I kind of mentioned names, but I did it anyway. Sorry, Lauren. And the reason I did is because her dad, Lauren—I mean, Lauren's dad, Matt, won a national cross country championship of his own in 1977. The daughter and the dad on national cross country championship teams—there's nothing better than someone following in a famous father's footsteps. Congratulations to Stanford's team.

Jim McLaughlin and the University of Washington women's volleyball team is here. Congratulations to the Huskies. These women won their first national championship in school history. They weren't supposed to

win. They were the underdog. They had low expectations. It's a good thing, is to keep expectations low, by the way. And they brought home a national championship to the University of Wisconsin. Congratulations to you all. I mean, the University of Washington; I beg your pardon.

Now we've got the University of Auburn men's and women's swimming and diving teams. Coach David Marsh is with us. Both the men's swimming and diving teams earned national championships. That's rare to do. And I welcome both teams with us today. It kind of says that, in a year of swimming, this is the year of War Eagle. I want you all to know that the women's swimming team kindly brought me a—[laughter].

[At this point, the President held up a Speedo swimsuit.]

Awfully thoughtful of you. [Laughter] I'm not going to wear it. [Laughter]

I welcome the University of Colorado ski team, under Richard Rokos. This is a coed team. The Colorado ski team's motto was "One team, one goal," and you achieved your goal by winning the National Championship. We welcome you. Your coach is an interesting story. He escaped Communist Czechoslovakia. He's a proud American coaching a wonderful group of athletes. Congratulations, and we're glad you're here.

The university—the United States Military Academy men's rifle team is with us. I congratulate the team here today. This is West Point's first championship in any varsity sport in a half a century. Congratulations to you. If you happen to be walking around and run into the Vice President—[laughter]—you might give him a few pointers. [Laughter] In the meantime, I look forward to coming to see you as your—as the graduation speaker here in May.

The thing I like about these teams is, they're not only great athletes but they also are champs off the field. When you think about the folks here from West Point, they decided to serve our country in a time of war. And I want to thank you for your contributions to our country.

Florida basketball players spent Thanksgiving morning serving hot meals at a local shelter. The Maryland basketball players

raised money to support breast cancer research. The Maryland field hockey players worked as counselors in summer camps for girls. They served as mentors. The Maryland soccer players helped the school canned food drive. The Portland soccer players arranged for the university to donate money for hurricane relief for every goal the team scored. The Wisconsin cross country runners participated in the Frostbite Roadrace to raise money for the local YMCA. The Stanford cross country team visited schools in East Palo Alto to talk about the importance of education and staying off drugs. The Washington volleyball players visited children in hospital. The Auburn swimmers helped raise funds for hurricane relief. The Colorado skiers participated in the Read With the Buff Program in elementary schools. What I'm telling you is, we've not only got fine athletes with us; we've got fine Americans with us. Thank you for serving your communities.

Welcome to the White House. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:05 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Billy Donovan, head coach, University of Florida men's basketball team; Brenda Frese, head coach, University of Maryland women's basketball team; Missy Meharg, head coach, University of Maryland women's field hockey team; Sasho Cirovski, head coach, University of Maryland men's soccer team; Garrett Smith, head coach, University of Portland women's soccer team; Jerry Schumacher, head coach, University of Wisconsin men's cross country team; Peter Tegen, head coach, and Lauren Centrowitz, team member, Stanford University women's cross country team; Jim McLaughlin, head coach, University of Washington women's volleyball team; David Marsh, head coach, Auburn University women's and men's swimming and diving teams; and Richard Rokos, head coach, University of Colorado women's and men's ski teams.

Proclamation 7997—Education and Sharing Day, U.S.A., 2006

April 6, 2006

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

A quality education is the cornerstone of a hopeful tomorrow for all our children. Edu-

cation and Sharing Day highlights our strong support for our young people as they pursue lives of learning, prepare to become responsible leaders, and work to reach their full potential.

On Education and Sharing Day, we remember the efforts of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who promoted the importance of education and ethical teachings to every student's future. He sought to improve lives and communities through a vast network of education and outreach centers and social service programs around the world. We continue to be inspired by the Rebbe's good works and all those who dedicate their time, talents, and energy to helping our next generation grow into caring, responsible adults. Through devotion to faith, family, education, and community, we can continue building a better and more compassionate society.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 9, 2006, as Education and Sharing Day, U.S.A. I call upon government officials, educators, volunteers, and all the people of the United States to reach out to young people and work to create a better, brighter, and more hopeful future for all.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirtieth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:47 a.m., April 7, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 10.

**Proclamation 7998—National
Former Prisoner of War Recognition
Day, 2006**

April 6, 2006

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

In every generation, America's Armed Forces have answered the call to duty with dedication and valor. On National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day, we pay tribute to the brave patriots of the United States military who endured captivity because of war. These heroes sacrificed their personal liberty to secure a future of freedom for all Americans.

While held as prisoners of war, American POWs have reflected the best of our country, acting with resourcefulness, bravery, and strength. Former POWs, such as Corporal Tibor "Ted" Rubin, USA, continue to inspire new generations to acts of courage and compassion. Liberated by U.S. forces from a Nazi concentration camp, Rubin enlisted in the Army after immigrating to the United States. He was captured and held as a POW during the Korean War even before he became an American citizen. His incredible bravery and service to his fellow POWs saved many lives and has left a legacy of hope and honor, and for his heroism, I had the great privilege to present him our Nation's highest military award, the Medal of Honor.

The sacrifices of those taken as prisoners of war have helped bring security to American citizens and freedom to the world. With determination and courage, America's former POWs, their fallen and missing comrades, and their families have demonstrated the true spirit of our Nation, and they will never be forgotten.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 9, 2006, as National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day. I call upon the people of the United States to join me in remembering and honoring the sacrifices of all American prisoners of war. I call upon Federal, State, and

local government officials and private organizations to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirtieth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:47 a.m., April 7, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 10.

**Memorandum on Assignment of
Reporting Function on Iraq Policy
Under the National Defense
Authorization Act for Fiscal Year
2006**

April 6, 2006

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Assignment of Reporting Function on Iraq Policy Under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006

By virtue of the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and laws of the United States, including section 301 of title 3, United States Code, I hereby assign to you the functions of the President under section 1227(c) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006 (Public Law 109-163).

You are authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum.

**Letter to the Speaker of the House of
Representatives Transmitting
Budget Amendments**

April 6, 2006

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed FY 2007 Budget amendments for the Departments of Agriculture, and State and

Other International Programs; the Federal Communications Commission; and the Smithsonian Institution. Overall, the discretionary budget authority in my FY 2007 Budget would not be increased by these requests.

This transmittal also contains FY 2007 Budget amendments for the legislative branch. As a matter of comity, appropriations requests for the legislative branch are commonly transmitted without change.

The details of these proposals are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Remarks at the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast

April 7, 2006

Thank you all very much. *Gracias, mi Tejano*. Thank you, sir, for your kind words. Thanks for inviting a Methodist. [Laughter]

When I first came out here and saw how comfortable these chairs look, I was a little worried you thought I might be giving quite a long speech. [Laughter]

I'm so thrilled to be here with cardinals of the Church. Cardinal McCarrick, I know, is here and Cardinal Bevilacqua—must make you feel good to see there's not a slice of bacon around. [Laughter] My spirits are always uplifted when I'm in the presence of Their Excellencies, and it's great to see you both.

I've been looking forward to this breakfast, but I've got to tell you, I was slightly concerned when I saw the draft of the program went like this: "We will mark the conclusion of the President's speech with the hymn, 'Now Thank We All Our God.'" [Laughter]

Laura sends her love and her best. I want to thank the leadership of the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast for having me, and, more importantly, having this chance for all to worship together.

I appreciate so very much the Chief Justice joining us. I'm proud you're here, Chief Jus-

tice. I haven't got to the best part of the family yet—[laughter]—and Jane.

Secretary Nicholson, I appreciate you being here, Jim Nicholson and Suzanne. As you might recall, he was our Ambassador to the Vatican, and he did a fantastic job.

Other members of the administration, thanks for coming. Don't tarry too long. [Laughter] Get back to work. [Laughter]

Looking around, I see Members of the United States Senate—Santorum; Members of the House of Representatives. Thank you all for coming. Proud you're here. Thanks for taking time out of your day. Smith, Beauprez, Lungren, I can't—I don't dare name them all.

We needed a hopeful moment for this world of ours. It's a time when more people have a chance to claim freedom that God intended for us all. It's also a time of great challenge. In some of the most advanced parts of our world, some people no longer believe that the desire for liberty is universal. Some people believe you cannot distinguish between right and wrong. The Catholic Church rejects such a pessimistic view of human nature and offers a vision of human freedom and dignity rooted in the same self-evident truths of America's founding.

This morning we ask God to guide us as we work together to live up to these timeless truths. When our Founders wrote the Declaration of Independence, they called liberty an unalienable right. An unalienable right means that freedom is a right that no government can take away because freedom is not government's to give.

Freedom is a gift from the Almighty because it is—and because it is universal, our Creator has written it into all nature. To maintain this freedom, societies need high moral standards. And the Catholic Church and its institutions play a vital role in helping our citizens acquire the character we need to live as free people.

In the last part of the 20th century, we saw the appeal of freedom in the hands of a priest from Poland. When Pope John Paul II ascended to the Chair of Saint Peter, the Berlin Wall was still standing. His native Poland was occupied by a Communist power. And the division of Europe looked like a permanent scar across the continent. Yet Pope

John Paul told us, “Be not afraid,” because he knew that an empire built on lies was ultimately destined to fail. By reminding us that our freedom and dignity rests on truths about man and his nature, Pope John Paul II set off one of the greatest revolutions for freedom the world has ever known.

Pope John Paul has now been succeeded by one of his closest friends and colleagues, Pope Benedict XVI. Pope Benedict, when he was a Cardinal, and recently—when he was a Cardinal, Laura and I had a chance to meet him, and recently she went back to Rome to see him again. He was such a gracious host, wonderfully kind man.

Like his predecessor, Pope Benedict understands that the measure of a free society is how it treats the weakest and most vulnerable among us. In his Christmas homily, the Pope noted that the Savior came to Earth as a defenseless child, and said that the splendor of that Christmas shines upon every child, born and unborn. Here in the United States, we work to strengthen a culture of life through many State and Federal initiatives that expand the protections of the unborn. These initiatives reflect the consensus of the American people acting through their elected representatives, and we will continue to work for the day when every child is welcome in life and protected in law.

I appreciate the leading role that the Catholic faith-based organizations play in our nation’s armies of compassion. And one of the many ways that Catholic faith-based organizations serve their neighbors is by welcoming newcomers and helping them become good citizens.

This Nation of ours is having an important debate about immigration, and it is vitally important that this debate be conducted in a civil tone. I believe that the American Dream is open to all who work hard and play by the rules and that America does not have to choose between being a compassionate society and a society of law.

An immigration system that forces people into the shadows of our society or leaves them prey to criminals is a system that needs to be changed. I’m confident that we can change—change our immigration system in ways that secures our border, respects the rule of law, and, as importantly, upholds the

decency of our country. As the Congress continues this debate, its Members must remember, we are a nation of immigrants. And immigration has helped restore our soul on a regular basis.

In this young century, our Nation has been called to great duties. I’m confident we’ll meet our responsibilities so long as we continue to trust in God’s purposes. During our time in the White House, Laura and I have been blessed by the prayers of countless Americans, including many in this room. It’s really an amazing country where people walk up to you, say, “Mr. President, I pray for you”—expecting to say, “Mr. President, I’d like a bridge.” [Laughter] But instead, they say, “I pray for you and your family.” It uplifts us, and I want to thank you for that from the bottom of our hearts.

I ask for your prayers again, that our Nation may always be an inspiration to those who believe that God made every man, woman, and child for freedom. It is such an honor to be here. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:30 a.m. at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Most Rev. Jose H. Gomez, Archbishop of San Antonio, who introduced the President; Theodore E. Cardinal McCarrick, Archbishop of Washington; Anthony J. Cardinal Bevilacqua, Archbishop Emeritus of Philadelphia; Jane M. Roberts, wife of Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr.; and Suzanne M. Nicholson, wife of Secretary of Veterans Affairs R. James Nicholson.

Remarks on the National Economy

April 7, 2006

Good morning. This morning’s economic report shows that America’s growing economy added 211,000 jobs in the month of March. The American economy has now added jobs for 31 months in a row, created more than 5.1 million new jobs for American workers. The unemployment rate is now down to 4.7 percent—that’s below the average rate of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

These millions of new jobs are evidence of an economic resurgence that is strong, broad, and benefiting all Americans. Real

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 pro-growth 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 en-

force 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 club-houses. 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

Released April 5

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by President John Kufuor of the Republic of Ghana

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Missouri

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Tennessee

Fact sheet: Health Savings Accounts: Affordable and Accessible Health Care

Fact sheet: Health Savings Accounts: Myth vs. Fact

Released April 6

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary on U.S. commitment to prevent widespread famine in the Horn of Africa

Statement by the Press Secretary: United States Welcomes Joint Statement by the British and Irish Prime Ministers

Released April 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Fact sheet: Economic Growth Continues—More Than 5.1 Million Jobs Created Since August 2003

Statement by the Press Secretary on the formation of the Iraq Study Group

**Acts Approved
by the President**

Approved April 1

H.R. 4911 / Public Law 109–212
Higher Education Extension Act of 2006