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Editor's Note: The President was at Camp David, MD, on May 12, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, May 12, 2006

The President's Radio Address

May 6, 2006

Good morning. Today I want to talk with you about the new Medicare prescription drug coverage that went into effect at the start of this year. Everyone on Medicare is eligible for this new coverage, but the enrollment deadline of May 15th is just over a week away. For those of you with Medicare who have not yet signed up, it is important for you to review your options and choose a plan. By enrolling before the deadline, you can ensure the lowest possible premiums and start saving on your prescription drug bills.

Many of you have already made the wise decision to enroll. Since the new coverage went into effect, more than 30 million Americans now have prescription drug coverage through the Medicare program, and more are enrolling each week. Recent surveys show that the vast majority of seniors are satisfied with the program and for good reason.

Competition in the prescription drug market has been stronger than expected, and costs for seniors are lower than expected. The average premium that seniors pay is a third less than had been expected—just $25 per month instead of $37 per month. The typical person with Medicare who previously had no drug coverage will now spend about half of what he or she used to spend on prescription drugs, saving an average of $1,100 per year.

Low-income seniors receive extra help. For them Medicare will now cover, on average, more than 95 percent of the costs of their prescription drugs. Thanks to this new coverage, America's seniors are now getting the modern medicine they need at prices they can afford.

Prescription drug coverage under Medicare is also giving our seniors more and better choices for their health care. Instead of having to accept a one-size-fits-all plan, seniors are now choosing from a variety of drug plans, and they're finding the one that best fits their needs. Most seniors are able to choose their plans that have low premiums, low or no deductibles, fixed copayments for most drugs, and affordable coverage to fill in coverage gaps.

Medicare prescription drug coverage is a great deal for seniors. So today I am encouraging those of you who still have not enrolled to take a look at your options and sign up before the May 15th deadline, in order to ensure the lowest premiums. Even if you do not have significant drug expenses now, you should consider joining a Medicare drug plan to protect yourself against high prescription drug bills down the road.

There are many ways you can get help to choose a drug plan and enroll. You can ask your doctor or pharmacist for help. You can speak with a Medicare counselor 24 hours a day at 1–800–MEDICARE. You can enroll online by visiting the official Medicare web site at medicare.gov. If you need help enrolling, citizens' groups like AARP and NAACP, faith-based organizations, health professionals, and pharmacies are working to answer questions. Between now and May 15th, events will be held across the country to answer your questions and help you enroll for the new drug coverage. And if you have family or friends on Medicare, you can help too. Helping can be as simple as showing an older neighbor how to fill out a form, helping a senior use the Internet, or making a call for your mom or dad.

I was proud to sign Medicare prescription drug coverage into law. Because we acted, America now has a Medicare system to fit the needs of the 21st century, and millions of American seniors and persons with disabilities are now saving a lot of money and receiving the modern health care they deserve. Over the coming days, we will continue working to make sure that everyone with Medicare has a chance to save money and

enjoy the peace of mind that this new drug coverage brings.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on May 5 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 6. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 5 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Commencement Address at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma

May 6, 2006

Thank you all very much. President Schmidly, thank you. Members of the Oklahoma State faculty and administration; Governor; people in the statehouse; Members of the United States Congress; distinguished guests; parents, friends, family, and, most important, the class of 2006—thanks for the warm welcome to this great State and to this fine campus. I'm honored to be here.

Laura sends her greetings, and she's disappointed that she couldn't be here with me. She was even more disappointed when she found out I had planned a romantic dinner for two—at Eskimo Joe's. She also said she had one question to ask the students here today: How orange are you? If you read the papers, you know that when some would criticize me, they call me a cowboy. This cowboy is proud to be standing here in the midst of a lot of other cowboys.

I want to thank the moms and dads here for the sacrifice and for the love you've shown your children. I want to thank the faculty for your hard work and dedication. I congratulate the class of 2006. Some of you are graduating with honors that involved much sacrifice and achievement. Others perhaps spent a little less time in the library. [*Laughter*] For all of you, I bring a message of great hope: There's life after English Comp. [*Laughter*] Someday, you'll appreciate what you've learned here; you're going to make your teachers proud. I know the professors who taught me English marvel at my way of words. [*Laughter*]

The last few months before graduation are busy ones. Amid all the excitement, there's one thing that probably eluded a few of you—you haven't had time to find a job. I speak for your parents when I say, now is the time to start looking. Some good news for you: The job market for college graduates is the best it's been in years. The economy of ours is strong, and so you'll have more jobs to choose from than previous classes, and your starting salaries will be higher. And the opportunities beyond are only limited by the size of your dreams.

You're privileged to live in the world's freest country at one of the most hopeful moments in human history. Soon you'll leave this university to take your place in our society. And as you do, you'll witness dramatic changes, and these changes will present you with opportunities and choices and great challenges.

Your generation will enjoy unimagined opportunities because of education. You know, when this university was founded in 1890, it was called the Oklahoma Territorial Agricultural and Mechanical College, one of the Nation's land-grant colleges. And the investment has paid off many times over. Some of the old-timers remember that after the Dust Bowl hit Oklahoma in the 1930s, this university responded by helping the farmers and ranchers with innovative soil conservation techniques. OSU is still committed to the land-grant mission of high-quality teaching and advanced research and outreach to the communities it serves. But the school has moved far beyond its original focus on agriculture, and Oklahoma State University is now a comprehensive public university with eight degree-granting colleges that offer more than 350 programs to more than 21,000 students.

This fine university has adapted, and to succeed in the 21st century, you're going to have to adapt as well. Your degree marks the successful end of your undergraduate education, and when you leave this university, you're going to enter a dynamic world and an economy that is constantly creating new opportunities that will require you to learn new skills. I urge you to rise to these challenges: Take charge of your future; be open to new ideas; be willing to take risks. Treat

the degree you receive today as the first step in a lifetime of learning, and your lives will be rich in purpose and reward.

Your generation will face unprecedented choices because of technology. When I was in college, we listened to music on 45 rpm records as opposed to the iPod. We used manual typewriters instead of the personal computer. When we made a mistake while writing a paper, we didn't have the luxury of spell check. As a matter of fact, we used something that maybe some of you have heard of—it was big and bulky—it's called a dictionary. [*Laughter*] Technology has helped improve almost every aspect of your life on campus—except maybe the cafeteria food. [*Laughter*]

Just as technology is making life better for college students, it's making all of us more productive. If you take a job in an office, the technology you use will make you more efficient than earlier generations. If you decide to open a small business, technology can help you lower your costs or reach more customers through the Internet. If you're a farmer or a rancher, technology gives you instant access to expert advice from specialists who may live thousands of miles away. By helping each of us do our jobs better, technology is improving life for all of us.

Some of the most exciting advances in technology you'll see will be in the field of energy. When I graduated from school, cars drank gasoline. Last month in California, I saw cars powered by hydrogen that use no gasoline and emit no pollution. Within your lifetime, advances in technology will make our air cleaner and our cars more efficient. The gasoline engine will seem as antiquated as the rotary phone and the black-and-white TV.

Technology holds promise for extending and improving our lives through dramatic breakthroughs in the field of medicine. In recent times, we've gone from x rays to MRIs, from eyeglasses to laser eye surgery, from major operations that would keep you in the hospital for weeks to miracle drugs that can prevent the need for the operation in the first place. In the decades ahead, you're going to witness incredible changes in health care that will even be more revolutionary.

These advances in technology will transform lives, and they will present you with profound dilemmas. Science offers the prospect of eventual cures for terrible diseases and temptations to manipulate life and violate human dignity. With the Internet, you can communicate instantly with someone halfway across the world and isolate yourself from your family and your neighbors. Your generation will have to resolve these dilemmas. My advice is, harness the promise of technology without becoming slaves to technology. My advice is, ensure that science serves the cause of humanity and not the other way around.

Your generation will confront the challenges of a world that is now at our doorsteps. When Oklahoma was settled in the late 19th century, this was America's frontier. Now the whole world is within your reach. You can e-mail friends in Central America, or you can fly nonstop across the Atlantic or Pacific, or you use your Bank of Oklahoma card and withdraw money from an ATM in Australia. At the same time, we're seeing the rise of new competitors like China and India, and this competition creates uncertainty. Some look at the changes taking place all around us, and they worry about the future. Their reaction is to wall America off from the world and to retreat into protectionism. This is a sure path to stagnation and decline. I ask you to reject this kind of pessimism.

We should welcome competition. We should welcome competition, because it makes our country stronger and more prosperous. Today, the citizens of Oklahoma export wheat to Mexico or pork to Japan or liquid pumps to Russia. For your generation, even more opportunities will come from overseas. Government must help, but it is up to you to take advantage of what you have learned here and meet the future with confidence in your ability to compete and succeed.

A country that shuts itself off from competition will be a country that isolates itself from the duties and opportunities of our world. One of the greatest opportunities of this young century is the advance of human freedom. The advance of liberty is the story of our time, and we're seeing new chapters written before our eyes. Freedom is taking

root in places where liberty was once unimaginable. Just 25 years ago, there were only 45 democracies on the face of the Earth. Today, there are 122 democracies, and more people now live in liberty than ever before. The advance of liberty gives us hope in the future because free societies are peaceful societies. As freedom spreads, the threat of tyranny and terror will recede, and the rise of democracy will bring peace to the world and security to the United States of America.

No, this changing world presents you with a lot of exciting opportunities. Yet a changing world also needs the anchor of old-fashioned values and virtues, like courage and compassion. These are the virtues that sustain our democracy and make self-government possible. These virtues are what we will need to build a more hopeful future. And these virtues are present in the Oklahoma State class of 2006.

We see these virtues in an extraordinary young woman named Melissa Unwin. Melissa has been studying in your College of Education. Back in 2001, she was diagnosed with cancer, and the doctors doubted she would ever finish college. If you know anything about educators, you know that when they tell you—when somebody tells them something is impossible, they're going to work harder to prove you wrong. And that's just what Melissa has done. The degree that Melissa has earned today is an example of courage in the face of adversity, and she represents a spirit necessary for your generation to succeed.

We see the spirit of compassion in the members of the class of 2006 who've stepped forward to serve their community. As part of your "Into the Streets" volunteer effort this past fall, one fraternity helped build a playground at the local homeless shelter. They probably realized it was better to help somebody else than go to the bar. [*Laughter*] Other members of your class traveled down the gulf coast after Hurricane Katrina to help clean up debris and deliver comfort and relief. They didn't have to do that, but they felt the calling to go help somebody in need.

I met seniors who have volunteered in a wide variety of ways, upon my landing—they build houses for the underprivileged and visit nursing homes and tutor fellow students. One of these volunteers says this about her service: "I feel I've been very fortunate, and any way I can help other people to have a house to live in, to have food on the table, or even a clean yard, means I'm making a difference."

We see the spirit of service in the members of the class of 2006 who've stepped forward to defend our freedom. In this graduating class, there are 27 new lieutenants who are receiving their Army and Air Force commissions along with their OSU degrees. They're carrying on the proud tradition of service in uniform exemplified by an OSU graduate named Luke James. After earning his commission at OSU in 2002, Luke had the world at his feet; he had a wife and infant son that he adored. Yet Luke had chosen a life of service, and in 2004, Second Lieutenant Luke James, graduate of OSU, was deployed to Iraq as a member of the Army's 82d Airborne. Shortly after arriving in that country, Luke was killed while leading his troops on patrol. He was awarded the Bronze Star. He's buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

On the anniversary of her son's death, Luke's mom went to visit her son's grave. And afterward, a young soldier came up to her and thanked her for the way she had raised her son. He said that Lieutenant James had saved his life. Luke's mom says this of her son's service: "All of Luke's life, he was very dedicated to the concept of freedom. While no soldier wants war, he understood the necessity of war, that it can ensure the freedoms we enjoy in America." Luke James is part of a generation who are every bit as selfless and dedicated to liberty as any that has ever come before. And the future of the United States of America is better because of the character of young Americans like Luke James.

In this time of technological change and global competition, ultimately the character of America will be determined by your willingness to serve a cause larger than yourselves. The day will come when you'll be asked: What have you done to build a better America than the one you found? I'm confident that you will answer the call to service. I'm confident that your lives will be more fulfilling and your country more hopeful.

And I'm confident that you'll look back and say, "Job well done."

Congratulations to you all. May God bless you, the class of 2006, and may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 a.m. in the Boone Picket Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to David J. Schmidly, president, Oklahoma State University; Gov. Brad Henry of Oklahoma; and Arleen James, mother of 2d Lt. Luke S. James, USA, who was killed in Iraq on January 27, 2004.

Interview With Sabine Christiansen of ARD German Television

May 4, 2006

President's Upcoming Visit to Germany

Ms. Christiansen. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for joining us. We feel very honored by this. Mrs. Merkel invited you to Germany, as we heard, this summer, just before the G–8 summit. And we feel very honored in Germany that you would come and visit us. And as I heard, you're going to visit for the first time the former GDR. Are you looking forward to that?

The President. Yes, I am. It was very kind of Chancellor Merkel—who I call Angela, by the way—to invite me to her residence. It's a gesture of friendship that I appreciate. And Laura and I are looking forward to it. And it will give me a chance to continue our dialog on important issues. I'll get to know her a little better, and she'll know me better. It will make the relationship be stronger over time. So I'm looking forward to it, and I really appreciate it.

German Chancellor Merkel

Ms. Christiansen. Your father helped to make German reunification possible. And Chancellor Merkel told me that you've shown a lot of interest in her life, in her former life in the former GDR. What was the point of interest for you?

The President. Well, last night we were sitting around in the private dining room upstairs here, and I thought it would be interesting for her to describe what it was like to grow up in a Communist world. Laura and I certainly don't know what that's like, nor did Condi Rice or Steve Hadley, the members of my team. And I thought it would be good for all of us to hear what it was like.

It was very interesting. She talked about—you know, her dad was a pastor, and she talked about the different pioneer clubs and the schools. It also gave me a chance to get a glimpse into her soul. As I said in the Oval Office yesterday, there's something really refreshing, to work with somebody who understands firsthand what it means to be free. And certainly Angela Merkel has gone from a society which was repressive to a society which is open and free. So I wanted to hear the history, her history, and I also wanted to get a better feel for what she's like and why she thinks the way she thinks.

Germany-U.S. Relations

Ms. Christiansen. That sounds more like a real transatlantic friendship than a partnership—well, with difficulties we had before.

The President. Well, listen, first of all I had a good relationship with Chancellor Schroeder. The problem was, of course, that there was a disagreement over a very difficult decision I had to make, and that was Iraq.

I fully understand why a government or a people would be, you know, I guess, disappointed in me in a way, and not understand why somebody would commit troops to achieve an objective. And I like to remind people that September the 11th, for us, was a change in our history, and it certainly changed the way I thought. And for others, it was just a moment in passing. So there was a disagreement.

On the other hand, U.S.-German relations were always important, and now we have a chance to turn a new chapter in our relationship, strengthen that alliance, strengthen that relationship, and work on matters that will make this world a better place.

So I'm thrilled with my relationship with Chancellor Merkel. She's a really interesting person. She is—first of all, I found her to be confident, not overconfident, but confident in her beliefs, and that's very important—for me, at least—to be dealing with someone who has got strength of character and confident in her capacity to work to make things better.

Iran

Ms. Christiansen. Now there is Iran on the agenda, and there you seem to be a team that plays together, in that. Are you confident after your meeting with Mrs. Merkel that the Europeans and others will support a resolution that might even open the door to sanctions?

The President. Look, first of all, the most important thing in achieving a diplomatic solution—and I want the German people to understand—I want this issue to be solved diplomatically, and I think it can be solved diplomatically. And that the first objective of trying to get different countries to come together in a diplomatic front is to agree that Iran—in this case, Iran—should not have a weapon. And we've agreed—Germany, France, the United States, certainly agree with that. But so does Russia; so does China. And that's a really important part of putting together a coalition of people saying with a universal voice, or unified voice, "no" to Iran.

Ms. Christiansen. Okay. At the——

The President. Well, that's right.

Secondly, we're working with our allies to—now that the Iranians, by the way, have basically said, "We don't care," what next? And "what next" is to go to the U.N. Security Council. And that's what we're working on now. And we're working on the language of the resolutions and the consequences. And as I told the press yesterday, it's best not to be describing the negotiations amongst ourselves on TV—simply because the Iranians will be listening to everything we say.

But the point is, is that we want a unified front. Iran must hear that the free world is unified in saying, "No weapon, no knowledge of how to build a weapon, no capacity to make a weapon." It's almost a matter of will at this point in time. In other words, they're watching to see whether or not our coalition will crack, whether or not they can create different factions within our coalition.

And as I've described to people here in this country, is that we must not crack. If we want to solve this diplomatically, there must be a common front with a common strategy to achieve the objective.

Diplomatic Negotiations With Iran

Ms. Christiansen. If this doesn't work with the U.N., you trying to find wide coalition that is going against Iran——

The President. Expand the coalition.

Ms. Christiansen. Exactly. Exactly.

The President. And they're not mutually exclusive. And first of all, I think we ought to assume it can work in the U.N. We want it to work in the U.N. Therefore, the strategy will be to see to it that it does work in the U.N. And that's why—you know, I talked to Putin, President Putin the other day, right before Angela came. And she talked to President Putin in Siberia, as you know. And a lot of our conversations obviously revolve around Iran, since this is the most dangerous threat to peace right now.

Ms. Christiansen. And sanctions?

The President. Possibility—absolutely.

Ms. Christiansen. But regarding Russia and China? That will be difficult——

The President. No. It may seem difficult at this point in time, but there's time. As I explained, again, to people in our country, we're at the beginning of the diplomatic process, not the end of the diplomatic process. I know—we live in a world where everything has to be solved instantly. I wish problems could be solved instantly, but that's not how the world works, particularly when you're dealing with a nontransparent regime.

See, they have an advantage—"they" being the Iranians. They don't have a press, like the German press and the United States press, that is constantly reporting. They don't have democracies that are holding leaders to account. They're nontransparent. So therefore, their negotiating position is much stronger than ours in many ways.

So we must double our efforts, constantly talking to each other, reminding each other about the need to stay unified, and that's what Angela and I spent a lot of time talking about yesterday.

U.S. Role in Diplomatic Negotiations With Iran

Ms. Christiansen. Why isn't Washington talking directly to the Iranians?

The President. Well, because it's much better to have a united front. In other words, we will achieve this diplomatically. If there's

more than one country involved—we are very much involved. Yesterday we were part of putting down a U.N. Security Council Resolution. The Iranians know we're involved. But what I don't want to have happen is this unified effort fall apart because everybody depends upon one country to solve the problem.

Ms. Christiansen. If all diplomatic efforts fail, what's worse at the end, a nuclear-armed Iran or an American military action?

The President. You're asking me the classic hypothetical question. I believe we can achieve this diplomatically. And that's what I want to do. I want to achieve this diplomatically, because it's—and it's necessary we do so. And an armed Iran will be a threat to peace. It will be a threat to peace in the Middle East; it will create a sense of blackmail; it will encourage other nations to feel like they need to have a nuclear weapon. And so it's essential that we succeed diplomatically.

Israel

Ms. Christiansen. Are you worried that Israel might not try to solve this diplomatically? Because Mr. Olmert already said, "We can defend ourselves."

The President. Well, if I were an Israeli, I'd be concerned about the combination of a President that said, "I want to wipe Israel off the map," and had a nuclear weapon. And so, obviously, Israel is a factor. It's a little country that will defend herself. Again, I keep repeating this, but that's why it's essential we continue to work together, like we're doing now, to convince the Iranians to give up their weapon.

They will be isolated. What they need to understand is that they're going to be isolated from the rest of the world, and that will harm their people, in my judgment. And it's a tough issue, and it's why I ran for office, to solve these problems.

Iraq

Ms. Christiansen. Let's go over to Iraq. Two German hostages who were held in Iraq for months, they just returned home safely, but Iraq remains a major terrorist base. Despite more than, I think, 130,000 U.S. soldiers there, are in the country, what do you say to the many Europeans who feel the Iraq war has made the world a less safer place?

The President. I would say that they need to look at the facts, that Saddam Hussein was a very dangerous person in the world. Saddam Hussein had used weapons of mass destruction. Obviously, we didn't find them like everybody thought we would, but we did know he had the capacity to make them. He had harbored terrorists. He had invaded his neighborhood. And the removal of Saddam Hussein was the right thing to do.

And now there's a new democracy developing. And the best way to defeat the terrorists in the long run is to defeat their ideology with an ideology based upon liberty. And one of the most amazing events in modern history took place in December of last year, when 12 million Iraqis went to the polls. It's just a—it's a joyous moment for them.

Now what's happened is, is there's a unified government formed. Obviously, it took a little longer than we wanted, but nevertheless they are together. There is a tough Shi'a as the Prime Minister-designate. There's a Sunni rejectionist who is now reconciled with the country. And what you'll see is a democracy that will grow to be an example for others and a country that will deny safe haven to the terrorists.

I disagree with the assessment that there are more terrorists in Iraq now. As a matter of fact, slowly but surely, we're defeating them. But what's important for people in Germany to listen to is what I listen to, which is the voices of an enemy. Zarqawi and Al Qaida has announced that it's just a matter of time for America and the coalition to leave so we can have our safe haven from which to plot and plan further attacks on America and free nations.

And the only way we can lose Iraq is if we lose our nerve, if we retreat, if we pull out before the job is done. And that's not going to happen so long as I'm the President.

Spread of Democracy

Ms. Christiansen. So the development in Iraq, in Palestine, hasn't made you stop halfway, let's say, in the democratization process——

The President. Oh, quite the contrary. I really believe it's necessary to promote democracy. One of the interesting examples in history is, democracies don't fight each other. And Europe today is whole, free, and at peace. You have your disagreements, but those disagreements are not determined on a battlefield anymore.

Japan was a country that my nation fought with, and today, one of my best friends in keeping the peace is the Prime Minister of Japan. What happened between World War II and today is, Japan took on a Japanese-style democracy. What's really interesting is, when you go back and look at some of the writings and musings of people after World War II, there was great criticism about trying to help the Japanese become a Japanese-style democracy: "We can't do that; they're the enemy." Well, today, the enemy is the friend. So I think all the more reason to promote democracy is the elections in Iraq.

I was not pleased that Hamas has refused to announce—its desire to destroy Israel. On the other hand, the elections did say to people in the Palestinian Territories, "We're sick and tired of corruption. We want leaders who don't steal from us. We want leaders who help us educate our children and provide health for our citizens."

And so elections can be good signals of what people are really thinking. I believe that there's still work after elections to be done, but there's no doubt that we've got to spread liberty and freedom if we're going to defeat this ideology that really says, "There should be no rights for women; there should be no religious freedom; and by the way, we'll carry out our foreign policy through acts of violence and murder."

Germany-U.S. Relations/Intelligence

Ms. Christiansen. We Germans seem to be more involved—have been more involved in the Iraq war than anybody else knew—involuntarily, I would like to say. Because the U.S. intelligence services used German airports for secret rendition flights, and interrogated, even, German citizens—hardly what you'd expect, I would say, from a friend and ally.

The President. Well, first of all, on intelligence matters, it's my policy not to talk about them; otherwise they're not intelligence matters anymore. And the questions you ask will be all—in some cases, analyzed through courts, in some cases through press inquiry. But Germany is a friend.

Ms. Christiansen. But the behavior itself? Is it behavior for an ally——

The President. Well, like, what are you talking about?

Ms. Christiansen. I mean, that you do this, that you don't ask for help for some of the ally, that you don't inform the ally and so on.

The President. On, like, what subject, for example?

Ms. Christiansen. Like these flights, for example.

The President. Well, again, you're asking me to talk about intelligence matters that I'm not going to talk about. And people can say whatever they want to say, but we work closely with Germany on all kinds of fronts in order to protect ourselves.

War on Terror

Ms. Christiansen. Then let me ask you about the image of the United States. Especially for us Germans after the war, the United States stood as the symbol of liberty, for democracy. And then we saw these—we saw Abu Ghraib; we saw Guantanamo; and these seemed, suddenly, to be signals that you're abandoning these values of democracy and liberty. And how do you want to repair them?

The President. Well, first of all, it's absurd to say America is abandoning our values. No question, Abu Ghraib was a disgrace for our country. But I think people ought to take a look at what happened afterwards—and those who are responsible for that disgraceful behavior have been held to account, have been tried, have been, in some cases, dismissed from our military.

We're at war with an enemy. And we've got to protect ourselves. And, obviously, the Guantanamo issue is a sensitive issue for people. I very much would like to end Guantanamo; I very much would like to get people to a court. And we're waiting for our Supreme Court to give us a decision as to whether the people need to have a fair trial in a civilian court or in a military court.

But in either case, they will get a trial, which they, themselves, were unwilling to give to the people that they're willing to kill—"they," the enemy.

And so it's—no, listen, our country is strong on human rights and civil rights. That's why we're leading the case in funding for HIV/AIDS in Africa. That's why we're trying to rally the Nation to do something about Darfur—the genocide in Darfur. That's why we provide food for the hungry. That's why we try to liberate people when we find them in the clutches of tyranny.

Ms. Christiansen. So you said you had to do more?

The President. Yes, we are doing a lot.

Iraq

Ms. Christiansen. I understand, like, $320 billion that the Iraq war cost—a lot of people are saying——

The President. It's worth it. It's worth it. I wouldn't have spent it if it wasn't worth it. Any time we put a troop in harm's way, they will get support. We're not going—I'm not going to ask a parent—I'm not going to be able to tell a parent, nor will I tell a parent, "Your son who volunteered, or your daughter who volunteered is not going to get the full support of the Federal Government." And so long as we've got people in harm's way, this Government is going to support them.

Dependence on Foreign Sources of Oil/ Gasoline

Ms. Christiansen. Let me ask you another question to the war on terrorism. How do you want, really, to fight terrorism when you are so dependent on Arabian oil?

The President. That's an interesting question. I've never thought of it that way. The first thing we ought to do is get off oil.

Ms. Christiansen. That's what you said.

The President. And I mean that. Yes, I know.

Ms. Christiansen. Do you mean that, really?

The President. Absolutely. Oil has become—it's an economic risk for us. I mean, after all, if the oil—if the demand for oil goes up in India or China, fast-growing economies, it affects the price of gasoline in the United States and in Germany. It's also a national security issue, obviously. Oil comes from unstable parts of the world, so I'm absolutely serious about getting off of oil.

Ms. Christiansen. Because we, in Europe, we asked this when we heard your speech, and we said oil is now——

The President. You don't believe old George W.?

Ms. Christiansen. Gasoline is now, let's say $70 a barrel. And we said if we look at the United States, your gasoline is still so—I mean, the prices are so low, and we are paying so much money. Why haven't you raise taxes, energy taxes or something, if you really mean it?

The President. Well, because the best way to do it is through technological change. You don't have to tax the working people. And, well, in order—what?

Ms. Christiansen. That's what we do. [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, we don't. We try not to. Listen, the price of gasoline just went up from $2.70 to $3 a gallon, which is about, I guess, 40 percent of what it costs in Germany. And people are screaming, because it's like a tax. And it affects low-income Americans.

And so the best way to solve the problem is to spend money on research and development and come up with alternative ways to drive our automobiles. And we're making interesting progress. We think we're close to a breakthrough, to have a battery in our vehicles that will enable an urban dweller to drive the first 40 miles without using gasoline. So it's that effect of reducing demand for gasoline that will ultimately help our consumers. Obviously, we're trying to do all we can to make sure that supplies of gasoline don't get interrupted in the short term, but in the long term, I can see cars being powered by hydrogen, for example.

Environment/Energy

Ms. Christiansen. Let me ask one more question to that climate topic. After Katrina and after a lot of new evidence of rapid climate change, are you now convinced that this is really a serious problem?

The President. No, I've always said greenhouse gases are a problem. There is an argument there as to whether or not they're naturally made or manmade. And my attitude is, let's just get beyond that argument and do something about it. I believe that we need more nuclear power. If you're really interested in solving greenhouse gas problems, nuclear power is one of the great renewable sources of energy. I know it's controversial.

Ms. Christiansen. Very interesting and controversy debate in Germany as well.

The President. And here in America. But if people are genuinely serious about solving greenhouse gas problems around the world, countries like the United States and India and China ought to be promoting civilian nuclear power.

There's other things we're doing. One, as I just told you, we've got to change our habits when we're driving our cars. One of the real promising areas besides battery research is ethanol research, you know; use corn to be able to fuel automobiles in the United States. Solar energy can work and is becoming more economically feasible. Wind energy is making a marginal difference in the United States but, nevertheless, a difference.

And so my—what I'm saying is, is that we're spending a lot—clean coal technology, for example, we're spending billions of dollars on clean coal technology to figure out how to have zero-emission coal-fired plants. And all this research is going to pay off. And the United States will be able to make sure our economy continues to grow and, at the same time, be good stewards of the environment.

The debate—let me just cut to the chase. I said I didn't support Kyoto—and all of a sudden, everybody said, "Well, George W. Bush doesn't care about clean air"—it's just rubbish. Of course I care about the quality of the air. As a matter of fact, the quality of the air has improved since I've been the President of the United States. But what I didn't want to do is wreck our economy, nor did I think it made sense to sign on to a treaty that didn't include countries like India and China. And so my attitude is, let's get beyond the debate and work in a cooperative fashion to share technologies, to share that which we're researching with each other, and have a new era of energy that is wise about how we treat the environment too.

Russia-U.S. Relations

Ms. Christiansen. I'm very mindful of our time, but I would like to have a look to the G–8 summit and Russia and about the Russian-American friendship as well. Perhaps another question. You had felt quite warm about President Putin, but there is rising criticism from the Vice President, for example, in the moment, and others, on a lack of democracy in Russia. Have you talked to Putin directly about this? And will you, perhaps, raise any obstacles regarding the G–8?

The President. Yes, of course, I've talked to him—a lot.

Ms. Christiansen. About this problem?

The President. Oh, absolutely. Yes, a lot.

Ms. Christiansen. What does he say?

The President. Well, first let me—let me share how I conduct my relations with people. I like Putin, but that doesn't mean I have to agree with some of the decisions he's made. I know this, that if I stand up and constantly criticize Putin publicly, he's not going to be interested in listening to what I have to say—and neither would I. When somebody feels like they can lecture to me publicly and doesn't do me the courtesy of coming to tell me what's on their mind, one-on-one, then I may not be interested in listening to them—if you know what I mean.

So I'm the kind of person that tries to establish a good personal relationship with somebody, and then we can sit down and talk, and I tell them what's on my mind, and they tell me what's on his. And I have expressed our Nation's concerns about—for example, when they shut down parts of the press corps. I said, "Vladimir, people are wondering why you're making the decision you're making. A free press is an indication of a healthy democracy." And he had an answer.

But, nevertheless, as you know, I'm a religious person, and I believe religious liberty is an important part of a society. And I've got friends in the Catholic Church who asked me to talk to him about Catholic bishops being allowed to move in the country and to practice their faith. And so I bring up all these issues with him.

But there's a difference in scolding somebody to try to gain editorial approval, and somebody who is in a position to be effective. I'd much rather be an effective person than a popular person; let me put it to you that way.

Family Values

Ms. Christiansen. As I said, we're very mindful of your time; it's been a great conversation. If you have 2 minutes—because I would like to have two questions, one on women and one on football. Do you agree to that?

The President. Okay, I will.

Ms. Christiansen. Very short ones. [*Laughter*] You seemed to get along very well Angela Merkel, a lot of women, strong women around you, here around the Oval Office. We're—have a big debate in Germany about women working and having children and the family. And your wife, for example, you seem to be a very good team in working together——

The President. Thank you.

Ms. Christiansen. And how do you strike this balance?

The President. Yes. First of all, I have been raised by an incredibly strong woman who I love, and that's my mother. And I'm married to an incredibly strong woman who I love, and that's my wife. I hope that Laura and I have raised two incredibly strong women who will have confidence to go out and explore life and to achieve. I don't think that encouraging my daughters to live life to its fullest means that they can't be good mothers at the same time. As a matter of fact, I think a good mother is somebody who is strong in her own right, confident, and independent.

And one of the things I do try to remind people is that the most important responsibility a person can have is to love their child with all their heart. That is by far the most important thing. I'll never forget—I'll give you one quick—we're fine on time. I'll tell you a quick anecdote. One of my dearest friends in political life is Karen Hughes. She was one of the most powerful women ever in the White House, simply because she had complete access to the President and I trusted her. At the same time, by the way, in an office down the hall was Condoleezza Rice, also a very strong woman who I am very fond of and very close to.

And Karen, one time, came in to see me, and she said, "Mr. President, I'm having trouble at home"—not that she—she wasn't having trouble with her husband or her son—but, "My son is unhappy." And my reaction instantly was, "Karen, do whatever is necessary to make your family happy. That's the most important thing." And so she left, and she went back to Texas, and I missed her dearly. But priorities matter in life, and people are able to set priorities and, at the same time, live life to the fullest.

And Karen is a good example. She got her son squared away; he's now at Stanford University. She's now back in Washington, working with Condi at the State Department. And my only advice is to, one, welcome women in society. I welcome them in the White House. My Presidency is more complete because some of my top advisers are very strong, capable women.

Angela Merkel is somebody who is a joy to deal with. She bring an interesting——

Ms. Christiansen. Why?

The President. Well, because she's got a straightforward manner about herself that is—when she says something, you know she means it. She is what she is. She's not a fake. And when I sit there talking to Angela, I'm not saying I'm talking to—I don't think gender; I think strength of character. I think reliability. I think clear-headed thinking. I think of a fellow strategist as to how to solve problems.

So, anyway, that's a long answer to a short question.

2006 World Cup

Ms. Christiansen. I think for the two of us, we don't have soccer expert teams sitting here together, but anyway, I think you're a baseball fan——

The President. I am a baseball fan—you're right.

Ms. Christiansen. You are. Do you think you've turned a little bit into a soccer fan? I mean, your team is doing so well at the moment and——

The President. That's what they tell me. I do know a little bit about the World Cup

because I read a very interesting article about the German coach—and evidently he's a dynamic—you know, he's spending some time in California. And the World Cup is such a huge event that I think most Americans like me, who weren't raised on soccer, are beginning to pay attention to it. Now, I know that sounds like heresy in Germany.

Ms. Christiansen. In Germany, yes. But think of just—I mean, that the American team could meet the Iranian team.

The President. Yes, could be.

Ms. Christiansen. What then?

The President. Well, I don't view it that way. I view it as, I hope the American team does well. But this is a big event for Germany, and Germany will be a great host for the games. And obviously, I hope the American team does well—they're supposedly a good team.

Ms. Christiansen. If they get world champion, you're coming for the final game?

The President. I don't know—do you think I possibly would be invited? I don't know.

Ms. Christiansen. We're very happy that you come over in July.

The President. I'm looking forward it, and I want to thank you for this good interview.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 1:21 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Chancellor Angela Merkel and former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister-designate Jawad al-Maliki, and Speaker of Parliament Mahmoud al-Mashhadani of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Jurgen Klinsmann, head coach, Germany's 2006 World Cup men's soccer team. The interviewer referred to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 7. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Kai Diekmann of Bild

May 5, 2006

The President. Have you ever been in the Oval Office before?

Mr. Diekmann. Once, a long time ago——

The President. I'll give you a quick tour before our interview. So, the first thing that a President does, which I didn't realize, was pick a rug. I've have no idea about rugs. And so in this job, you've got to delegate. The American President is in a position where there's just unbelievable complexities to the job—Darfur, Iran—a whole lot of issues. So I delegated the decision about the rug to my wife.

The second thing a President has got to do is have a strategic mind. In order to be successful, in my judgment, as the President, you've got to constantly think strategically. And so I said to her, "You pick out the colors; you be the tactical person; but I want it to say, 'optimistic person.' " That's all I wanted it to say. Here is the result. Isn't it beautiful?

Mr. Diekmann. Yes, it is very beautiful.

The President. There's a sense of optimism when you come in here. And there's a reason why. You cannot lead people unless you're optimistic about what you're doing. You've got to believe it in your very soul. One of the interesting things about the Presidency is, people watch me like a hawk. They're looking at my moves. And if I'm going to be wringing my hands and if I'm all worried about the decisions I make—are not going to lead to a better tomorrow, they'll figure it out.

And so when you talk to me today, I just want you to know, I not only strongly believe in the decisions I make, I'm optimistic that they're going to work—very optimistic.

These are all Texas paintings. That's west Texas; those are other Texas paintings. At least if you're a Texan, it reflects a way of life and a way of thinking. The interesting thing about Washington is that they want me to change—"they" being the—and I'm not changing, you know. You can't make decisions if you don't know who you are and you flip around with the politics. You've got to stay strong in what you believe and optimistic about that—you'll get good results.

And so—the other thing I want you to know about me is that no matter how pressurized it may seem, I'm not changing what I believe. Now, I may change tactics, but I'm not going to change my core beliefs—a belief

that freedom is universal or the belief that private markets work, a belief in ownership—when people own something, society is better off; a belief that there's a role for government, but it's limited in nature. And I'm not changing. I don't care whether they like me at the cocktail parties or not. I want to be able to leave this office with my integrity intact.

That's George Washington, the first President, of course. The interesting thing about him is that I read three—three or four books about him last year. Isn't that interesting? People say, "So what?" Well, here's the "so what." You never know what your history is going to be like until long after you're gone—if they're still analyzing the Presidency of George Washington—[*laughter*]. So Presidents shouldn't worry about the history. You just can't. You do what you think is right, and if you're thinking big enough, that history will eventually prove you right or wrong. But you won't know in the short term.

Lincoln—this is the place on the Oval Office wall where the President puts the most—the best President, and I put Lincoln here, and I don't think there's any question—now, people will have their—but I think he was the most influential President ever. And the reason why is because that in the midst of a difficult Presidency, needless to say—the Civil War, thousands of people dying, with Americans killing Americans—he had a vision of a United States. It's conceivable this country would have ended up being two countries had he not had a clear vision, even though all around him was seemingly falling apart. He was a great President.

That's called "A Charge to Keep," based upon a religious hymn. The hymn talks about serving God. The President's job is never to promote a religion. The great thing about America—and Germany, for that matter—is that you should be able to worship freely. I like to tell people, you're equally American whether you're a Jew, Muslim, Christian, or atheist—you're equally all Americans—and that if we ever lose that, we begin to look like the Taliban.

I understand, in parts of Europe, some scoff at my faith. It doesn't bother me. But I happen to believe, for me at least, faith is one way to make sure that my values stay intact and that I keep life in proper perspective, which is a very important part, in my judgment, of being a good decisionmaker.

Finally, the desk, where we'll have our picture taken in front of is—nine other Presidents used it. This was given to us by Queen Victoria in the 1870s, I think it was. President Roosevelt put the door in so people would not know he was in a wheelchair. John Kennedy put his head out the door.

Mr. Diekmann. Yes, the very famous picture——

The President. That's it—the most famous picture. And then Reagan, interestingly enough, put the bottom on there. He was a big guy; he didn't want to bump his knees under the desk.

Anyway, this is the Oval Office. It's a shrine to democracy. And we treat it that way. When people walk in here, they don't come in here in bathing suits and flip-flops. They come in here dressed like they'd come to a shrine. It is to be respected and honored because the Office of the President is bigger than the person who occupies it. It's one of the great things about a true democracy—is that the institutions outlast the individuals, and therefore, there's stability in the process.

Some Presidents forget that they're not bigger than the Office. But all Presidents must always honor the Office and remember it is a sacred trust to uphold the honor of the Presidency.

Mr. Diekmann. Thank you for taking the time.

The President. Yes, glad to do it.

Mr. Diekmann. Bild has 12 million readers. It's the largest newspaper in Germany. And there's one thing which is really special about our newspaper—every German who wants to work for the newspaper, he has to sign in his working contracts some beliefs—and there's the belief you have to be for reunification; you have to be against totalitarianism from riots on the right side and the left side; and you have to be for the peace and for the understanding with Israel. And since September 11th, we have a new belief—you have to be for partnership with America. Otherwise, you can't work for us, you can't come—you have to sign it in your contract.

The President. My kind of guy. [*Laughter*]

War on Terror

Mr. Diekmann. Okay, so I would like to start. Mr. President, the fifth anniversary of the terrible 9/11 attack is nearing. Has the Western world really learned the right lessons from 9/11?

The President. Yes. The Western world, by and large, understands that we face an enemy that is coldblooded and will kill innocent life to achieve an objective. That killing not only took place on September 11th here in our country, but it has taken place in other countries around the world since then.

Secondly, the governments of the Western world understand that in order to protect our respective peoples, there must be intelligence sharing. We must be willing to converse with each other in ways that might not have happened before. In other words, if we know something is going to happen in Germany, it's very important for the United States Government to call up its counterparts and to share that information. And there's a lot of that information sharing.

Thirdly, we understand that money is what fuels these terror cells, and the idea of sharing intelligence about the movement of money is necessary to make sure we protect our people.

The degree of understanding about September the 11th varies, however. For some people around the world, September the 11th was just a terrible moment. For me and a lot of other people in America, September the 11th was a change of attitude; it was a call to arms in the sense that this is the first—for America—the first battle of the war in the 21st century.

One of the things that I hope people come to understand is that there are two ways to defeat this enemy: One is to bring them to justice so they don't harm people, which means we've got to be constantly on the offense, finding them where they hide and bringing them to justice. And secondly, is that the way to defeat their hateful ideology is by the spread of liberty. That notion—some understand that, and some don't. But I want your readers to understand, I fully understand it—that liberty will yield peace that we all want.

And so part of our strategy is to work with countries, particularly in the Middle East, to encourage the spread of liberty and freedom. And we're making progress there.

Mr. Diekmann. But still we see bombs in Tel Aviv——

The President. Yes.

Mr. Diekmann. ——suicide bombers. And just a couple of days ago, even the U.S. Government delivered a warning that there could be attacks and strikes at the World Cup in Germany.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Diekmann. Do you really believe we have a chance to win the war against terrorism?

The President. Absolutely. I know this: that if we don't try to win the war on terrorism, the world will be a lot worse off; that if we believe these are just isolated incidents and people are maybe just temporarily angry, it is an attitude that will ultimately lead to more catastrophe, more danger.

This is an enemy which is—has clearly stated they have ambitions. They want to spread their ideology throughout—starting in the Middle East. They want to topple moderate government. They want to—they believe capitalists and democrats are soft—by democrats, I mean people living in democracies—are soft. They believe it's just a matter of time before the Western world tires. They have stated clearly they want weapons of mass destruction and that they want safe haven from which to launch their attacks. This is what the enemy has said. And I think those of us in positions of responsibility must take the words of the enemy very seriously.

They can be defeated, and they will be defeated—so long as we don't lose our nerve. And so the United States is committed to finding these folks where they hide, to bringing them to justice, which we're doing, and to—but recognizing that the world has changed from the world of the past because of the spread of liberty. Just look at Europe; it's whole, free, and at peace, because democracies live side by side in peace. That's one of the great lessons of the 20th century. And it's a lesson that must be applied to the 21st century.

And so, absolutely, we can win this war on terror. The victory in the war on terror won't come with a signing ceremony. The victory in the war on terror will come as the enemy becomes more and more marginalized. You cannot judge defeat or victory on whether or not a suicide bomber is able to pull off an attack. You can see progress in the war on terror as new democracies take hold around the world and deny—which denies an enemy a safe haven.

And one such democracy that's now evolving and getting stronger is Iraq. Another such new democracy is Afghanistan—50 million people who once lived under the thumb of a tyrant—or two tyrants now are free. And I strongly believe the world is better off for it, and I know that those two democracies are a major defeat for the terrorists.

Relations With the Muslim World

Mr. Diekmann. We have to learn in dealing with the Muslim world. Do we learn the right lessons? Do we have to deal in a different way with the Muslim world?

The President. There is a—there needs to be more understanding between the Muslim world and the Western world. There needs to be a better understanding of the true beliefs of their respective religions. We must understand, words mean things to different people. There's got to be a better way to communicate with ourselves. Sometimes my own messages send signals that I don't mean to send—but stirs up anxieties in the Muslim world.

On the other hand, I take great comfort in knowing that the true Muslim—Islam, itself, is a peaceful religion, and those who adhere to Islam are people that respect the rights of others. And there's common values in the great religions. And what we cannot allow happen is for these totalitarians, these Islamic extremists, to distort a great religion and define the nature of that religion.

And so there's a lot of work that needs to be done between America and the West and the Muslim world, but we can do that work without sacrificing the need to defend ourselves and without condemning people to tyranny.

Europe-U.S. Relations

Mr. Diekmann. How important is the partnership between the United States and Europe when it comes to the war on terror?

The President. The partnership between the United States and Europe is a vital partnership that transcends the war on terror. Part of our relationship is working together in the war on terror, but there are many other areas where we can and will continue to work together.

One such area is, obviously, trade. Europe and the United States benefit from free and fair trade. Another area is to help those who are afflicted with disease, like HIV/AIDS on the continent of Africa. Another is to deal with suffering that we see in the world. And hopefully, we'll be very strong in our determination to end the genocide in Darfur of Sudan.

But when the United States and Europe cooperate, we can achieve security for our people and enhance the prosperity for our people as well—as well as do our duty. See, I believe there's a duty to help ease the suffering in the world. I believe in the admonition that to whom much is given, much is required. And the United States—the people of the United States have been given a lot. We're a blessed nation—and same for the people of Europe. And we have a duty to work together to help relieve the suffering of those who are less fortunate.

Russia-U.S. Relations/Democracy in Russia

Mr. Diekmann. In this context, is Russia a reliable democratic partner?

The President. Russia is a country in transition. And if you really think about where our fathers, at our age, if they had been sitting around talking about Russia—maybe a little younger—they would have been talking about an enemy, the great Soviet Union. And by the way, that enemy at that point in time, bound the relationship between Germany and the United States—at least a part of Germany and the United States—very closely. It gave us a common front.

So Russia no longer is that enemy, and that's a major change. Secondly, Russia is a country that has made some signals that are mixed signals, signals that allow—cause us to

question their commitment to whether or not they intend to become a true democracy, where there's a freedom of the press or freedom of religion, all the different freedoms that are inherent in democracy.

I, personally, have a working relationship with Vladimir Putin, and that's very important. I've got a warm relationship with him. It's a relationship where I can sit down with him and ask him direct questions as to why he's made the decisions he's made. It's a relationship where he questions me about what the intentions of the United States may be. It's one that I value, and I think it's an important relationship not only for the United States to have, but it's an important relationship for countries in Europe, for the United States to have a relationship with Vladimir Putin.

One of our concerns is economic nationalism, to a certain extent, where he's using his oil companies to achieve what appears to be political objectives. And we make our concerns known when someone uses natural gas, for example, to effect—to send signals to government. As you might recall, Secretary Rice was in Europe, and she spoke out loudly about the gas contracts with Ukraine. And the reason she did that is, it's—we have a duty to express our concerns, but in such a way that the relationship is one that—where, at my level, I'm able to be comfortable in discussing concerns with Vladimir Putin.

We've got commonality when it comes to dealing with proliferation. It's very important that the United States and Russia work closely to make sure that nuclear materials are stored as safely as possible. We've got commonality when it comes to fighting the war on terror. And we've now got a new, important issue to work together on, as well as working together with Germany and others, and that's Iran.

Germany's Role in the War on Terror

Mr. Diekmann. What role must Germany play in the war on terror?

The President. Germany plays a vital role in the war on terror. Germany is in the heart of Europe. Germany is—whether it's this current administration or the previous administration, we have had a—amongst our intelligence services as well as our law enforcement services—a close coordination and a close discussion. Germany's will is important. When the German Chancellor stands up and says, "The war on terror must be won," or—"is a vital part of the security of our peoples," people around the world listen. Germany plays a very important role.

Iraq

Mr. Diekmann. Taking a look at the past, do the Americans feel that the Germans abandoned them when they went to war with Saddam Hussein?

The President. I've come to realize that the nature of the German people are such that war is very abhorrent, that Germany is a country now that is—no matter where they sit on the political spectrum, Germans are—just don't like war. And I can understand that. There's a generation of people who had their lives torn about because of a terrible war.

I felt like—I made the decision I made based upon my full understanding that threats must be dealt with before they come to fruition. And I fully understood during that period of time, not everybody would agree with me. And so we put together a significant coalition and followed through on a difficult decision.

The point now is not what went on in the past; the point now is, how do we work together to achieve important goals? And one such goal is a democracy in Germany [Iraq] *. And I appreciate the German Government's—previous Government's support and this Government's support of helping the Iraqis rebuild their lives. Training missions are important. Debt relief was important. Gerhard Schroeder relieved the debt on Iraq. And all those gestures are very important gestures that say that even though people disagreed with the decision to go into Iraq, we now agree that it's important that a democracy in Iraq succeed. And that's how I view the relationship.

Democracy in Iraq

Mr. Diekmann. The dictator is on trial now, but at the same time, the violence in

* White House correction.

Iraq is getting worse. Is it really a victory? Is the war against Iraq really a success?

The President. Oh, yes, it's going to be a success, absolutely. When 12 million people go to the polls—listen, these people lived under a brutal tyrant. People seem to forget, quickly forget, the nature of Saddam Hussein. This is a man who had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. He had invaded his neighbors—Kuwait. He was shooting at U.S. aircraft. He was violating sanctions. He had—as we now know, he had been using the Oil-For-Food Programme to enhance his own standing inside the country. We didn't find the weapons of mass destruction that everybody thought he had, but we do know he still had the capacity of making weapons of mass destruction. He had ties to terrorist groups.

Removing Saddam Hussein has made the world a safer place. We found—particularly for Iraqis. We found graves stuffed full of Iraqi men, women, and children. This guy was a brutal, brutal tyrant.

But it is hard work to go from a tyranny to a country based upon liberty. We've been there 3 years. And I think if you look at the history of—in post-World War II, it took a long period of time to recover. And yet we live in a world where there's supposed to be instant success. And my work and the work of those of us in Iraq require patience, and the need is to give the Iraqi people a chance. And they haven't let us down.

Just think about what happened in December: 12 million people voted. That's a lot of people going to the polls in the face of intimidation and threats. These are people that had no chance to express themselves at a ballot box during Saddam Hussein—in free elections. And yet when given a chance, they went to the polls. And now what you're seeing is the formation of a unity government. You've got Shi'a, Sunni, and Kurds, all committed to a unity government; all willing to fight off the terrorists, to get rid of the militias, and to form a government that the Iraqi people can be proud of.

And no question, there's still Al Qaida, which has said they want Iraq as a base from which to attack, willing to recruit suicide bombers. Those are hard to stop. But slowly but surely, the Iraqis, with American help, are reconciling their differences politically, are marginalizing those who are still loyal to Saddam, and are bringing the Al Qaida and the foreign fighters to justice.

Iran

Mr. Diekmann. But Iraq—it's still a long journey to peace, and now there's a new threat. You already mentioned it; that is Iran.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Diekmann. Iran is on the way to a nuclear program. How are we going to prevent them from making true what they threaten us, for example, in destroying Israel?

The President. You know, it's interesting, the world in which we live is one that requires great confidence in our values and strength of purpose. And we are challenged with the Iranian issue. And I want your readers to know that it is my desire and my belief we can solve this diplomatically. And the best way to solve this issue diplomatically is for there to be common purpose amongst the nations of the world.

Any diplomatic solution requires agreement on the goal. And there is solid agreement that the Iranians should not have a nuclear weapon or the knowledge and capacity how to make a nuclear weapon. That agreement—when I say that's the agreement, it's the agreement amongst Germany, France, Great Britain, the United States, Russia, China, and a lot of other nations. We all agree. And that's the most important step. If we didn't agree on the goal, it would be impossible to put together a coalition, a group of nations anxious to say to the Iranians with one voice, "You're not going to have a weapon."

The way forward diplomatically, because of the intransigence of the Iranian Government, is to go into the United Nations Security Council. And that's where we're headed, and we are working closely with our counterparts to develop the tactics to move forward once in the United Nations Security Council. Our message there is, the Iranians have defied the world, and you're now isolated, and it's your choice to make. They must make the choice to give up their weapons.

People have said to me, "Well, why aren't you at the negotiating table?" We are at the

negotiating table—in this sense: We're with our partners on a regular basis. I think about this issue a lot. I talk to respective leaders a lot; the United States laid down the Security Council resolution, along with others. I speak to Angela Merkel quite frequently on this subject. It is the number one item on our agenda when it comes to international coalitions. And the thing that we've got to do is be effective. And what the Iranians are looking forward is weakness among our group. They want to see how firm we are. So one of my jobs is to keep people firm in our resolve. And it's easy, by the way, with your Chancellor. She is firm in her resolve.

Threat of Terror/Iran

Mr. Diekmann. The German Chancellor and the new head of state, Olmert of Israel, they said the Iranian President is as dangerous as Adolf Hitler. Do you share their view?

The President. I think that it's very important for us to take his words very seriously. When people speak, it is important that we listen carefully to what they say and take them seriously. For example, when Al Qaida speaks, I take their words seriously. When bin Laden says, "We'll bring harm to the West," I take them seriously. When Zarqawi says, "It's just a matter of time for the U.S. to get out of Iraq so we can have safe haven," I take him seriously. Zawahiri, the number two man in Al Qaida, he's constantly speaking about their grand designs to spread their ideology.

And when Ahmadinejad speaks, we need to take it seriously. And when he says he wants to destroy Israel, the world needs to take that very seriously. It's a serious threat. It's a threat to an ally of the United States and Germany. But what he's also saying is, if he's willing to destroy one country, he'd be willing to destroy other countries. And therefore, this is a threat that has got to be dealt with in a way that—where the world—this is an important moment for the world to come together and deal with this in a way that's diplomatic, so that the next person who thinks or the next country that thinks they can threaten will understand that there is an effective response.

Mr. Diekmann. Do you rule out, as a last resort, a military intervention against Iran?

The President. As you know, I have said this on German soil; I've said it on U.S. soil, that my first choice is to solve this diplomatically. I think we can, but all options are on the table.

President's Relationship With Foreign Leaders

Mr. Diekmann. Mr. President, it seems that since Chancellor Angela Merkel took office, the ice age between Washington and Berlin is over. Are good personal ties really so important for the relationship between America and Germany?

The President. I've always felt like it's important to establish personal ties with my counterpart. And the reason why is, is that the role of a President is to be a strategic thinker as well as to be able to understand the tactics necessary to achieve the strategic objectives. And in order to be able to work strategically with my counterparts, I've got to have a personal relationship with them. I've got to be in a position such that when they speak, I listen, and when I speak, they listen, so they know that there is a compatibility to the point where we're comfortable sharing ideas as we try to work together to solve problems.

And this world is full of problems. You're in the Oval Office during this interview—there are—Sudan, North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Israel-Palestine—I mean, that's just to name a few of the problems that come to this desk that I deal with on a regular basis. In order for us to be effective, I've got to have a personal relationship with other leaders so that we can work together to achieve common objectives.

Germany/Leadership

Mr. Diekmann. During a state visit in 1989, your father described Germany as "partner leadership."

The President. Yes.

Mr. Diekmann. Does this statement still apply today?

The President. Absolutely. Absolutely. And it's manifesting itself on the Iranian issue. Chancellor Merkel has been strong. It's very important for the Iranians to know

that there is a Germany committed to working with others to send the strong message to the Iranians that their nuclear ambitions, their nuclear weapons ambitions, will cause them isolation in the world in which we live.

President's Upcoming Visit to Germany

Mr. Diekmann. You will visit Germany in July. What would you—did Angela Merkel ask what you would like to see in Germany?

The President. It's really interesting. She felt like it was important for me to go to East Germany—old East Germany. There is no East Germany now—the old East Germany. And, one, I appreciated that a lot. You know, we're all products of how we are raised and, in many ways, where we were raised. If people want to get to know me better, they've got to know my parents and the values my parents instilled in me and the fact that I was raised in west Texas, in the middle of the desert, a long way away from anywhere, hardly. There's a certain set of values you learn in that experience.

I was very intrigued by dealing with a very strong woman who had been raised in a Communist country and what it meant—what it meant. I spent some time with her upstairs in the private dining quarters here in the White House complex, listening to her. I asked her what it was like to grow up as a child. And the interesting thing—she first described her mother and father, which said a lot to me about the kind of person she is. I thought that was really insightful. She talked about her dad, the pastor, and her mom. She talked about going to school in a Communist system. And she told me she wanted me to come to her home, which, in my part of the world, at least where I'm from, inviting somebody to your home is a gesture of generosity. It's hospitality that is very gracious.

And so I'm really looking forward to going. I'll let her plan my itinerary once I get there. And it's going to be a very fascinating moment for me. And I thank her very much for her invitation.

President's Views on Germany

Mr. Diekmann. Are there things that bother you about the Germans? And are there things that you envy about the Germans?

The President. I am—look, I mean, Germans have always been incredibly efficient, capable businesspeople, and when they make a product, it is always of the highest of quality. The only thing that interests me about Germany is—it's not bothersome, but it's just a challenge for Germany—is the absorption of East and West, and the difficult assignment it is to really help the eastern Germany develop an economy that will be able to give people hope. But, again, I have great respect for Germany.

Trade With Germany

Mr. Diekmann. What kind of role does Germany play in the world?

The President. Germany is vital for the European Union's vitality. And Germany—and that's important for the United States. Listen, we want our trading partners to be strong. If you—if we have trade between one another, it really helps when there's economic vitality with your partner. You want your partner doing well. Trade is not a zero-sum game. Trade is an opportunity for a mutually beneficial relationship. And therefore, we want the European Union's economy as a whole to be doing well. And Germany has a great—when Germany's economy is vibrant, it has a chance to really help all the countries around her to grow well.

National Economy

Mr. Diekmann. The U.S. economy is booming.

The President. Yes, it is, thankfully.

Mr. Diekmann. Yes, it is booming because you made big tax cuts.

The President. True.

Mr. Diekmann. What do you think about the Germans—are you—they acting correctly if they increase taxes now?

The President. We have—our economy is booming for several reasons. One is, no question the tax cuts help, and I intend to keep our taxes low. Secondly, our work rules are very flexible, and so is our economy.

We've got some issues that put us at a competitive disadvantage, and one is, we've got too many lawsuits. And we're trying to do something about that. I am smart enough,

however, to allow each country to make its own fiscal decisions as suits the needs of their constituents and the people.

Pope Benedict XVI

Mr. Diekmann. You are a practicing Christian. Does having a German Pope 60 years after World War II have a special meaning to you?

The President. You know, it's interesting that the last two Holy Fathers were from the same neighborhood. The Holy Father who just passed away, who was a great man, came from Poland and really helped rally the spirits of the people to challenge the tyranny of communism. And the current Holy Father came from a country torn asunder by war and is witness to a renewal of a united Germany. And I think it helps the world to have that perspective in a very important position of leadership. I admire the two Popes. These are strong, capable men who challenge the concept of moral relevancy.

The Presidency

Mr. Diekmann. Three last very short questions. What was the most wonderful moment in your terms of being President so far, and what was the most awful moment?

The President. The most awful moment was September the 11th, 2001.

Mr. Diekmann. The famous picture, when somebody gave you the information?

The President. Yes, that. I think, like all of us, it took a while for the—it was more than a moment. It was the event and the aftermath. On a situation like that, it takes a period to understand exactly what was going on. When somebody says, "America is under attack," and—you've got to fully understand what that meant. And the information coming was haphazard at best for a while. We weren't sure if the State Department got hit. I'd heard the White House had got attacked. Of course, I was worried that—my family was here.

And so I would say the toughest moment of all was after the whole reality sunk in, and I was trying to help the Nation understand what was going on, and at the same time, be empathetic for those who had lost lives.

The best moment was—you know, I've had a lot of great moments. I don't know, it's hard to characterize the great moments. They've all been busy moments, by the way. I would say the best moment was when I caught a 7½ pound largemouth bass on my lake. [*Laughter*]

2006 World Cup

Mr. Diekmann. Perfect. Very last question—you're a great sports fan.

The President. Yes, I am.

Mr. Diekmann. How important is the international World Cup in Germany? And what is your personal take on who will be at the end, the world champion?

The President. Listen, the World Cup is a—first of all, most Americans, up until recently, didn't understand how big the World Cup is. And we're beginning to understand. And the reason why is, a lot of us grew up not knowing anything about soccer, like me. I never saw soccer as a young boy. We didn't play it where I was from. It just didn't exist. I can't even—I'm thinking about all the—between age 6, when I can remember sports, and 12 or 13, I just never saw soccer being played.

And so there's a generation of us that really weren't fanatic. There's a new generation of Americans that did grow up on soccer. And there's obviously a huge interest amongst that crowd in the World Cup. And some of us older guys are now beginning to understand the significance of the World Cup around the world. It is the major sporting event worldwide, and it's got to be a great honor for Germany to host the event. And I'm confident that the German people will do a magnificent job of welcoming people from around the world.

And, of course, my team is the U.S. team. They tell me we've got a good team. Now, whether it's good enough to win it all, who knows? But I know they'll try their hardest.

Mr. Diekmann. Mr. President, thank you very much.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 1:55 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; senior Al

Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran. The interviewer referred to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 7. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Memorandum on Assignment of Functions Relating to Import Restrictions on Iraqi Antiquities

May 5, 2006

Memorandum for the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Homeland Security

Subject: Assignment of Functions Relating to Import Restrictions on Iraqi Antiquities

Pursuant to the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, including section 301 of title 3, United States Code, the functions of the President under section 3002 of the Emergency Protection for Iraqi Cultural Antiquities Act of 2004 (title III of Public Law 108–429) are assigned to the Secretary of State. In the performance of such functions, the Secretary of State shall consult the Secretary of Homeland Security and the heads of other departments and agencies, as appropriate.

The Secretary of State is authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 8.

Memorandum on Certain Programs To Build the Capacity of Foreign Military Forces and Related Reporting Requirements

May 5, 2006

Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget

Subject: Certain Programs to Build the Capacity of Foreign Military Forces and Related Reporting Requirements

Pursuant to the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, including section 301 of title 3, United States Code and section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006 (Public Law 109–163), I direct the Secretary of Defense to conduct or support, within available appropriations, programs that comply with section 1206 for the following countries: Algeria, the Bahamas, Cameroon, Chad, Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Indonesia, Jamaica, Lebanon, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tunisia, and Yemen.

The function of the President under subsection (f) of section 1206 is assigned to the Secretary of State. In performing such function, the Secretary of State should consult with the Secretary of Defense and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

The Secretary of State is authorized and directed to transmit, on my behalf, a copy of this memorandum to the Congress and to publish it in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 8.

Remarks Announcing the Nomination of General Michael V. Hayden as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency

May 8, 2006

The President. Good morning. Today I'm pleased to nominate General Mike Hayden as the next Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Mike Hayden is supremely qualified for this position. I've come to know him well as our Nation's first Deputy Director of National Intelligence. In that position, he's worked closely with our Director of National Intelligence, John Negroponte, to reform America's intelligence capabilities to meet the threats of a new century.

Mike has more than 20 years of experience in the intelligence field. He served for 6 years as Director of the National Security Agency and thus brings vast experience leading a major intelligence agency to his new assignment. He also served as Commander of the Air Intelligence Agency, as Director of the

Joint Command and Control Warfare Center, and as Deputy Chief of Staff of the United States and U.N. Forces in Korea.

He's held senior positions at the Pentagon, the U.S. European Command, the National Security Council, and served behind the Iron Curtain in our Embassy in Bulgaria during the cold war.

Mike knows our intelligence community from the ground up. He has been both a provider and a consumer of intelligence. He's overseen the development of both human and technological intelligence. He has demonstrated an ability to adapt our intelligence services to the new challenges of the war on terror. He's the right man to lead the CIA at this critical moment in our Nation's history.

It's my honor to welcome Mike's wife, Jeanine, and their family to the Oval Office. I want to thank them for their willingness to support Mike Hayden in his long service to the United States.

With the agreement of the Senate, Mike will succeed a great patriot in Director Porter Goss. Under Porter's leadership, the CIA launched a 5-year plan to strengthen the Agency's human intelligence capabilities. This plan involves increasing the number of operatives and sources in the field and building up the Agency's analytical capabilities, so the hard-working men and women of the CIA have the resources they need to penetrate closed societies and secretive organizations.

Porter also played a vital role in shaping the new relationship between the CIA and the new Director of National Intelligence. And this process benefited greatly from the decades-long friendship between him and Director Negroponte.

Porter took on a critical job at a critical moment in our Nation's history. He instilled a sense of professionalism in the CIA and maintained the high standards of this vital agency at a time of transition and transformation. Throughout his public life, Porter Goss has been a man of accomplishment and integrity, and America appreciates his service.

I'm confident that Mike Hayden will continue the reforms that Porter has put in place and provide outstanding leadership to meet the challenges and threats of a dangerous new century. Mike Hayden was unanimously confirmed by the Senate last year for his current post, and I call on the Senate to confirm him promptly as the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The work of the CIA has never been more important to the security of the American people. America faces determined enemies who struck our Nation on September the 11th, 2001, and who intend to attack our country again. To stop them we must have the best possible intelligence. The men and women of the CIA are working around the clock and around the world in dangerous conditions to gain information that is vital to securing our Nation. I appreciate their dedicated service, and so does Mike Hayden.

In Mike Hayden, the men and women of the CIA will have a strong leader who will support them. He will ensure they have the resources they need to do their jobs. He will enforce the secrecy and accountability that are critical to the security of the American people.

Mike, I appreciate your many years of service to our country. We're grateful that you've agreed to step forward and serve once again. Thank you very much.

[*At this point, Director-designate Hayden made brief remarks.*]

The President. Congratulations, Mike. Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:31 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Director-designate Hayden.

Remarks on a Peace Agreement in Sudan

May 8, 2006

I want to thank the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, for joining me, and I also want to thank Deputy Secretary of State Bob Zoellick. He has just briefed me on his trip

to Abuja, where he has played a very important role in setting up a peace agreement between the Government of Sudan and a major rebel group in the Darfur region.

Congratulations on a job well done, Bob. Thank you.

Last week, we saw the beginnings of hope for the people of Darfur. The Government of Sudan and the largest rebel group signed an agreement and took a step toward peace. Many people worked hard for this achievement. I'm particularly grateful for the leadership of President Obasanjo of Nigeria and President Sassou-Nguesso of Congo. Deputy Secretary Zoellick told me of their really fine work, and I had the honor of calling both of them to thank them over the phone the other day. Their personal hands-on involvement was vital.

We're still far away from our ultimate goal, which is the return of millions of displaced people to their homes so they can have a life without fear. But we can now see a way forward.

Sudan is one of the most diverse nations in Africa and one of the most troubled countries in the world. A 22-year-old civil war between north and south took more than 2 million lives before a peace agreement was made that the United States helped to broker. About the same time, another conflict was raging in the west, and that's in Sudan's vast Darfur region.

Darfur rebel groups had attacked Government outposts. To fight that rebellion, Sudan's regime armed and unleashed a horse-mounted militia called the Janjaweed, which targeted not only rebels but the tribes thought to be supporting them. The Janjaweed murdered men, and they raped women, and they beat children to death. They burned homes and farms and poisoned wells. They stole land to graze their own herds. Hundreds of villages were destroyed, leaving a burnt and barren landscape.

About 200,000 people have died from conflict, famine, and disease. And more than 2 million were forced into camps inside and outside their country, unable to plant crops or rebuild their villages. I've called this massive violence an act of genocide, because no other word captures the extent of this tragedy.

A cease-fire was declared in this conflict in April 2004, but it has been routinely violated by all sides. The Janjaweed continued to attack the camps and rape women who ventured outside the fences for food and firewood. The Government took no effective action to disarm the militias, and the rebels sometimes attacked food convoys and aid workers.

An African Union force of about 7,200 from the region has done all it can to keep order, but they're patrolling an area nearly the size of Texas, and they have reached the limits of their capabilities. With the peace agreement signed on Friday, Darfur has a chance to begin anew. Sudan's Government has promised to disarm the Janjaweed by mid-October and punish all those who violate the cease-fire. The main rebel group has agreed to withdraw into specified areas. Its forces will eventually be disarmed as well, and some of its units will be integrated into the national army and police.

The African Union will meet a week from today, urge its members to help implement this new agreement.

Our goal in Darfur is this: We want civilians to return safely to their villages and rebuild their lives. That work has begun and completing it will require even greater effort by many nations. First, America and other nations must act to prevent a humanitarian emergency and then help rebuild that country. America is the leading provider of humanitarian aid, and this year alone, we account for more than 85 percent of the food distributed by the World Food Programme in Sudan.

But the situation remains dire. The World Food Programme has issued an appeal for funds necessary to feed 6 million people over the next several months. The United States has met our commitment, but other major donors have not come through. As a result, this month, the World Food Programme was forced to cut rations by half.

So I proposed in the emergency supplemental before Congress to increase food aid to Sudan by another $225 million. I hope Congress will act swiftly on this true emergency. To get food to Darfur quickly, I've directed USAID to ship emergency food

stockpiles. I've directed five ships and ordered them to be loaded with food and proceed immediately to Port Sudan. I've ordered the emergency purchase of another 40,000 metric tons of food for rapid shipment to Sudan. These actions will allow the World Food Programme to restore full food rations to the people of Darfur this summer.

Americans who wish to contribute money to help deliver relief to the people of Darfur can find information about how to do so by going to the USAID web site at www.usaid.gov and clicking on the section marked "Helping the Sudanese People."

Moving forward, we cannot keep people healthy and fed without other countries standing up and doing their part as well. The European Union and nations like Canada, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Japan have taken leadership on other humanitarian issues, and the people of Darfur urgently need more of their help now.

In addition, the Government of Sudan must allow all U.N. agencies to do their work without hindrance. They should remove the visa and travel restrictions that complicate relief efforts. And all sides must cease attacks on relief workers.

And finally, the United States will be an active participant in the Dutch-led reconstruction and development conference. And it's an important conference. It will take place within the next couple of months, to help the people get back on their feet so they can live normal lives in Darfur.

Second, America and other nations must work quickly to increase security on the ground in Darfur. In the short term, the African Union forces in Darfur need better capabilities. So America is working with our NATO allies to get those forces immediate assistance in the form of planning, logistics, intelligence support, and other help. And I urge members of the alliance to contribute to this effort.

In the longer term, the African Union troops must be the core of a larger military force that is more mobile and more capable, which generates better intelligence and is given a clear mandate to protect the civilians from harm. So I'm dispatching Secretary Rice to address the U.N. Security Council tomorrow. She's going to request a resolution that will accelerate the deployment of U.N. peacekeepers into Darfur. We're now working with the U.N. to identify countries that contribute those troops so the peacekeeping effort will be robust.

I've called on President—I just called President Bashir of Sudan, both to commend him on his work for this agreement and to urge the Government to express clear support for a U.N. force. The vulnerable people of Darfur deserve more than sympathy; they deserve the active protection that U.N. peacekeepers can provide.

In recent weeks, we've seen drastically different responses to the suffering in Darfur. In a recent audio tape, Usama bin Laden attacked American efforts in Sudan and urged his followers to kill international peacekeepers in Darfur. Once again, the terrorists are attempting to exploit the misery of fellow Muslims and encourage more death. Once again, America and other responsible nations are fighting misery and helping a desperate region come back to life. And once again, the contrast could not be more clear.

In late 2004 in Darfur, the Janjaweed attacked a village of a woman named Zahara. They raped her, murdered her husband, and set fire to their home. One of the attackers told her, "This year there's no god except us. We are your god now." But you and I know that at all times, in all places, there is a just God who sides with the suffering and calls us to do the same. America will not turn away from this tragedy. We will call genocide by its rightful name, and we will stand up for the innocent until the peace of Darfur is secured.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:43 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization.

Statement on Medical Liability Reform Legislation

May 8, 2006

I am disappointed that the Senate has yet again failed to pass real medical liability reform legislation. Unwilling to take on their trial lawyer supporters, the Democrats led

this effort to block these much-needed reforms.

Junk lawsuits are driving too many good doctors out of medicine. Women in nearly 1,500 counties are without a single ob-gyn, and frivolous and abusive lawsuits are encouraging the use of defensive medicine, which imposes substantial and unnecessary costs on all Americans.

This is a national problem that deserves a national solution. I have called on Congress to pass responsible medical liability reforms, and the House of Representatives has acted. It is time for the Senate to put the needs of the American people ahead of the interests of trial lawyers and pass meaningful medical liability reform legislation.

Notice—Continuation of the National Emergency Blocking Property of Certain Persons and Prohibiting the Export of Certain Goods to Syria

May 8, 2006

On May 11, 2004, pursuant to my authority under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701–1706) and the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003 (Public Law 108–175), I issued Executive Order 13338 in which I declared a national emergency authorizing the blocking of property of certain persons and prohibiting the exportation or reexportation of certain goods to Syria. On April 25, 2006, I issued Executive Order 13399 to expand the scope of this national emergency. I took these actions to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States constituted by the actions of the Government of Syria in supporting terrorism, interfering in Lebanon, pursuing weapons of mass destruction and missile programs, and undermining United States and international efforts with respect to the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq.

Because the actions and policies of the Government of Syria continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States, the national emergency declared on May 11, 2004, and the measures adopted on that date to deal with that emergency, must continue in effect beyond May 11, 2006. Therefore, in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency authorizing the blocking of property of certain persons and prohibiting the exportation or reexportation of certain goods to Syria.

This notice shall be published in the *Federal Register* and transmitted to the Congress.

George W. Bush

The White House,
May 8, 2006.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:49 a.m., May 9, 2006]

NOTE: This notice was published in the *Federal Register* on May 10.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency Blocking Property of Certain Persons and Prohibiting the Export of Certain Goods to Syria

May 8, 2006

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice, stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13338 of May 11, 2004, and expanded in scope in Executive Order 13399 of April 25, 2006, authorizing the blocking of property of certain persons and prohibiting the exportation and reexportation of certain goods to Syria, is to continue in effect beyond May 11, 2006. The most recent notice continuing this emergency was published in the

Federal Register on May 10, 2005 (70 *FR* 24697).

The actions of the Government of Syria in supporting terrorism, interfering in Lebanon, pursuing weapons of mass destruction and missile programs, and undermining United States and international efforts with respect to the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq, pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue in effect the national emergency authorizing the blocking of property of certain persons and prohibiting the exportation and reexportation of certain goods to Syria and to maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat.

George W. Bush

The White House,
May 8, 2006.

Memorandum on Assignment of Function Relating to Granting of Authority for Issuance of Certain Directives

May 5, 2006

Memorandum for the Director of National Intelligence

Subject: Assignment of Function Relating to Granting of Authority for Issuance of Certain Directives

By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, including section 301 of title 3, United States Code, I hereby assign to you the function of the President under section 13(b)(3)(A) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (15 U.S.C. 78m(b)(3)(A)). In performing such function, you should consult the heads of departments and agencies, as appropriate.

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

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:04 a.m., May 11, 2006]

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 9, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on May 12.

Memorandum on Assignment of Function Concerning Assistance to Afghanistan

May 8, 2006

Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, and the Director of National Intelligence

Subject: Assignment of Function Concerning Assistance to Afghanistan

By 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, the function of the President under the heading "Economic Support Fund" in the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2006 (Public Law 109–102) that relates to waiver of a proviso is assigned to the Secretary of State. The Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy and the Director of National Intelligence shall, consistent with applicable law, provide the Secretary of State with such information as may be necessary to assist the Secretary in the performance of such function.

The Secretary of State is authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 9. An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum.

Remarks to Reporters in Coconut Creek, Florida

May 9, 2006

The President. I want to thank you all for joining us. I'm proud to be here with Secretary Leavitt. We're traveling the country

reminding people that there's a fantastic opportunity for our seniors, and that is, Medicare now offers a prescription drug benefit that will save people a lot of money.

We just visited with some of our citizens inside there, and they're talking about significant savings. And that's what we want; we want our seniors to be able to have modern medicine. So far a lot of seniors have signed up. It's coming down the stretch toward the May 15th deadline; we want everybody to sign up. We want people to understand that they're going to save a lot of money when it comes to prescription drugs.

And I appreciate Secretary Leavitt's hard work. One of the things that our seniors have got to understand, that if you qualify for extra help in the program, if you're a low-income senior that qualifies for extra help, the May 15th deadline doesn't apply to you, you'll have time to take a look—we want everybody signing up. And if you're a low-income senior, you get—the Government pays about 95 percent or more of your prescription drug benefit. So it's worthwhile for people to look.

I want to thank groups like the AARP, NAACP, many in the faith community, community-based groups, all for working hard to educate seniors as to what's available. This is a good deal for America's seniors, and I'm proud to have signed a law to modernize Medicare, and I'm proud to be working with Michael.

I also want to thank Congressman Foley and Congressman Clay Shaw for joining us. They're strong backers of Medicare reform. They were informing me that a lot of their citizens have signed up. In south Florida, people are taking advantage of this program. And I strongly urge people to take a look and see what's available.

[*At this point, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services Michael O. Leavitt made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thank you all for joining us. Thank you all very much, I appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:53 a.m. in the OMNI Auditorium at Broward Community College. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Leavitt. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit and a Question-and-Answer Session in Sun City Center, Florida

May 9, 2006

The President. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's great to be here in Sun City Center. Brother Jeb said, "If you want to come to a really good place, come here." First of all, I think it's a pretty neat deal when you get introduced by your brother, particularly since he's such a good Governor. We both share the same political adviser—Mom. [*Laughter*] I don't know if Mother is still telling you what to do, Jeb, but she's certainly telling me what to do all the time. [*Laughter*]

And both of us married well. The first lady of Florida is a fantastic woman, and so is the First Lady of the United States. Laura sends her very best. She sends her love. Yesterday she represented us in Costa Rica. They inaugurated a new President, and they sent the word back—please send the best in your family. [*Laughter*] So we sent Laura.

I'm also proud to be joined by Congressman Adam Putnam. Where's Adam? There he is. Thank you. He's a smart guy. He's a smart person, and he's a good guy to work with, and I appreciate you being here, Adam.

I want to thank the WCI Communities' leadership and staff for having me here.

What I thought I would do is spend a little time talking about the new Medicare program. The reason I'm doing this, because I want people to sign up. And then I'll answer some questions, if you have some. And then I'm going to go over to Orlando and do the same thing tomorrow morning—just like I did earlier in south Florida. And the reason why I'm doing this is because we have changed Medicare for the better, but sometimes change creates anxieties. In other words, people say, "Well, maybe I don't want to change. I kind of like it the way things are." And—but we have a duty to educate people and give them a chance to see what's

available, and that's what I'm doing. That's what you want your President to do.

First thing, let me give you a little history. As you know, Medicare was signed by one of my predecessors—happened to be from the State of Texas, Lyndon Baines Johnson. And it's a vital program. It's a program that has worked. It's a necessary program. Medicare is a commitment of the Federal Government. And once you make a commitment, it seems like to me, it makes sense to make the commitment a good commitment. In other words, you want it to work. You want it to be a modern, excellent program.

Medicare had done a—provided a lot of comfort for a lot of people, but it was getting old and stale; it needed to be reformed. And one reason it needed to be reformed is because it did not provide prescription drug coverage. And you know that. In other words, Medicare would pay for a surgery, say, like ulcer surgery, for $28,000 but wouldn't pay $500 for the prescription drugs that would have prevented the ulcer in the first place. See, medicine had changed with the advent of prescription drugs, but Medicare hadn't.

So I thought it made sense to make Medicare work better, to keep our commitment to our seniors. And we passed legislation that modernized Medicare, and we are now explaining to people what the modernized system means. Nobody is going to say, "You've got to sign up for this," but I think we have a duty to say to people, "Please take a look at it. Take a look and see what's available."

The first thing that's in the new system I think is important is that every senior now entering Medicare is eligible for a "Welcome to Medicare" physical exam. That wasn't the case prior to the reform. Now it is. And that makes a lot of sense, it seems like to me, to say, "Here's a physical for you." The best way to cure disease is to anticipate it and prevent it from happening in the first place, is to be able to catch illnesses early through screenings. Part of a modern, effective health care says that we'll encourage prevention. Helping to prevent disease is going to be a really important part of a modern system, whether you're on Medicare or not on Medicare; whether you're a guy like me, or whether you're a person who's eligible for Medicare.

There is a new prescription drug coverage in Medicare. And that's important for people to understand. The prescription drug coverage, first of all, helps all seniors pay for prescription drugs, no matter how they've paid before. In other words, everybody should take a look at the prescription drug coverage.

Secondly, what's interesting about the new program is, it provides choices for seniors. You know, I knew that when we put—laid out the idea of giving seniors choices, it would create a little confusion for some. I mean, after all, up to now there hadn't been much—many choices in the system. And all of a sudden, a senior who feels pretty good about things says, "Here's old George W. or Mike Leavitt or Jeb or somebody say, 'Take a look.' " And all of a sudden, 40 choices pop up.

The reason why we felt it was necessary to provide choices is because we want the system to meet the needs of the consumer. The more choices you have, the more likely it is you'll be able to find a program that suits your specific needs. In other words, one size fits all is not a consumer-friendly program. And I believe in consumers. I believe in trusting people. I did know that there would be some worries about having to choose from 40 different plans, but I thought it was worth it because I know that 40 different plans here in Florida will mean that each individual can tailor a plan to meet his or her needs. And I thought that was important.

So how do we handle the 40 different programs? Well, we encouraged all kinds of people to help—AARP is helping; NAACP is helping; sons and daughters are helping; faith-based programs are helping people sort through the programs to design a program that meets their needs. I readily concede some seniors have said, "There are so many choices, I don't think I want to participate." My advice is, there is plenty of help for you.

Thirdly, seniors with the highest drug costs are going to get extra help in this modernized Medicare. We have catastrophic protection for the first time. And that's important. Drug costs over $3,600 a year will be—any costs over that will be picked up by 95 percent

for the Federal Government. It's called catastrophic care. Part of the reason you modernize medicine this way is to give people peace of mind. You know that if you sign up for the program and something goes terribly wrong and your prescription drug bills skyrocket, the Government is there to help, after $3,600. And that's important for families and its important for our seniors, to have that notion that there's stopgap insurance, that there's help beyond a certain level of costs.

And third—and fourthly, there's extra help for low-income seniors. If you qualify as a low-income senior—this is about a third of our seniors here in America—the prescription drug coverage includes little or no premiums, low deductibles, no gaps in insurance. On average, the Government will pay more than 95 percent of the cost for prescription drugs for low-income seniors.

It's really important for people to take a look and see whether or not there's a program that meets your needs. A lot of people are signing up. There's about 42 million folks eligible for Medicare in the United States, a little more than that. More than 31 million thus far have signed up. That's a lot. In other words, since January, people have said, "I think I'm going to take a look and get involved in this new program."

There's 6 million more who have an alternative source of coverage. In other words, they're plenty happy with the plans they have. And this program—by the way, nobody forces anybody to do anything. You know, this is our country; you're free to choose. So there's 37 million of the little more than 42 million people that have got coverage, and we're working hard to sign up the remaining eligible seniors. And they're signing up—a lot of people signing up, as we head toward a May 15th deadline.

I want to make this very clear. If you are eligible for extra help, if you're a low-income senior, the May 15th deadline does not apply to you. In other words, you can apply after May 15th without penalty. And that's important for low-income seniors to understand. We want everybody to sign up. We want people to understand that there are really good benefits for—the average senior is going to save one-half on his or her cost—one-half on the cost of prescription drugs.

We were meeting, as I said, in south Florida earlier, and some of the stories down there for people who signed up were really strong stories—people saving money, people got a little extra money in their pocket. The system is modernized, and it saves you money. And that's what we want. Now, some say, "It's too good to be true." If you haven't looked at the program, take a look. Take a look. I think you're going to find what I said is true.

The other interesting thing that's happened is—just so the people out there who are wondering whether or not this is cost-effective, whether or not this makes sense to do—first of all, I think it makes a lot of sense to do. We don't want seniors choosing between food and medicine. We're a compassionate society. Secondly, because there's competition for you—in other words, somebody said, here's some different options for you, the average premium seniors pay for the prescription drug benefit is $25 a month on average. And that's down from an anticipated cost of $37 a month. In other words, when somebody bids for your business, it tends to be—it helps on price.

In Florida, the lowest cost option is about $10 a month. There are many zero-dollar premium Medicare advantage plans available for our seniors to choose from. The program is saving seniors a lot of money. And as a result of people competing for your business, it's saving the taxpayers money. In other words, people said, "Well, it's going to cost X." Well, it's costing 20 percent less. This is a good deal for America's seniors.

And so over the next week, Secretary Leavitt and myself and others in the administration are reminding people that there's a good opportunity for you. And so I would suggest, if you haven't signed up yet, if you're living in Florida and watching this TV program—or anywhere in the country watching the TV program, I'd call 1–800–MEDICARE, and there's somebody there who'll help you. Or if you've got some—if you're computer-literate or have a friend who's computer-literate, get on the web page, medicare.gov, and take a look—take a look at what's available. Seniors all across the

country are saving money because of this plan. It's—if you're a son or a daughter, and your mom or dad is eligible for Medicare, and he or she hasn't signed up, I believe the son or a daughter has a duty to help the mom or dad understand what's available. That's what sons and daughters are supposed to do. That's called love. And a loving son or daughter should take a look and help their folks realize what's possible, help design a drug benefit program that meets your mom or dad's needs.

Churches all across the country are reaching out—synagogues, people from different faiths understand that it makes sense to help their parishioners realize the benefits of this plan. I mentioned earlier AARP, NAACP, groups all across the country are out trying to find the folks who haven't signed up yet and encourage them to do so. And so that's why I'm here. I'm here doing my duty as educator in chief. [*Laughter*] It's to say to people from around this part of the world and those who may be watching over the airwaves, this is a good deal for the American seniors. And it's the right thing to do for the Government. If the Government makes a promise, we want to make sure that promise lives up to what we've told you. We've said, we're going to get you a modern health care system, and we have.

And that's what I've come to talk about. I'll be glad to answer any questions anybody has on any subject that may be on your mind. But in the meantime, thanks for letting me come by, and God bless.

All righty—[*applause*]—no, no—thank you. I'll be over—we'll get a little picture-taking in a minute. Yes, sir.

Availability of Literature on Medicare Benefits

Q. I find there's a dearth of literature about the new program. I just don't see any pamphlets or books around, which there should be.

The President. True.

Q. Secondly, I want to ask, if you do sign up, and I don't know what it's all about—I'm, truthfully, computer fearful and so I'm not—I'm computer-illiterate. And I'd like to know, when—if I do sign up, can I quit, can I get out of it?

The President. Yes, you can. [*Laughter*] I think if you sign—first of all, that's a great question. Literature—there's all kind of literature. I can't answer the question as to why——

Q. I haven't seen it.

The President. No, I know, there's not any—you haven't seen it yet, I know. But I will try to find out why you haven't seen any here. Secondly, you're not alone when it comes to saying, "I'm a little frightened about getting on the computer." You're not the only person I've heard say that. And therefore, one of the things that centers such as this do is provide help with people who are computer-illiterate. And it's—with somebody explaining how it works and what you're watching, I think you'll find it to be a lot less intimidating than you think.

And thirdly, I wouldn't sign up, if I were you, unless you were comfortable that it saves you money. This is an add-on to Medicare. It is a part of Medicare. It's called Medicare Part D. In other words, the rest of Medicare exists, but what this does is, it provides an additional benefit. And as I said, across the country, people are saving half on their prescription drug bills. People say to me, "Well, I'm feeling pretty healthy, and I'm not taking a lot of prescription drugs, I'm not going to sign up." My advice is, sign up, because you don't know when you're going to have to start taking prescription drugs.

But at the very minimum, take a look. You seem like an inquisitive person, somebody who wants to know the facts, and there should be people here at this center that will help you find the facts out front. And there's going to be some literature, I hope—there is? Brother said there's literature. Now, there had better be literature, because the man—[*laughter*]—the man in the hat is going to walk out there, and if he doesn't see any literature, I'm cooked. [*Laughter*] Good looking hat too.

Yes, sir. Thank you for your question.

Iran

Q. Mr. President, my question concerns the Iranian situation.

The President. Yes.

Q. I'm very worried about it, and I don't think I'm alone. I know that you and Secretary Rice and Ambassador Bolten are doing everything humanly possible to unite the global community in persuading the Iranians that getting the bomb is not in their own interest. And even if you get the Chinese and the Russians to come around eventually on meaningful sanctions, my fear is it's liable to take so long it will be too little and too late. So I assume there's a good possibility, given their attitude, they're going to get the bomb. And my question is, if they do, what next?

The President. Yes. First of all, it's a great question because he is bringing to the front here a question of international significance. Our objective is not to let them get the bomb, first of all. And I am an optimistic person and, therefore, believe—I'm going to rephrase your question a different way: How are you going to stop them from getting it in the first place—not what are you going to do if they get one.

And the first goal—first of all, all options—the first option and the most important option is diplomacy. As you know, I've made the tough decision to commit American troops into harm's way. It's the toughest decision a President can ever make, but I want you to know that I tried diplomacy. In other words, a President has got to be able to say to the American people, diplomacy didn't work. And therefore, the first choice and a choice that I think will work with the Iranians, is diplomacy. And I believe we can accomplish this through diplomacy.

Any diplomatic effort must have a common goal, and the common goal here is precisely what you said, sir, which is the Iranians should not have a nuclear weapon or the capacity to make a nuclear weapon.

Now, that wasn't always the case during my Presidency. In other words, people have come together around that goal. And the countries that have come around that goal are not only our allies in Europe but China and Russia agree. So the first step toward good diplomacy is to have different countries agree to a common goal, which is that the Iranians should not have the capacity and/or a nuclear weapon. So that's positive.

Secondly, we're now working on the tactics as to how to convince the Iranians through—to get rid of their ambitions through a united front. And so what you're watching play out—by the way, because we live in a transparent society, everything, of course, is in the newspapers—which is fine; that's healthy. But that's not the case when you're dealing with a nontransparent society.

And so we got six countries—Condi was up there dealing with them last night, sitting around the table saying, how are we going to achieve our common goal? So what you're watching is, of course, all the guessing and speculating about the different positions of the six countries sitting around the table. But I believe that through hard work, we will continue to keep people bound together because there is a common interest to prevent the Iranians from getting that weapon. They understand—the countries understand the danger inherent with the Iranians having a weapon. They understand the consequences of a nuclear Iran, particularly when you have a President who's threatening people.

And so we're at an early stage of diplomacy at this point in time. And one of the options, of course, is to go to the United Nations Security Council. And once in the United Nations Security Council, we're trying to reach—what does the resolution say. My objective—and thank you for your kinds words about Condi and myself working hard to keep the common front. It's very important for the Iranians to know they will be isolated in the world; that the rest of the world, much of the world, shares the same demands that those of us who are heading the—involved in the negotiations say.

But you're right, this is a very difficult issue. And we will continue to work through diplomatic channels to make it clear that we mean what we say. And, obviously, part of making the diplomacy work is, what will be the consequences if the Iranians decide maybe not to listen to the rational demands of the world. And you mentioned one, economic sanctions. But we're—and I'm not going to comment on that, because I think it's very important for good negotiators to keep their cards close to the vest, and then at the appropriate time, make it clear what our intentions are.

This is a serious issue; it's taking a lot of our time, as it should. Ultimately, of course,

I would hope that an American President is able to say to the Iranian people, "You're free, and we look forward to having good relations with you." Liberty has got an amazing way of changing the world. I speak to a group of people who know that better than most. You have seen liberty transform the world during your lifetime. You've seen—and one of my favorite ways of explaining the effects of liberty and my belief in what liberty can do is to explain the relationship I have with the Japanese Prime Minister.

I bet I've got some World War II vets here. I'll bet there's some people who know World War II vets, who are here. I bet people are here who know somebody who was called into action to fight the Japanese in World War II. And today I can—I report to you that the Japanese Prime Minister is my friend in keeping the peace. And there's a reason why—is because after World War II, one of my predecessors, Harry S. Truman, had the belief that the United States should help that country, our enemy, become a democracy, not styled—an American-style democracy but a Japanese-style democracy. And because of the faith in the capacity to freedom to change people's way of thinking, because he felt strong to that conviction, today a Japanese-style democracy is a friend of America.

Freedom has the capacity to change enemies into friends. And so in the long run, the best way to deal with problems such as the Iranian problem is to encourage people to be free. And the fundamental question is, do people want to be free? And the cornerstone of my foreign policy is my strong belief that freedom is universal. People desire to be free.

One of the lessons that your generation has taught our generation is that staying strong to the values that America subscribes to—human rights, human dignity, the universality of freedom—has changed parts of the world in incredible ways. Just look at Europe—this is a long answer—[*laughter*]—to an important question. And the reason I'm framing it this way is, I want you to understand how I think about laying the foundation of peace so we can deal with not only the issue that you asked about, sir, but other issues that will inevitably come up during the course of the 21st century.

But freedom has the capacity to lay the foundations for peace, and we must not lose sight of the historical examples. Take Europe, for example—there was two major conflicts in Europe, World War I and World War II. Today, Europe is whole, free, and at peace because democracies don't war. It's one of the historical lessons.

And so in the short term, on the issue you described, we will keep our diplomacy going. We'll be knitted up as best as we possibly can with different—with as many nations as possible—six of them at the table last night in New York, by the way. And in the meantime, it is—we will continue to advance the freedom agenda.

Good question. Yes, sir.

Health Care Reform

Q. Thank you. First, let me say, I think a lot of people will be helped by this program.

The President. They will——

Q. A lot of people will be helped by the Medicare Part D program.

The President. Oh, thank you.

Q. But I think there's major deficiencies in it that I think we'd like to hear some comments from you on. The first major issue, I think the program is going to be a lot more expensive both to the user and to the taxpayer than it needs to be, because we don't allow Medicare to negotiate directly with the pharmaceutical companies. This could wind up costing the taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars over the next 10 years.

Another thing, the insurance companies are allowed to change their formulary once a person is in the program; a person is not allowed to get out until the end of the year. This is a legalized bate-and-switch operation by the insurance companies. How many of them are doing it, I don't know, but it's a danger for our seniors.

Third, I have a report here from Families USA indicating that the poorest people that are affected by this program are not being helped.

The President. Well, I just——

Q. Not helped—either they're not signed up, they're not being helped compared to the benefits they were getting under a combination of Medicare and Medicaid.

So, finally, I think there are several major changes that should be made in the program. Number one, let Medicare negotiate with the pharmaceutical companies. Number two, stop the formulary switch. If we do that, by reducing the costs, I think we can possibly reduce the size or even eliminate the doughnut hole that people are exposed to.

The President. Okay, thanks.

Q. And I think—[*laughter*]. One last thing—okay. If we don't bring our costs down this way, we're never going to control health care costs in the U.S. And we're subsidizing the pharmaceutical companies, and we're subsidizing health costs in every other country around the world because every other country negotiates directly with the pharmaceutical companies.

The President. Yes, I'll be glad to give you some comments. First of all, if a senior takes a look at the program and doesn't think it saves his or her money, they shouldn't sign up.

Secondly, in terms of the low-income seniors, I don't know what the report is that you cite—people cite reports all the time. I will tell you this, that a lot of people are working hard to find the low-income seniors, to give them the chance to sign up for an incredibly beneficial program—including AARP, the NAACP, as I mentioned. I've met with their representatives. They realize this is a good deal for low-income seniors. But if you're premise is right that the low-income senior won't benefit from the program, they shouldn't sign up to it. I just strongly disagree that this isn't good for low-income seniors.

Thirdly, one of the reasons why—we're trying to make individual choice available for seniors, as opposed to having the Federal Government making the decisions on behalf of seniors. And so the idea of having the Federal Government negotiate price keeps the Federal Government squarely in the middle of the program. There's a philosophical difference, evidently, between me and you. All I can tell you is, is that the program is costing less than anticipated, and this program is going to benefit a lot of seniors because there is more choice for seniors.

Now, the idea of—this won't help us control health care costs, one, I disagree with that. I think more choices for consumers, the better off we are. Secondly, health care costs are on the rise. A lot of it has to do with these lawsuits that are driving good doctors out of practice, that are causing people to practice defensive medicine, and running up the premiums for consumers. We need to modernize health care as well, by introducing information technology so that, kind of, the system of writing files by hand, which leads to errors and inefficiency, is replaced by a modern system of information technology. Thirdly, we need transparency in pricing. People need to know that which they're purchasing and the quality of that which they purchase so that consumers are able to make more rational decisions.

Fourthly, at the center of the health care needs to be the doctor-patient relationship—not bureaucracy, either government or private bureaucracy. And that's why I'm such a strong believer in health savings account, which are now being—now available for a lot of folks in America.

So I think you and I may have a different vision of health care. I thank you for bringing it up, but, look, if people don't like it, they don't have to sign up for it. People have got the right to pick what they want to pick. And therefore, I know you would agree with me in saying that seniors ought to take a look and see whether or not it meets their needs.

Thank you, sir, very much. I appreciate that.

Yes, ma'am.

Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit May 15th Deadline

Q. Mr. President—[*inaudible*]—to live in this country, and I'm very proud of it.

The President. Good. Where were you from initially?

Q. East Germany.

The President. Very good.

Q. I've been through a lot, and I appreciate this country. And also I just signed up—I belong to AARP supplement, and I just signed up for Medicare Complete Choice Rx United Healthcare with zero monthly premium, and I'm saving 140 some dollars a month.

The President. Good.

Q. Thank you.

The President. How long have you been in the country?

Q. I've been in this country longer than I lived in Germany because I was in East Germany, and we had a lot of problems. You couldn't speak up for anything. My brother was arrested. My sister almost was, for saying something. So I got out pretending I'm performing at the opera house in Nuremberg, and I broke my contract interest, and I stayed in West Germany. And I've been here since 1959. And I'm an American citizen. I'm very proud of it.

The President. Great. Welcome.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Yes, ma'am. By the way, I met with Chancellor Angela Merkel the other day, and she was—she, too, was raised in East Germany. It's interesting to be dealing with a world leader who was raised in a Communist country. She brings an interesting perspective to the idea of people being free. I mean, she understands freedom as well as anybody understands freedom. And she's going to be a—she's a good ally and a good person. When I see her, I'll tell her I saw you. [*Laughter*]

Q. Welcome, Mr. President. Thank you for coming here. One of my questions is, May 15th, I believe, is the sign-up date.

The President. Yes.

Q. If people cannot make a decision by May 15th, will they be penalized, or will there be another time period where they can sign up?

The President. It depends upon whether you're a—eligible for extra benefits, a low-income senior or not. If you're a low-income senior, there will be no penalties. If you're not a low-income senior, sign up before May 15th.

Q. Oh, okay. So then there will be—there will not be another sign-up date?

The President. You can continue to sign up, but there won't be sign-up at the same rates at which you could—the same rates at which you'll get your prescription drug benefits prior to May 15th. Deadlines are important. Deadlines help people understand there's finality, and people need to get after it, you know? And so the idea is, there's the deadline. Now, low-income seniors, as I mentioned to you, will be able to sign up after May 15th without penalty.

Let's see—yes, ma'am.

Q. I appreciate everything you've said. I think you're great.

The President. Thank you. Well, we'll leave it at that. [*Laughter*]

Q. No, I'm just like your mother. I do want to suggest, this is a community. Our motto is "Neighbors Helping Neighbors." We're volunteers. There are many, many seniors here who need help. We procrastinated and finally made the decision to sign up through AARP, because you can always change. And if they start increasing costs, we'll change to another one. You can have influence on people you buy from more than if the Government is handling it. And so I appreciate your approach.

However, I would beg, not for myself—because there were logjams, they were shuffling the phone calls directly to Medicare. I got an ID number; my husband got, in the afternoon, a confirmation number. No one knows whether they're actually recorded. The Internet was so bogged down, you couldn't get information, because everyone is doing it at the last minute. Now, when we pay our taxes, there's a deadline. But we can apply for a 6-months' reprieve. I think—[*laughter*]——

The President. I think I know where you're headed. [*Laughter*]

Q. All right, I don't have to continue it. We could go out and help our neighbors. There's a Medicare bus—we just found out this week—going to a Catholic church in Tampa to help people sign up. There's a Medicare bus going to a hospital in Sarasota, but we didn't think about getting one to come here for our people, and we need some time to give them some help. Thank you.

The President. Yes, I appreciate that, thanks. In other words, what you're saying is, there's a lot of people beginning to come in at the last minute, and you're afraid they're not going to be able to access the system and/or have their numbers and names filed properly before May 15th. I'll check with the local people to make sure that—see what the strategy is in dealing with that.

Yes, ma'am. There you go.

Medicare Benefits for Individuals With Disabilities

Q. Is this the same Medicare plan——

The President. You're doing fine, just keep cranking it up.

Q. Is this the same Medicare plan for people that are on disabilities?

The President. Disabilities, yes. It applies to people with disabilities as well.

Q. So if you're under 65—then I would have to still go and apply under this?

The President. For the additional help, yes, ma'am.

Q. For additional help on this. And also, I just want to say, thank you very much for the way that you run the Government with the beliefs of—your Christian beliefs and not letting others bring you down when you're standing behind on your beliefs. It's very important. All the Christians stand behind you.

The President. Thank you. Yes, ma'am.

Trade/Energy

Q. ——be able to tell you from the same point of view that I'm very concerned about the growing fields, the products that are now being sent and brought back from other countries, that we've eroded our own economics in America, that we're too trusting of other countries, instead of being able to build up from within. And it's a very great concern, because we live in this area—being Ruskin—a tomato growing area for the State of Florida—going into other countries, other States than Florida. We've lost our fields. We're losing the orange groves. We're losing so much that this whole country was built on, and we're now relying on beef from Australia. We're relying on produce from South America. We're now looking at China to come in and supplement Hewlett Packard and all these other companies that have now said, "We can't afford to keep the Americans employed." This is a very big concern for me, at my age, let alone for the kids who are coming up behind me.

The President. You know, it's an interesting—that's a very interesting question. She—or statement—there's a lot of people that are concerned about a global world in which there is fierce competition. My attitude about this is that I don't think we ought to fear the competition; I think competition is good and healthy. But I think we ought to be smart about how we deal with it. In other words, one of the options to deal with that global fear is to wall ourselves off; is to say, we're not going to accept products; is to go through protectionism; is to say, we'll put high tariffs on products because we don't want other people selling their product in the American market. That's one way to deal with your concern. And it's—I, frankly, think that would lead to economic problems for the country.

I am, as you know, a person who believes in free trade. I also believe in making sure companies treat us fairly—in other words, so that we can compete on a level playing field. And so here's some ideas as to how to deal with it. And by the way, yours is not an isolated concern. It's a legitimate question for policymakers—is, how do you deal—how can you assure us that we can continue to be the economic leader of the world with such competition?

Wait, let me finish. Let me finish my answer. And here's some practical things to do. One, make sure our children have got the job skills necessary—the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. One of the things that Brother Jeb has done is he's brought strong accountability in the public schools to make sure that there's high standards and people are measured. And when we find failure, you do something about it, so that we're just not shuffling kids through the system.

And I want to extend those high standards and extra help for Title I students who may not be measuring up to standards in math and science. Because I'm going to tell you what's going to happen in a global world, that if we do not educate our children with the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century—math, science, engineering—jobs that will help lead this country forward—if we don't do that, the jobs are going to go to other countries. The good, high-paying jobs are going to go to other parts of the world.

So step one is education. Step two is to make sure we're always the leader in innovation and research and development. And the way to do that is to spend Federal money, which we're going to do, in the basic

sciences, as well as make sure the research and development tax credit which encourages the private sector to invest in research and technology, make sure that's a permanent part of the Tax Code. In other words, make sure America is the leader in innovation. If we're not the leader in innovation, other countries will be the leader of innovation. So there's competition. We can try to wall ourselves off, but it will still be a competitive world.

Thirdly, we got to do something about energy. The gas prices, as you know, are affecting you; they're high. Part of the reason why they're high is because the price of crude oil is high, and part of the reason the price of crude oil is high is because the demand for crude oil has been outstripping supply. And I'm not sure supply will ever catch up with demand in the short term, so one of the things we need to do is to figure out how to drive our cars differently—different fuels like ethanol grown right here in—the core product of which can be grown right here in Florida.

Hybrid automobiles is the second. And we've got incentives in Federal law that provides incentives for people to buy hybrids. Hybrids mean you're running on a combination of electricity and gasoline. And I'll tell you an interesting breakthrough that's about to come, though, because of research as a result of the Federal Government and private sector, is that we're going to have batteries that will be able to last for the first 40 miles when somebody drives. That's good for urban America, for example. A lot of people don't drive 40 miles in a day. It would be pretty good if they could drive those first 40 without using gasoline.

We got to be wise about our energy policy. I happen to believe in nuclear power. I believe in nuclear power—I know nuclear power is renewable, and it protects the environment. We got to make sure we continue to develop technologies that allow us to burn coal in environmentally friendly ways. Solar technology is becoming more advanced, and the Government is helping with the research there.

My point to you is that on the energy front, we've got to be wise if we're going to compete. We got to do something about junk lawsuits that are making it hard here in America not only for the medical profession but for the business sector, if we want to compete. We got to keep taxes low if we want to compete. If we want to compete in the future, we got to do something about Social Security. Social Security is fine for you. You all are in good shape. It's fine for my generation, but it's not so fine for the people who are going to be trying to pay for my generation. And it's time to put aside all that business—the political business in Washington, DC—and come up with a solution so younger generations of Americans—[*applause*]. My answer to the country is: We shouldn't fear the future; we ought to shape it.

And the alternative is to shut ourselves off, and I think that would be a huge mistake. It's really interesting when you look at the 1920s. During that period of time, the American people became isolated with high protective tariffs, and it eventually was part of the reasons why we had a Great Depression. And I think we always must be mindful of the lessons of history.

Anyway, excellent question. Thanks for giving me a chance—you're not through yet, I take it. [*Laughter*] You want to debate?

Alternative Fuel Sources/Energy

Q. Forty years ago——

The President. Go ahead.

Q. Forty years ago, we had the red flag flying about the oil shortage. We were all told, let's do something. That was 40 years ago. Solar power was supposed to be the future for us. The Government was participating and literally supplying people with the money to put solar power into their homes. It all stopped. Why don't we continue to look at these resources instead of now stopping people because they can't get to their jobs——

The President. No, no, say that again, look at what now?

Q. Why don't we continue to look at these sources of solar power——

The President. We are.

Q. ——these houses around here, literally, if you put up a solar power panel, somebody is coming up to say, "Hey, wait a minute, it's not okay." Down in Fort Myers, they did it 20 years ago, so it has been accepted, and

it's fine. But 40 years ago, we had these red flags flying——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——why did we waste 40 years? Now we're scared.

The President. No, I appreciate—I actually am not—I don't think "scared" is the right word to describe how I feel. I feel that we need to rise to the challenge. I'll remind you, in 2001 the price of crude oil was like $17 a barrel, is one reason why. In other words, it—the low price of crude oil kind of lulled people into a sense that maybe things we're going to—the supply would be greater than demand. But it also made it more difficult for alternatives to compete. And I'm not sure what you mean, people aren't encouraged to put up solar panels. I think people can put up solar panels if they want to. But the interesting thing about—and we're spending research money on advanced solar technology. In other words, there's not going to be "a" answer for diversifying away from foreign sources of oil. There's going to be a series of answers on a series of fronts, that will enable this country to diversify away from oil, and we need to. I completely agree we need to. And the question is, are we spending money at the Federal level to do so? And the answer is, absolutely. Since I've been President, we've spent about $10 billion on ways to help us diversify away from oil, through research and development.

Yes, sir.

Hurricanes

Q. We put out a patent to control hurricanes, and we sent it to—[*laughter*]—Senator Burr, and he thought it was great, and he——

The President. Give him a mic that works, please. [*Laughter*]

Q. We sent it to Senator Burr, and he thought it was great, and he gave it, I understand, to Karl Rove.

The President. What now? I missed your question, sir.

Q. A patent to control hurricanes.

The President. To control hurricanes?

Q. Right.

The President. Where were you last year? [*Laughter*]

Q. I'm here this year, okay. And Senator Burr thought it was good enough, from North Carolina, and he gave it—I understand it was given to Karl Rove, okay. We want—we tried to get in touch with you, and we hope you get the description of this patent, because we feel sure it's the one thing that can stop hurricanes when they're young and vulnerable, okay. We can get at them, and we're using the coldest thing in the universe to do it. And planes—it's all planned on just how to do it, from MacDill or anywhere. And so we hope you get to read this. I gave it to a guy named Ryan here, that's an associate of yours, and I hope he gives it to you.

The President. Okay, good. What's his name?

Q. My name is Luther Hoffman. We sent you a letter, but I guess it may not have gotten through.

The President. Well, you know—[*laughter*].

Yes, sir.

Gasoline

Q. Yes, sir, can you hear me okay?

The President. Yes, sir.

Q. You mentioned gas prices, and I think everybody understands that this is being driven by economic imperatives. What I don't understand—what seems to violate common sense—is why the oil companies are also reporting record profits. It doesn't seem like people should get rich on somebody else's misery.

The President. Well, my attitude is, is that I believe in the markets; I believe in private enterprise; but I also believe people ought to reinvest. You know, we haven't built a refinery in this country since the early 1970s, not one refinery. And guess what—when you have shortage of supply and demand stays strong, price goes up. So part of the reasons why we've got high gasoline prices is because the price of crude oil has gone up.

Part of it also is because we're not increasing the supplies of gasoline for the consumers. And so my call to the energy companies is: Reinvest in America; expand refinery capacity; build new ones. Part of the problem, though, is our own fault. We've got a lot of rules and regulations that prevent there

to be—that stop people from investing capital in refinery expansion. So one of the things I'm working with Congress is to relax these regulations.

I mean, if we've got a problem, let's address it square on and figure out where the problem is. And there is a bottleneck when it comes to this paperwork. And we've got to be less regulatory in America to increase the supply of gasoline for our people.

We've got another problem, in that in a lot of States they require different kind of fuel blends, which means that it's hard. When you have to change your gasoline supply on a seasonal basis to have specialized blends, it causes supply disruptions. And disruption in supply causes prices to go up.

And so I don't believe the Federal Government ought to be taking over businesses; I don't believe that. But I do believe that the Federal Government ought to be encouraging people to spend profits here in America, to build pipeline and expand capacity for the sake of consumers.

Yes, ma'am. We're kind of running out of air time, here, because I've got to go to Orlando. Brother, you need to get back to work. They're paying you a lot of money, and you're just sitting there. [*Laughter*]

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge/Oil

Q. First of all, Mr. President, I want you to know that you are in our prayers on a daily basis.

The President. Thank you.

Q. We pray for you and your Cabinet. Secondly of all, I would like to ask one question about the Alaskan pipeline. My understanding is that most of that supply does not come to the United States, and I would like to know why that goes to other countries rather than to where it's needed here, so that we can——

The President. You mean the crude oil coming down the pipeline?

Q. Yes, sir.

The President. I don't know where it goes, to be honest with you. Sorry. I can find out. [*Laughter*]

Q. Okay. Could we just divert a little bit of that our direction, please? [*Laughter*]

The President. I thought you were going to ask, how come we don't have the gas pipeline coming down yet, because there's a lot of untapped oil and gas up there that can be explored in environmentally friendly ways. And I think we ought to be drilling in ANWR—it's called ANWR. I know we can do it and protect the environment at the same time. And I know there's a lot of untapped gas up there that we ought to get down through pipeline as well. I don't know where all the oil goes coming out of the pipeline now. I'll try to find out for you.

Okay, final question. Yes, sir.

Social Security Reform

Q. Morning, Mr. President.

The President. How are you?

Q. I'm a retired New York City fireman.

The President. Yes, sir.

Q. I appreciate the love and affection that you showed New York City after 9/11 on behalf of all them people that passed away at that time——

The President. Yes, thanks.

Q. ——and the 343 firemen, my brother firemen that died there that day. I think you're doing a fantastic job, and we'll always love and respect you.

You said before you'd like a solution for Social Security. I have it right here in my hand, Mr. President.

The President. I'll meet you right there at the corner, and you can hand it to me.

Q. I'd love to. [*Laughter*]

The President. The hurricane guy can show up here with his answer too. [*Laughter*]

Q. I wrote a solution to the Social Security reform a year ago. I sent it to every Congressmen, every Senator, every newscaster, every station throughout this country. I sent 794 letters out, and I got about 5 replies. I think what's happening with Social Security is a disgrace. It's not going to affect us, like you say, but it's going to affect us because we're the parents of the baby boomers.

The President. That's right.

Q. And we're also the grandparents of the boomers' babies. [*Laughter*] And we're worried about them.

The President. Yes. I tell you what. I'm fixing to thank everybody and you stand right there.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. And I'm—I tell you what I'm——

Q. Please give me two minutes with this letter.

The President. I'm going to get the photographer to take a picture of you handing me that letter.

Q. Thank you, sir.

The President. And that way I'll remember who you were when you handed it to me. [*Laughter*]

Q. I'll always remember you, Mr. President.

The President. Thanks for being a firefighter. God bless, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:09 a.m. at the Kings Point Clubhouse. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida, and his wife, Columba; President Oscar Arias Sanchez of Costa Rica; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Visit to a Fire Station in Sun City Center

May 9, 2006

The President. Jeb and I just were briefed by the firefighters here about the dry conditions that are creating hazards for the people—and Kelley, I appreciate your briefing. He was in charge of putting out that fire yesterday that consumed 450 acres. They think it was caused by a spark out of one of the utility lines.

I've always been impressed by those who are willing to get out and fight the fires and save lives and save property. I'm surrounded by people who made a career out of that. And I want to thank them for their dedication to service. I want to thank them for the briefing about the threat we find ourselves in; we've got dry and windy conditions.

The good news for the people of Florida is, they've got people who are willing to serve and willing to put their lives at risk and willing to fight fires. There's one going on right now, as we speak. Kelley was briefing us on the equipment and manpower that's in place fighting the fire. This is one of these difficult periods for the State of Florida, dealing with the traumatic conditions as they are.

Obviously, the people need to be real careful—be careful about starting a fire, be careful about throwing used cigarettes out, and be mindful these are dangerous conditions. And they ought to be thoughtful about how to conduct their lives so they don't put others in the positions where a fire could destroy them or their property.

Do you want to say something, Jeb?

Governor Jeb Bush. Well, other than the fact, as the President said, it's actually right that if someone throws a cigarette out on the Interstate, it could create—first of all, it's a loss of life and property and puts a lot of people at risk. And it's a felony in our State. So we want to make sure that no fires are started because of human error or negligence or malfeasance.

The President. Anyway, I want to thank you all for joining me.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:59 p.m. at Sun City Center Fire Station No. 28. In his remarks, he referred to Vincent Kelley, captain, Hillsborough County Fire Rescue. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks in a Discussion on the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit in Orlando, Florida

May 10, 2006

The President. Please be seated. Thank you. Thanks for letting me come by to say hello. I'm thrilled to be back in the State of Florida. Yesterday I checked in with my brother—[*laughter*]—to make sure everything is going all right. I'm real proud of Jeb. He's a good, decent man, and I love him dearly.

I also checked in with Laura this morning, to see how she's doing. She sends her best to all of you all. She's doing just great, by the way.

I'm here to talk about Medicare. We've got an exciting program and an exciting opportunity for people to improve their lives. So this is an educational forum. This is a chance not only to speak to the folks here but to those who may be watching on TV

about a really interesting opportunity for the seniors all around our country to really improve their lives by signing up for a new opportunity in Medicare.

But before I do—and by the way, I've got some interesting helpers here to make the case. I thought it would be better to have others describe what the Medicare program means—than me sitting up here just giving a long speech. [*Laughter*] You probably agree with that, but you're too polite to say so. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Tommy Martinez for welcoming us here. Tommy, thank you. I thank all the good folks who work here. Thanks for helping our seniors to improve their lives. You know, one of the great things about America is, there's a lot of citizens who have heard a call to help a neighbor, and there's a lot of people that are willing to, kind of, help educate somebody or help somebody find help. That's what we're really here to honor today, in many ways. We're not only here to talk about a new program for Medicare, but we're here to thank people that have taken time out of their lives to help a senior improve their lives.

I want to thank Sylvia Caceres. She is the central Florida regional director. Thank you, Sylvia. Ramon Ojeda is the president of the Hispanic Chamber of Metro Orlando. Ramon, thank you. Finally, old Rich Crotty, he's here somewhere. Hey, Rich, good to see you, buddy. I was thinking about Rich. You might remember, his son made him famous—[*laughter*]—made me famous too. [*Laughter*] The lad went to sleep in the middle of one of my stemwinders. [*Laughter*] Give him my best, Crotty.

Let me talk real quick about Medicare. First of all, my administration views Medicare as a vital—that Medicare is a vital program. It's an important program that has worked well for many years. And therefore, when I got into office, I said, we're going to not only commit ourselves to Medicare, but we're going to make it better. See, the Federal Government has said to our seniors, "We're going to provide a good health care system for you." And so we started looking at whether or not the Medicare system was delivering as good a health care system as possible. And I determined it wasn't. I said it was good, but it could be better.

And the reason why it wasn't as good as it could be is because the system was not helping seniors with prescription drugs. In other words, medicine had changed a lot since the '60s, obviously—that's an obvious statement—but Medicare itself hasn't changed along with the modernization of medicine. I'll give you a good example. Medicare would pay for ulcer surgery, a surgery which might cost upwards of $25,000, but it would not pay for the prescription drugs that could have prevented the ulcer from happening in the first place. And that didn't make any sense. It didn't make any sense for our seniors, and it didn't make any sense for the taxpayers. And so it seemed like, it made sense to me to modernize the system, which we did.

And so we created what's called Part D, and basically Part D is a prescription drug benefit for not only our seniors but those who qualified who are disabled as well. Part D says this: It says that seniors have now got a prescription drug plan available to them. It's your choice to make. One of the interesting things about the strategy we've employed is, seniors now have over 40 choices to choose from in Florida. Now, that in itself created a slight problem, because 40 choices can create a sense of uncertainty among people. You know, people say, "I don't think I want all those choices." After all, there had been very little choice up to now. And so the idea of saying, "Well, here are 40 different plans to choose from," I knew was going to create the need to encourage people to get involved to help people make the right choice for them.

I strongly believe that giving seniors choices is important to a good health care system. After all, not everybody's needs are the same. And therefore, the more opportunity there is to pick a program that meets your needs, the better off the health care system will be. That's why choice matters.

It also means there are people actually competing for your business. They're saying, "I want your business; therefore, I'm going to try to make it attractive for you." And the idea of giving choice to people has affected the cost of the plan. When we first got in

there, we anticipated the cost for the average senior was going to be $37 a month; now it's down to $25 a month for the average plan. That's positive news. It's positive for our seniors, and it's positive for the taxpayers.

We also believe that peace of mind is important for our seniors. And so inherent in this reform plan is the notion of the Government stepping in after a certain level of expenditures have been made by the average senior. In other words, anything over $3,600 in prescription drug coverage, the Government will pick up 95 percent of it. That's a catastrophic plan. It says that we recognize that we've got to help seniors after a certain level of expenditures, so as to help peace of mind.

That wasn't the case in the old plan, as you might remember. The new plan has got stop-loss; it's got catastrophic care. And that's a very important part of helping make sure the system was modern. The other thing that's important for people to understand is that this program is very generous for low-income seniors. About a third of the seniors qualify for extra help. And that's the way it should be in America, in my judgment. We want to help people who cannot help themselves. And so if you're a low-income senior, this plan will pay nearly 95 percent of all your drug costs, and that's important for our seniors to understand.

We've had good success at signing people up. There's about 42—a little more than 42 million people who are eligible for Medicare in the United States. Up to this point, a little over 31 million have signed up for the new Part D plan. There's about 6 million seniors who don't feel the need to sign up because they're adequately covered elsewhere, and that's okay; I understand that. So there's about 37, more or less, million people have so far signed up since January for this new benefit. And our mission is to reach out for the final 6-plus million, is to encourage people to, at the minimum, take a look at what's available.

There is a May 15th deadline, unless you're a low-income senior, in which case you can sign up after May 15th without any penalty. And that's important for our seniors to understand as well.

And so we're here today to talk about a Medicare plan that I believe is a good deal for America's seniors. It's very important for people to understand that there are significant savings for you involved in this plan. There's—the average senior saves about one-half on his or her drug bills, and that's good news. This is a plan that helps people when there's a catastrophe in their lives, and this is a plan that means our low-income folks won't have to choose between food and medicine. And that's good for America.

Now, we're reaching out to people from all walks of life. First of all, if you're interested in finding out about the program, call 1–800–MEDICARE, and somebody will be there at the other end of the line explaining it to you. If you're computer literate, call up medicare.gov, and you'll find a program that will help you—it will help explain to you what is available for you.

If you've got a—if you're a son or a daughter, and you've got a mother or dad who is eligible for Medicare and hasn't looked at this program, you have a duty, in my judgment, to be a good son or a daughter and help your mom or dad. You know, some of our seniors aren't that comfortable with using a computer, and I understand that. But your sons and daughters are comfortable, or your grandchildren are comfortable. Get them to help you. Get them to take a look at what's available. A son or a daughter owes it to their mom and dad to do that. If you're a member of a church group and you've got seniors in your congregation, find help for them. If you're a member of AARP, an active member of AARP, help a friend see what's available. If you're a part of an outreach group such as this, continue doing your duty to give people knowledge.

And that's what we're here to do. We're working with the National Alliance for Hispanic Health, the Hispanic Business Roundtable, the National Coalition of Latino Clergy and Christian Leaders. I mean, we're talking to a lot of groups. We've reached out through Univision and Telemundo and Spanish radio. My point is, is that we're reaching out to all people in all societies. We're working with the NAACP, AARP. There are a lot of people trying to help. And for those of you here who are helping, thank you for doing what you're

doing. I hope it makes you feel better. It makes me feel good to know there are millions of Americans who are willing to help a neighbor understand what's available in this important program.

So you're watching the President be educator in chief today. [*Laughter*] My job is to go around America and explain that which is available, but I can't do it alone. Yesterday, down in South Florida, Mike Leavitt was with me. He's the Secretary of Health and Human Services. He's doing a fine job. Josefina Carbonell works with Mike. Her title is Assistant Secretary for Aging, Administration on Aging, Department of Health and Human Services—a long title for a fine person. Josefina, tell us what's happening in the Department. Welcome.

Assistant Secretary Josefina Carbonell. Thank you, Mr. President. Yes, I'm known as the Assistant Secretary of Aging, but I've got the great honor to also have been coined in this campaign as "Senora Medicare." [*Laughter*] And we've gone across the country.

It's indeed a wonderful honor to serve you as the Assistant Secretary for Aging, but having worked in the aging field for over 35 years right here in the State of Florida, it is so gratifying and so historic for me personally to see the fine work of individuals and volunteers across this country that have made such a difference. And you'll meet—some of them are with us today, and many in the audience—how important the benefits are.

We've held over 47,000 events like this, assistance and enrollment events and information events. And we've ridden in buses, in our Medicare buses across this country and visited with people in towns small and big, rural and urban communities, in limited English-speaking communities. And we are so proud of the work that our inner-city and our community-based organizations and our volunteers in both the private non-profit sector, civic organizations, the business community, and our municipalities, and most importantly, our volunteers.

We've had a wonderful opportunity to have over 40,000 dedicated volunteers that have served to assist people on one-on-one as a backup to our 1–800–MEDICARE, to, of course, our web site, and our area agencies on aging, our senior centers, our Meals on Wheels programs, our home care agencies. But those 40,000 volunteers have made such a difference. I've been in communities where we've sat around somebody's dining room table in the middle of a little church hall—and being able to assist them one-on-one making that choice.

And that's so important. I know that having worked with seniors for so many years, it is so gratifying to see the difference that this new benefit takes on, not only in cost savings, but the most important thing for me, in many of the minority communities, have been the ability for them to access new preventive benefits, and cardiovascular and diabetes and other chronic conditions that are so prevalent in our minority communities. So that's another very important feature.

But help is there. Those that might still be afraid and have not set out—the 1–800–MEDICARE, we've staffed that Medicare line up with 6,000 operators, trained people. We've got volunteers like Sandra, 40,000 across this country, and the area agencies on aging and the elder help lines that are there to assist you. We also have help lines for minority communities. We know that in the Hispanic community, in addition to the 1–800–MEDICARE, we have the 1–800–SU–FAMILIA [1–866–SU–FAMILIA] *, run by the National Hispanic Council, the National Hispanic Alliance for Health, which is manned by grassroots organizations across this country, and many, many more that are there to help you.

So seek help. The 15th is the deadline. Don't stay without that very important benefit, that not only will give you the prescription drug benefits that you need but, most importantly, will be a lifesaving effort for many, many of our at-risk individuals.

The President. Yes, I knew one of the real challenges, once this bill had passed, was to convince people that change would be in their interests. There's a lot of folks, frankly, at a certain point in their lives, where they're just really aren't interested in change. They're happy with the way things are, and therefore, it would be hard to get people to, kind of, be alert to the new opportunities.

* White House correction.

And so therefore, we knew we'd have to rally a group of folks who were not political people, but just concerned about their neighbor, so that there was a human touch to convince somebody that change—it's one thing to call a phone number; you're talking to somebody you can't see. But the most important contact is the one-on-one contact that many in this audience have helped others with. And for those of you doing that, I want to thank you.

Josefina also talked about an important part of the reform, and that is that there's now a wellness exam for people entering Medicare finally. It makes sense to detect problems early so it makes it easier to solve problems. That old Medicare system didn't have, kind of, this sense of prevention as a part of our strategy to help our seniors, and now it does.

But for a senior who hasn't signed up, call but also reach out to somebody. They'll help you. This program is not as complicated as one would initially think. And there's a lot of people that will help you, help you walk through the steps necessary to determine what is best for you.

Now, we've got some folks here who are being served. Pete, Pete Navarro, welcome; thank you for coming.

Peter Navarro. Good morning, Mr. President.

The President. You got to speak into the mike.

Mr. Navarro. Good morning, Mr. President.

The President. Where do you live?

Mr. Navarro. I live in Tavares, Florida.

The President. Very good—right around the corner.

Mr. Navarro. About 45 minutes.

The President. Well, it's a large corner. [*Laughter*] Give people your circumstances, please.

[*At this point, Mr. Navarro, retiree, made brief remarks.*]

The President. One of the things people have got to understand—Pete, by the way, is not eligible for Medicare yet, just in terms of age.

Mr. Navarro. That's correct.

The President. You're 59?

Mr. Navarro. Fifty-nine, yes.

The President. So am I. [*Laughter*] I blame my gray hair on my mother. [*Laughter*] I don't know who you blame yours on. [*Laughter*] I used to think 60 was old, didn't you?

Mr. Navarro. When I was young, I thought that was way out.

The President. Now I think it's young, don't you?

Mr. Navarro. I think so. [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes. Anyway, people on disability can apply for this program as well. You have done so.

Mr. Navarro. I have done so.

The President. You're taking eight different medications a day.

Mr. Navarro. Eight different medications a day.

The President. So you're worried, obviously, about the cost.

Mr. Navarro. I was, and since I have it, I only pay a $2 copay for generics and a $5 copay for the regular drugs.

The President. Right. Are you able to estimate your monthly savings now?

Mr. Navarro. I'm saving between 500 and 600 dollars a month.

The President. I'm not surprised. We hear stories like this all the time, where this program is helping people. The average senior is going to save half on their drug bills. Here's a fellow who is saving a lot more than half.

Mr. Navarro. That's a lot of money.

The President. Yes. And that helps you, obviously—500 or 600 dollars a month gives you a little breathing room.

Mr. Navarro. Oh, yes. It really does. It eliminates that stress that you live when you don't know if you can get it or not.

The President. Yes. Well, I appreciate you sharing your story with us. It's—so, when are you turning 60?

Mr. Navarro. Next January.

The President. Oh, January. You're a lot younger than I am. [*Laughter*] We're baby boomers—[*laughter*]—which really leads to another issue, and that is whether or not the Congress will have the will to help restructure Social Security and Medicare so a young generation, your grandchildren who are going to be paying people like me to retire—whether or not the system is solvent for

them. You're fine. I mean, the seniors are in great shape when it comes to Medicare and Social Security. The truth of the matter is baby boomers like old Pete and I here, we're in good shape. It's just those who are going to be paying for us need to make sure the system is solvent.

It's not exactly the issue, but it is an issue that is of major importance. And, look, I'll work with Congress. Look, we need to just get rid of all the politics in Washington and focus on what's best for the country and do what's right.

All right, Pete, thank you very much.

Gloria Lavergne. Gloria, where do you live?

Gloria S. Lavergne. Good morning, Mr. President.

The President. Yes ma'am, thank you.

Ms. Lavergne. I live here in Orlando.

The President. Fantastic.

Ms. Lavergne. I was born and raised in Puerto Rico.

The President. *Que bueno.*

Ms. Lavergne. *Que bueno.* And I moved to Florida in 1982 with my family. I work as a legal assistant for 20 years, and unfortunately, on 2002, I became disabled. And like you, I suffer from that time until 2 months that I'm going to be able to get my supplemental, because I'm paying right now $265 with an insurance. And I would say, when I heard about Medicare Part D, I start my own search. I look at different companies that I receive in the mail and compare, start calling. Don't be afraid to call; get the name of the medication that you are taking—I'm taking six medicines every day. One of them is Lidoderm—it's a patch—that cost me at regular price $175 per month, and I'm paying $28 is my deductible.

The President. Let's slow down for a minute. You're doing great. I just want to make sure everybody understands: This good woman is paying for six different medicines, one of which costs 175—speak in the mike, please—175. You signed up for Medicare Part D, and now it costs you 28?

Ms. Lavergne. My premium is $26.60; my deductibles are $28; and I'm saving $550 per month. That's amazing.

The President. Yes. Now, I know it sounds too good to be true; like, if I had said it, everybody would have said, "Well, I think he's just—you know—just talking." [*Laughter*] So I asked Gloria to be here. It's interesting what she said. She said she took the initiative to see what was available.

Was it that difficult?

Ms. Lavergne. No, it wasn't difficult. I look at the brochures, check with the medication that I was taking, and I enrolled in AARP—for me is one of the best. And I'm very happy. I encourage everybody to join the program.

The President. See, she said—what you just heard her say is, she took the initiative, took a look, and found a program that met her needs. And that's why choice is important. In other words, the Government didn't say, "Here's the program that meets your needs." The Government said, "Here's programs available. You pick the one that meets your needs." It's a little change of attitude, when you think about it—basically empowers the customers.

Now, there are some people, I readily concede, that aren't that confident about picking a program that meets their needs. But there are people out there who are willing to help you. So therefore, please call in and let us know who you are. We're trying to make sure that every senior has a chance to sign up for this program. And there's going to be some people in society that are nervous about the program. They hear all the talk, and they hear this program, and they hear the advertisements, and I know they're nervous. I know they're concerned. But I assure you, it is worth your time to listen to somebody who wants to at least explain what's available for you.

If you're—I repeat, if you're a son or a daughter and your mom hasn't signed up or your dad hasn't signed up, do your duty and—to find out what's available and explain. You just heard the testimony of Gloria; she's saving $500 a month.

Ms. Lavergne. ——$550.

The President. ——$550 a month. Well, that's a lot. And one of the things we want is the program to work, and it works well when people take advantage of the program.

So thank you both for sharing your—you got something else to say? You're welcome—you're through?

Ms. Lavergne. Thank you so much.

The President. *Gracias.* Good job. Very good job. I told you you'd do a good job. You were great.

We got an interesting fellow here named Ramon Ortiz. Ramon is a pharmacist, as you can see. One of the most important groups of people who are helping our seniors realize what is available are our pharmacists. You can understand why. They're the point of contact for a lot of our seniors.

How long have you been a pharmacist?

Ramon Ortiz. Well, 15 years. I've been 15 years—3 years which I served in the United States Air Force. I was stationed here at Patrick Air Force Base.

[*Mr. Ortiz, pharmacist, CVS Pharmacy, made brief remarks.*]

The President. One of the things he said that's interesting is—CVS took corporate responsibility and said, we now understand—once President George W. signed the bill, we understand that a lot of our customers are now going to be wondering whether or not it makes sense for them to look at it. And the company became a part of the educational outreach by educating first the educators, who happened to be the pharmacists; that's what you're saying.

And then now—so you've got people coming, and saying, hey, Ramon, what's up? Maybe they don't put it that way—[*laughter*]—but they're——

Mr. Ortiz. We knew it was going to be big. And also, we knew that we were going to be providers; we were going to be instrumental in their choices.

[*Mr. Ortiz made further remarks.*]

The President. It's hard for some Americans to believe, but there were seniors who were going out—without their drugs in the past. People had to choose, and that's not right. And this program really helps a lot of low-income seniors. It helps all low-income seniors. We don't want people making that choice between food and medicine. We want the health care system to be modern; we want it to work. If you're going to say to your seniors, "Let's have a good health care system," we need to make it good, and we've done that. And so—keep going; you're on a roll. [*Laughter*] Your mother?

Mr. Ortiz. I also—perhaps one of the most difficult patients that I had was my mom.

The President. Yes, I know the feeling. Does she tell you what to do?

Mr. Ortiz. Yes. For her, I'm the baby; I'm not a pharmacist.

The President. Yes, well, I know the feeling as well. Join the "aggressive mothers club." [*Laughter*]

Mr. Ortiz. So being a pharmacist, seeing how much this program had helped seniors, and I knew, because I was paying for my mom's prescriptions sometimes, and I knew that she was taking—paying over $280 for prescriptions. Recently I called her, yesterday. She told me that she was not even taking some of the medications doctor prescribed because she could not afford it. I said, "Mom, why didn't you call me? I would have paid for your prescriptions."

Finally, I convince her—she's down in Puerto Rico in a small town, Ceiba; she enrolled. And she asked me, tell President Bush—[*laughter*]—this is the greatest thing ever happened. Now my father, at the age of 73, he's looking for retirement. He was working 40 hours just to pay——

The President. To help your mom.

Mr. Ortiz. ——for the prescriptions. Now he can look into retirement. I'm not sure if my mom will allow him to retire. [*Laughter*] They cannot be in the same house. [*Laughter*] True story.

The President. Let's leave it at that, you know? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Ortiz. So I mean, I know there's a lot of complication, and I asked Anna, the first lady that I told you, "Anna, do you really need to understand the Medicare Plan D?" She said, "No, I don't have to; I'm saving money." [*Laughter*] That's what it's all about.

The President. Yes, it is. You know what I come away with? One, I want to thank you for your compassion. There's a lot of people who deeply care—a lot of people who care about our fellow citizens. We really are a compassionate country, aren't we? Here's Ramon. You know, he speaks with passion

about people who come to his place of business worried about their health care and worried about their future. Thanks.

The other good lesson is, here's a good son. You know, he takes time to worry about his mom—and dad, by the way. Sons and daughters owe that to their parents. They have received a lifetime of love from a mother or father, and they need to repay it by helping understand what's available in this new program. So if you're—I keep saying this, I know, but I strongly believe it. I believe there's personal responsibility in society, and sons and daughters have a personal responsibility to help their mom or dad, just like Ramon did.

You did a fine job. Thank you. *Gracias.*

Mr. Ortiz. *Gracias.*

The President. Sandra Johnson. Now, Sandra Johnson works for the Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders, known as SHINE. Is that right? Explain SHINE.

[*Sandra Johnson, local coordinator, Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders, made brief remarks.*]

The President. You know what's a blessing? We got people like you in this country, like Sandra. She comes down here, she says, "What can I do to help. How can I help somebody?"

I love your spirit. Thanks for helping. She represents a lot of other people in this area and around the country who are volunteering.

Ms. Bryan. [*Inaudible*]—$22 a month.

The President. There you go. [*Laughter*] From 350 to 22?

Ms. Bryan. Twenty-two.

The President. Testify. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Bryan. [*Inaudible*]

The President. There you go. We're glad you're here, Ms. Bryan. Thank you for coming.

Listen, I hope you've enjoyed this experience. I've asked these good folks to join us to help make the case: One, take a look at what's available; two, help somebody take a look at what's available. That's all we can ask. There's a May 15th deadline coming up, unless you qualify for extra help, in which case you can sign up after May 15th with no penalty. If you don't quality for extra help, sign up now. Now's the time. This is a good deal. It's the Government doing its duty to provide modern medicine for our seniors.

I want to thank our panelists. You all did a fantastic job. God bless you all, and God bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:47 a.m. in the Asociacion Borinquena de Florida Central, Inc. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Tommy Martinez, president, Asociacion Borinquena de Florida Central, Inc.; Sylvia Caceres, southern States regional director, the Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration; and Mayor Richard T. Crotty of Orange County, FL, and his son Tyler.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Victims of Identity Theft

May 10, 2006

Identity theft is a serious problem in America. I have just listened to the horror stories from fellow citizens who have had their identities stolen. I listened to their ideas about how the Federal Government can help in the response in not only dealing with those who commit the crime but helping those who have been victimized. And I want to thank you all for joining us. Thanks a lot.

I appreciate Al Gonzales and Chairman Majoras, Deb Majoras, of the FTC for being here, because I just signed an Executive order that has the Attorney General as the Chairman, the Chairman of the FTC as the Vice-Chairman of a coordinating group to make sure that this Government of ours uses our assets in a responsible way, in a good way, to not only put those people who commit identity fraud in jail but to help the victims of identity fraud.

I've signed two pieces of legislation which are important, one of which says that credit companies must issue a credit report once a year free of charge. We're very serious about upholding the law in this administration, and credit companies must look at the spirit and the letter of that law, so that when citizens ask for the free credit report on an annual basis, he or she should be given that free credit report.

I signed law enhancing penalties. Now what we're going to do is make sure that the

13 governmental agencies involved with identity theft have a well-coordinated strategy to help the victims and to put those who commit the theft behind bars.

Again, I want to thank you all very much for helping us understand the issues but, more importantly, telling a story of the emotions and the feelings that you went through during this—difficult periods of your life.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:27 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Tax Legislation

May 10, 2006

The tax cuts we passed in recent years are working to fuel America's economic expansion. Our progrowth policies have helped the economy create more than 5.2 million jobs since August of 2003, and last year, our economy grew faster than that of any other major industrialized nation. By extending key Capital Gains and Dividends tax relief, the House has taken an important step to continue to help hard-working Americans and to keep our economy strong and growing. I appreciate the House Leadership and Chairman Bill Thomas for their hard work.

I urge the Senate to vote swiftly so that I can sign this bill into law and put a stop to a massive tax hike that would be disastrous for small businesses, our economy, and all working Americans.

Executive Order 13402—Strengthening Federal Efforts To Protect Against Identity Theft

May 10, 2006

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, in order to strengthen efforts to protect against identity theft, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. *Policy.* It is the policy of the United States to use Federal resources effectively to deter, prevent, detect, investigate, proceed against, and prosecute unlawful use by persons of the identifying information of other persons, including through:

(a) increased aggressive law enforcement actions designed to prevent, investigate, and prosecute identity theft crimes, recover the proceeds of such crimes, and ensure just and effective punishment of those who perpetrate identity theft;

(b) improved public outreach by the Federal Government to better (i) educate the public about identity theft and protective measures against identity theft, and (ii) address how the private sector can take appropriate steps to protect personal data and educate the public about identity theft; and

(c) increased safeguards that Federal departments, agencies, and instrumentalities can implement to better secure government-held personal data.

Sec. 2. *Establishment of the Identity Theft Task Force.*

(a) There is hereby established the Identity Theft Task Force.

(b) The Task Force shall consist exclusively of:

(i) the Attorney General, who shall serve as Chairman of the Task Force;

(ii) the Chairman of the Federal Trade Commission, who shall serve as Co-Chairman of the Task Force;

(iii) the Secretary of the Treasury;

(iv) the Secretary of Commerce;

(v) the Secretary of Health and Human Services;

(vi) the Secretary of Veterans Affairs;

(vii) the Secretary of Homeland Security;

(viii) the Director of the Office of Management and Budget;

(ix) the Commissioner of Social Security;

(x) the following officers of the United States:

(A) the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System;

(B) the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation;

(C) the Comptroller of the Currency;

(D) the Director of the Office of Thrift Supervision;

(E) the Chairman of the National Credit Union Administration Board; and

(F) the Postmaster General; and

(xi) such other officers of the United States as the Attorney General may designate from time to time, with the concurrence of the respective heads of departments and agencies concerned.

(c) The Chairman and Co-Chairman shall convene and preside at the meetings of the Task Force, determine its agenda, direct its work and, as appropriate, establish and direct subgroups of the Task Force that shall consist exclusively of members of the Task Force. Such subgroups may address particular subject matters, such as criminal law enforcement or private sector education and outreach. The Chairman and Co-Chairman may also designate, with the concurrence of the head of department, agency, or instrumentality of which the official is part, such other Federal officials as they deem appropriate for participation in the Task Force subgroups.

(d) A member of the Task Force, including the Chairman and Co-Chairman, may designate, to perform the Task Force or Task Force subgroup functions of the member, any person who is a part of the member's department, agency, or instrumentality and who has high-level policy or operational duties or responsibilities related to the mission of the Task Force.

Sec. 3. *Functions of the Task Force.* The Task Force, in implementing the policy set forth in section 1 of this order, shall:

(a) review the activities of executive branch departments, agencies, and instrumentalities relating to the policy set forth in section 1, and building upon these prior activities, prepare and submit in writing to the President within 180 days after the date of this order a coordinated strategic plan to further improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Federal Government's activities in the areas of identity theft awareness, prevention, detection, and prosecution;

(b) coordinate, as appropriate and subject to section 5(a) of this order, Federal Government efforts related to implementation of the policy set forth in section 1 of this order;

(c) obtain information and advice relating to the policy set forth in section 1 from representatives of State, local, and tribal governments, private sector entities, and individuals, in a manner that seeks their individual advice and does not involve collective judgment or consensus advice and deliberation and without giving any such person a vote or a veto over the activities or advice of the Task Force;

(d) promote enhanced cooperation by Federal departments and agencies with State and local authorities responsible for the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of significant identity theft crimes, including through avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort and expenditure of resources; and

(e) provide advice on the establishment, execution, and efficiency of policies and activities to implement the policy set forth in section 1:

(i) to the President in written reports from time to time, including recommendations for administrative action or proposals for legislation; and

(ii) to the heads of departments, agencies, and instrumentalities as appropriate from time to time within the discretion of the Chairman and the Co-Chairman.

Sec. 4. *Cooperation.* (a) To the extent permitted by law and applicable presidential guidance, executive departments, agencies, and instrumentalities shall provide to the Task Force such information, support, and assistance as the Task Force, through its Chairman and Co-Chairman, may request to implement this order.

(b) The Task Force shall be located in the Department of Justice for administrative purposes, and to the extent permitted by law, the Department of Justice shall provide the funding and administrative support the Task Force needs to implement this order, as determined by the Attorney General.

Sec. 5. *General Provisions.* (a) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(i) authority granted by law to an executive department, agency, or instrumentality or the head thereof; and

(ii) functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budget, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) This order is intended only to improve the internal management of the Federal Government and is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities, or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

Sec. 6. *Termination.* Unless the Task Force is sooner terminated by the President, the Attorney General may terminate the Task Force by a written notice of its termination published in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

The White House,
May 10, 2006.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., May 12, 2006]

NOTE: This Executive order was published in the *Federal Register* on May 15.

Remarks on the Terrorist Surveillance Program

May 11, 2006

After September the 11th, I vowed to the American people that our Government would do everything within the law to protect them against another terrorist attack. As part of this effort, I authorized the National Security Agency to intercept the international communications of people with known links to Al Qaida and related terrorist organizations. In other words, if Al Qaida or their associates are making calls into the United States or out of the United States, we want to know what they're saying.

Today there are new claims about other ways we are tracking down Al Qaida to prevent attacks on America. I want to make some important points about what the Government is doing and what the Government is not doing.

First, our intelligence activities strictly target Al Qaida and their known affiliates. Al Qaida is our enemy, and we want to know their plans. Second, the Government does not listen to domestic phone calls without court approval. Third, the intelligence activities I authorized are lawful and have been briefed to appropriate Members of Congress, both Republican and Democrat. Fourth, the privacy of ordinary Americans is fiercely protected in all our activities.

We're not mining or trolling through the personal lives of millions of innocent Americans. Our efforts are focused on links to Al Qaida and their known affiliates. So far we've been very successful in preventing another attack on our soil.

As a general matter, every time sensitive intelligence is leaked, it hurts our ability to defeat this enemy. Our most important job is to protect the American people from another attack, and we will do so within the laws of our country.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:03 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Commencement Address at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College in Biloxi, Mississippi

May 11, 2006

Thanks for the warm welcome. President Lott; members of the faculty, staff, and administration; distinguished guests; family, friends, and, most importantly of all, the graduating class of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College.

This afternoon, we celebrate commencement in a stadium that is still under repair, near streets lined with temporary housing, in a region where too many lives have been shattered—and there has never been a more hopeful day to graduate in the State of Mississippi.

I am proud to stand before some of the most determined students at college or university in America. Over these past 9 months, you have shown a resilience more powerful than any storm. You continued your studies in classrooms with crumbling walls. You lost homes and slept in tents near campus to finish courses. You cleared debris during the

day, and you went to class at night. You worked past exhaustion to catch up. By your determination to reach this day, you have sent a message to our Nation and the world: Mississippi is coming back, and it's going to be better than ever before.

You have sent a message, and I've came with a message of my own: This Nation honors your dedication. We're inspired by your optimism, and we're going to help this great State of Mississippi rebuild.

I'm honored to be the first sitting President to address a community college commencement. Recognizing this is a grand occasion, I wanted some tips from the best speaker I know—so I went to the First Lady, Laura. [*Laughter*] I asked her what I should talk about, and she said, "You ought to talk about 15 minutes." [*Laughter*] Listen, I've learned her advice is worth taking. She sends her best to you all.

Today I want to share a few thoughts on the history you've seen this year and the history you will make once you leave this fine college. For some of you, graduation day has been a long time in the making. Many of you have large responsibilities beyond school, such as jobs and families to care for, and none of those roles are part-time. Others here are taking a first step toward further education at one of Mississippi's fine universities. And on this special afternoon, some of you are fulfilling the dreams of generations by becoming the first person in your family to graduate from college.

This college is also part of a strong military community, and it's obvious some of you have earned your degree while serving your Nation in uniform. And I'm proud to be your Commander in Chief. There are also military family members in the graduating class, including the Levens family of Long Beach. Margaret Levens and her son, Matt, are getting their degrees, and they're both carrying pictures of a loved one who they remember today. Earlier this year, Donnie Levens, Margaret's son and Matt's brother, was killed in a helicopter crash while his Marine unit was fighting terrorists near the Horn of Africa. Margaret says Donnie's courage inspired her to complete her studies. She said, "I've never been a quitter. Donnie was never a quitter either. He had a job to do, and he did it well. And I am graduating for him today." America honors the service of Donnie Levens, and we honor the strength and the sacrifice of our military families.

This day of accomplishment would not be possible without the faculty and the staff and the administration of this college. They reopened this school just 17 days after the worst natural disaster in American history struck your campus and your State. All who work at this college have dedicated themselves to this school's stated mission of making "a positive difference in people's lives every day." You have fulfilled that mission and so much more. Your students will always remember your unselfish service in an hour of need, and the United States of America is grateful for your service.

This is my 10th visit to Mississippi since Hurricane Katrina hit. I've seen firsthand the devastation in Gulfport and Gautier, Poplarville and Pascagoula and Pass Christian, Bay Saint Louis and Biloxi. This was the first city in your State I visited after the storm. I remember walking down the street with your fine mayor through a neighborhood where every house had been destroyed. I remember sitting on a doorstep that was surrounded by boards. I remember looking in the eyes of people who were stunned and saddened, longing for all they had lost.

I remember something else, too—a quiet, unyielding determination to clear the wreckage and build anew. People who saw their own houses flattened rose to the aid of neighbors. One group of men tied themselves with a rope, dove into a flooded street, and pulled 20 others to safety. Churches and congregations gave to their limit of their resources and then found a way to give more. Thousands lost their homes, their cars, and their businesses—but not their faith in the future. Across this State, a powerful spirit has emerged, a Mississippi spirit that sees hope in adversity and possibility in pain and summons a strength that wind and water can never take away.

And that Mississippi spirit is embodied by your great Governor, Haley Barbour. Haley spoke for the State when he said, "People aren't leaving. They're hitching up their britches and rebuilding Mississippi." That Mississippi spirit is carried to Washington by

your superb United States Senators, Trent Lott and Thad Cochran and by an outstanding congressional delegation. And the Mississippi spirit is sustained daily by your mayors and county officials and local leaders, and many of those leaders are here today. And I appreciate your service, and you can count on a steady partner in my administration.

Over the past 9 months, we have seen what the Mississippi spirit can achieve. The population of coastal Mississippi has returned almost all the way to full strength. Every school district that closed after the hurricane has reopened. More than 90 percent of the debris has been cleared. Highways and bridges are being repaired. Homeowners are rebuilding with the help from the State and the Federal Government. There are more jobs available in Mississippi today than before the storm, and the resurgence of this great State has only begun.

The renewal of the gulf coast is one of the largest rebuilding efforts the world has ever seen, and all of you will play a leading role. Your experience at this college has prepared you to shape the future of your State. I ask you to rise to the challenge of a generation: Apply your skill and your knowledge, your compassion and your character, and help write a hopeful new chapter in the history of the gulf coast.

A hopeful future for the gulf coast will require your skill and your knowledge. The destruction left by Katrina reaches beyond anything we could have imagined. Rebuilding will create an immediate need for workers with a wide range of skills. I appreciate how this college responded, by offering courses in carpentry and plumbing and electrical and drywall and other skills in high demand. Federal funds allowed students to complete these courses for free, and many have moved straight into good jobs with Mississippi companies. When it comes to rebuilding this State, there is no question "if;" it is a matter of "when." Mississippi will rebuild, and you will be the ones to rebuild it.

Ultimately, rebuilding this region will require more than the reconstruction of building and bridges that were destroyed. A renewal of the gulf coast will also require creativity and innovation and enterprise in every aspect of society. The growth and vitality of the gulf coast will come from people who open new stores, design new urban plans, create new jobs, teach children, and care for the sick. The key to unlocking these opportunities is knowledge, and millions who want to gain new knowledge come to community colleges just like the one you're graduating from. In the gulf coast and beyond, community colleges are the centers of hope and the gateways to social mobility. At any stage in life, you can come to a community college, and you can learn something new, and you can put yourself on a course to realize your dreams.

The class of 2006 is filled with people determined to use their knowledge to revitalize the gulf coast. It's full of people determined to realize dreams. Today I met Tracy Malosh, and she's graduating with a degree in nursing. Tracy was born nearby at Keesler Air Force Base, and she has lived in this part of the country for her whole life. She married her high school sweetheart, Charles, 13 years ago, and they have three children who, by the way, are proudly watching their mom graduate today. After Tracy's son Trevor was born with a heart condition, she decided to come to this college to become a pediatric nurse. When Hurricane Katrina hit, Tracy's family lost everything they owned, but she kept coming to class. She was determined. The family is now looking for a new home in the area. Today Tracy gets a degree, and she's planning to work in pediatrics at a local hospital. And here is what she said, "I can't even begin to describe to you how good it feels to finish this. I always knew I'd go back to school, but I never knew I'd face the difficulties that I did—and I conquered this."

Tracy's story is a clear lesson: It's never too late to get a fresh start in life. And people all over the gulf coast are following her lead. Out of the devastation of Katrina will come great opportunities to get a fresh start in life. And for many in this great State, the road to a brighter future will run through a community college.

A hopeful future for the gulf coast will require your compassion and your character. Our whole Nation has been moved by the outpouring of kindness and decency shown by the people of this great State. Neighbors

have joined forces to care for the weak and the vulnerable. Strangers have come together to help each other cope. Now you must work to sustain the compassion inspired by this storm long after the damage has been cleared away. I urge you to take the same determination you brought to rebuilding schools and use it to ensure that every school provides a good education. Use that same bravery it takes to rescue people from water to rescue communities from poverty. My hope is that one day, Americans will look back at the rebuilding of Mississippi and say that your work added not only to the prosperity of our country but also to the character as our Nation.

Earlier today I met one of your classmates who represents the character necessary for the gulf coast to succeed. Kendrick Kennedy grew up here in Biloxi. He's a proud graduate of Biloxi High. At age 30, an illness caused Kendrick to go blind, and eventually he lost his job. So he decided to come to this college. He recorded each of his lectures on tape, and he scanned his books into a computer program, provided by the school, that reads them aloud. When the hurricane hit, Kendrick opened his home to family members in need, and he returned to school as soon as possible. Today this good man is graduating at the top of his class, and he hopes to attend law school one day. Here is what Kendrick said: "I'd be doggoned if I was going to let Hurricane Katrina stop me. I thought, 'You started school when you were blind, and you can overcome this hurricane.' " Kendrick is right, and today we honor his inspiring example.

That same optimism is present in many of the graduates today, and so many others across the gulf coast. And optimism is justified. There is going to be a day when communities across Mississippi sparkle with new homes and businesses bustle with customers and this college is filled with more students than ever before. I plan to return one day to the Biloxi neighborhood I visited on my first trip and see beautiful homes with children playing in the yards. Across this entire region devastated by the storm, new vitality will emerge from the rubble, and cities from Mobile to Biloxi to New Orleans will be whole again.

It's going to take time for that vision to be realized, and it will demand the skill and knowledge and character of all of you. Yet you can leave this college with confidence in your future and with certainty that you're not going to work alone. In these trying months, we have been aided by a Power that lightens our struggles, reveals our hidden strength, and helps conquer all suffering and loss. We can never know God's plan, but we can trust in His wisdom and in His grace. And we can be certain that with His help, the great State of Mississippi will rise again.

Congratulations to the class of 2006. May God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:29 p.m. in the Mississippi Coast Coliseum. In his remarks, he referred to Willis Lott, president, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College; and Mayor A.J. Holloway of Biloxi, MS.

Statement on Senate Action on Tax Legislation

May 11, 2006

I applaud the Senate for passing important tax relief that will help keep our economy strong and growing. This legislation prevents an enormous tax hike that the American people do not want and would not welcome. The bill will extend policies that have helped our economy flourish. We have had 18 straight quarters of growth, including 4.8 percent growth in the last quarter, and the unemployment rate is 4.7 percent. I appreciate the Senate leadership and Chairman Grassley for their hard work on behalf of American taxpayers and small businesses, and I look forward to signing this important legislation into law.

Proclamation 8014—Peace Officers Memorial Day and Police Week, 2006

May 11, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Every day, our Nation's dedicated law enforcement officers put themselves at risk to keep their fellow Americans safe. As we observe Peace Officers Memorial Day and Police Week, we pay tribute to the courageous men and women who have lost their lives protecting us, and we honor all those who wear the badge and keep the peace.

The law enforcement officers of today carry on the long and proud tradition of service built by their predecessors. With valor and distinction, these citizens stand watch over us all and work hard to fight crime, violence, and terrorism in communities across America. We are a country built on the rule of law, and our Nation is grateful to the men and women who enforce those laws and uphold the fairness and peace we treasure.

Law enforcement officers deserve our appreciation for the work they do, and citizens fulfill an important civic responsibility by supporting their work to protect our communities. Through organizations like Citizen Corps, men and women are assisting their local police force, fire department, and neighborhood watch program. More information about Citizen Corps volunteer opportunities can be found at citizencorps.gov. I encourage all Americans to help fight crime in their communities by volunteering and participating in crime prevention organizations. By working together, we can achieve a better and more secure future for our children and grandchildren.

On Peace Officers Memorial Day and during Police Week, we honor the heroism of all our law enforcement officers, especially those who have given their lives so that others might live. They performed their jobs with extraordinary distinction, and a proud and grateful Nation will always remember their service and sacrifice. We ask God's blessings for the families and friends they left behind.

By a joint resolution approved October 1, 1962, as amended, (76 Stat. 676), the Congress has authorized and requested the President to designate May 15 of each year as "Peace Officers Memorial Day" and the week in which it falls as "Police Week," and by Public Law 103–322, as amended, (36 U.S.C. 136), has directed that the flag be flown at half staff on Peace Officers Memorial Day.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 15, 2006, as Peace Officers Memorial Day and May 14 through May 20, 2006, as Police Week. I call on all Americans to observe these events with appropriate ceremonies and activities. I also call on Governors of the United States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, as well as appropriate officials of all units of government, to direct that the flag be flown at half staff on Peace Officers Memorial Day. I further encourage all Americans to display the flag at half staff from their homes and businesses on that day.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this eleventh day of May, 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, 8:45 a.m., May 15, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 16.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Military and Diplomatic Leaders

May 12, 2006

I've just completed a second meeting with former Secretaries of State and former Secretaries of Defense on Iraq. We also discussed the broader Middle East as well.

I want to thank you all very much for sharing your thoughts not only with me but with the Vice President and Secretary Rice and Secretary Rumsfeld. It really means a lot to hear your thoughts and your concerns and your suggestions about the way forward in Iraq. We've had our disagreements in this

country about whether or not we should be there in the first place. Now the fundamental question is, how do we achieve our objectives, which is a democracy which can defend itself, sustain itself; a country which is an ally in the war on terror; and a country which serves as a powerful example for others who desire to be free.

Since we last met, there has—a unity government is now in the process of becoming formed. I've got great hopes about this unity Government. We've got a Shi'a as the Prime Minister-designee, a Sunni as the Speaker, a Kurd as the President, all of whom have dedicated themselves to a country moving forward that meets the hopes and aspirations of the Iraqi people.

There are certainly challenges, and the Secretaries here discussed those challenges with us. Perhaps the main challenge is the militia that tend to take the law into their own hands. And it's going to be up for the Government to step up and take care of that militia so that the Iraqi people are confident in the security of their country. It's important to have a secure Iraq in order for people to go about their daily lives. And we understand that.

I also assured the Secretaries here that this Government is committed to success. They've got good people on the ground. We've got brave troops that are working every day to help this country succeed and, at the same time, deny safe haven to Al Qaida.

And again, I want to thank the members for coming—the former Secretaries for coming. I think it's very useful for those of us who are helping to plot the strategies and the tactics to help secure this country, to hear from you. I'm optimistic about our successes. I know this: The only way we will not succeed is if we lose our nerve, we don't have faith in our values, and that we're constantly changing tactics on the ground to achieve our objectives.

So thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister-designate Jawad al-Maliki, Speaker of the Parliament Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, and President Jalal Talabani of Iraq. Participating in the meeting were former Secretaries of State Colin L. Powell, Madeleine K. Albright, Warren Christopher, James A. Baker III, and Alexander M. Haig, Jr.; and former Secretaries of Defense William S. Cohen, Frank C. Carlucci, James R. Schlesinger, Melvin R. Laird, and Robert S. McNamara.

Remarks on the Observance of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month and a Presentation of the President's Volunteer Service Awards

May 12, 2006

The President. Thank you all. Welcome. Please be seated. Welcome to the White House. I like to call it the People's House. I'm glad you could join us today to celebrate Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. This is the month we recognize the many accomplishments of Americans who trace their origins to the Asian-Pacific region, and we honor the contributions they make to our great land.

Across our country, Asian Pacific Americans are making their mark in all walks of life, including business and law and politics and education, community service, the arts, and science. Today, more Asian Pacific Americans serve in my administration than in any other administration in history, and two of them serve in my Cabinet. And today—[*applause*]—and I am delighted to recognize Secretary Elaine Chao and Secretary Norm Mineta and thank them for their great work for our country.

I want to thank Ray Pamintuan—he is the Chairman of the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. And I want to thank all the other Commission members who are here. I enjoyed my visit. Thank you for serving.

I want to thank the members of the 442d Regimental Combat Team who are here today. Thank you all for coming. God bless you. Veterans who have set such a fine example for those who wear the uniform today. And I would like to welcome the men and women in uniform who have joined us today. Thank you all for being here. Thank you for your service.

These men and women are on the frontline of defending the United States of America, and in so doing, they're laying the foundation of peace for generations to come. And we are really proud of your service.

Fourteen million Americans can claim ancestry from the Asian-Pacific region. Through a commitment to educational excellence, you help raise standards and show that the American Dream is within reach for all who study hard and persevere. Through your love of family and community, you help unite us as a people. Through entrepreneurship and innovation, you have strengthened our economy, creating jobs for other—and thereby contributing to the opportunity of this Nation.

In 2004, I created the President's Advisory Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islanders to improve the opportunities for small-business development. And to keep this good work moving forward, I signed an Executive order this morning that renews the Commission for another year.

America has thrived as a nation because we've always welcomed newcomers who, in turn, embrace our values and our way of life. Every immigrant who lives by these values makes our country better and makes our future brighter as "one nation under God."

We're grateful to the many Asian Pacific Americans who serve our Nation in many ways. I just honored those who serve our Nation by wearing the uniform, but there are all kinds of ways to serve America. The President's Volunteer Service Award is the highest honor given in recognition of those who have contributed their time and their talents to those in need.

I created this award because I understand the great strength of the United States of America is not found in our military, and it's certainly not because of the size of our wallets. It's because the strength of America is found in the hearts and souls of generous citizens who answer to a universal call to love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself.

Five folks here today have earned this award by volunteering to improve the communities in which they live and thereby helping our fellow citizens. They've heard that call to serve something greater than themselves. And by the way, by answering the call, they've inspired others to serve; you just don't know it.

Volunteers we recognize have brought care and outreach to veterans and men and women in uniform; they've helped children learn to read; they've extended food and shelter to hurricane victims in our gulf coast; they've helped underprivileged high school students prepare their SATs; and they've aided immigrants who have recently arrived in our country. They have served our Nation in distinct ways and, in so doing, have made America a better place to live.

I am proud of the achievements, the many achievements of our citizens of Asian and Pacific Island heritage. You really have enriched America by your contributions. You've made us a better land. And the five we honor today have done so in a unique way. And so I join all Americans in congratulating you and wishing you continued success of your work. I want to thank you for what you've done. I ask God's blessings on all who are here and their families as well as our great Nation.

And now I ask the commander to please read the citations that will enable me to award the volunteer awards to you.

[*At this point, Lt. Cmdr. Geoff Gagnier, Coast Guard Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the awards.*]

Now you can see why I love an event such as these. [*Laughter*] What a great country we have. And I want to thank you all for being active citizens in the greatest land on the face of the Earth.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:07 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Rudy Pamintuan, Chairman, President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Statement on the Death of G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery

May 12, 2006

Laura and I and the entire Bush family are saddened by the death of a good friend

and patriot, Sonny Montgomery. Sonny Montgomery served during World War II and the Korean war, and he was a tireless advocate for America's veterans throughout his three decades in the House of Representatives. He sponsored the Montgomery GI Bill, which has helped make higher education and professional training accessible to millions of our veterans. In 2005, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Nation's highest civil award, in recognition of his lifetime of service to the United States. We send our condolences and prayers to the Montgomery family.

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.

May 6

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Stillwater, OK, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer William O'Connor. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had separate telephone conversations with President Olusegun Obasango of Nigeria and President Dennis Sassou-Nguesso of the Republic of the Congo to discuss the peace process in Darfur, Sudan. Later, at Oklahoma State University, he met with family members of a soldier killed in Iraq.

Later in the morning, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon.

May 8

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Fort Lauderdale, FL, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer David Tompkins. Later, at a private residence, he made remarks at a Friends of Clay Shaw reception.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister John Howard of Australia to the White House on May 16.

The President announced his intention to nominate Troy R. Justesen to be Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Eric Solomon to be Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Tax Policy.

The President announced his intention to nominate W. Stuart Symington IV to be Ambassador to Djibouti.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ellen C. Williams to be a Governor of the Board of Governors of the U.S. Postal Service.

The President announced his intention to nominate the following individuals to be members of the National Council on Disability: John R. Vaughn; Victoria Ray Carlson; Chad Colley; and Lisa Mattheiss.

The President announced his intention to appoint Sean M. Healey as a member of the President's Export Council.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to attend the Inauguration of President Rene Garcia Preval of Haiti on May 14: Jeb Bush (head of delegation); Janet Ann Sanderson; and M. Rony Francois.

May 9

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Coconut Creek, FL.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Tampa, FL, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Julie Whitney. He then traveled to Sun City Center, FL.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Orlando, FL, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Dick Stipe.

May 10

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, at Norman's Restaurant, he participated in an interview with representatives of Florida's print media.

Later in the morning, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon.

May 11

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Yellow Oval Room, he met with Chinese human rights activists Li Baiguang, Wang Yi, and Yu Jie.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Biloxi, MS, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Deeneaus Polk.

Later in the afternoon, the President met with family members of soldiers killed in the war on terror. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gayleatha Beatrice Brown to be Ambassador to Benin.

The President announced his intention to nominate Peter R. Coneway to be Ambassador to Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christina B. Rocca for the rank of Ambassador during her tenure of service as U.S. Representative to the Conference on Disarmament.

The President announced his intention to nominate William H. Tobey to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation in the National Nuclear Security Administration at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to appoint Arthur E. Johnson and Walter B. McCormick, Jr., as members of the President's National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Commission on Presidential Scholars: Robert A. Gleason, Jr.; Richard R. Kilgust; J. Bryan Pickens; Linda O. Shaw; and Harvey W. Schiller.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad: Linda Leuchter Addison; Ronald H. Bloom; David A. Burke; Mordechai E. Gobioff; Andrew M. Klein; Elizabeth May Stern; Robert Zarnegin; Martin Berson Gold; and Harley Lippman.

May 12

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to Camp David, MD.

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 May 8

General Michael V. Hayden,
U.S. Air Force, to be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, vice Porter J. Goss, resigned.

Troy R. Justesen,
of Utah, to be Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education, Department of Education, vice Susan K. Sclafani.

W. Stuart Symington, IV,
of Missouri, 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 Djibouti.

Submitted May 9

Victoria Ray Carlson,
of Iowa, to be a member of the National Council on Disability for a term expiring September 17, 2007, vice Joel Kahn, term expired.

Chad Colley,
of Florida, to be a member of the National Council on Disability for a term expiring September 17, 2007, vice David Wenzel, term expired.

Lisa Mattheiss,
of Tennessee, to be a member of the National Council on Disability for a term expiring September 17, 2007, vice Carol Hughes Novak, term expired.

Eric Solomon,
of New Jersey, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, vice Pamela F. Olson, resigned.

John R. Vaughn,
of Florida, to be a member of the National Council on Disability for a term expiring September 17, 2007, vice Lex Frieden, term expired.

Ellen C. Williams,
of Kentucky, to be a Governor of the U.S. Postal Service for the remainder of the term expiring December 8, 2007, vice John S. Gardner.

Submitted May 10

Neil M. Gorsuch,
of Colorado, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Tenth Circuit, vice David M. Ebel, retired.

Submitted May 11

Thomas D. Anderson,
of Vermont, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Vermont for the term of 4 years, vice Peter W. Hall, resigned.

Gayleatha Beatrice Brown,
of New Jersey, 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 Benin.

Peter R. Coneway,
of Texas, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Switzerland, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Christina B. Rocca,
of Virginia, for the rank of Ambassador during her tenure of service as U.S. Representative to the Conference on Disarmament.

William H. Tobey,
of Connecticut, to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation, National Nuclear Security Administration, vice Paul Morgan Longsworth, resigned.

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 May 6

Advanced text: Remarks by the President to Oklahoma State University

Released May 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Director of National Intelligence John D. Negroponte on the nomination of Gen. Michael V. Hayden, USAF, to be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by Prime Minister John Howard of Australia

Fact sheet: Brett M. Kavanaugh: Nominee to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit

Fact sheet: Darfur Agreement: A Step Toward Peace

Fact sheet: General Michael V. Hayden: The Right Leader for the CIA

Released May 9

Transcript of a press gaggle by former Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Fact sheet: General Michael V. Hayden: Extremely Well Qualified To Lead the CIA

Fact sheet: Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage: Saving Beneficiaries Money, and Getting Them the Drugs They Need

Released May 10

Fact sheet: The President's Identity Theft Task Force

Released May 11

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Dana Perino

Advanced text: The President Delivers the Commencement Address to Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College

Released May 12

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3351 and S. 584

Acts Approved by the President

Approved May 5 *

S. 592 / Public Law 109–219
Glendo Unit of the Missouri River Basin Project Contract Extension Act of 2005

S.J. Res. 28 / Public Law 109–220
Approving the location of the commemorative work in the District of Columbia honoring former President Dwight D. Eisenhower

Approved May 12

H.R. 3351 / Public Law 109–221
Native American Technical Corrections Act of 2006

S. 584 / Private Law 109–1
Betty Dick Residence Protection Act

* These public laws were not received in time for inclusion in the appropriate issue.