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This past Thursday, the House of Representatives passed a bill granting line-item-veto authority. This was a victory for the taxpayers and for spending restraint. I call on the Senate to show a bipartisan commitment to fiscal discipline by passing the line-item veto so we can work together to cut wasteful spending, reduce the deficit, and save money for American taxpayers.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on June 23 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on June 24. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 23 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Organizations That Support the United States Military in Iraq and Afghanistan and an Exchange With Reporters

June 26, 2006

The President. I have just had a remarkable discussion with some of my fellow citizens who have dedicated their lives to making sure our troops know that this country supports them as they help secure our country and spread freedom.

One of the amazing things about America is that people are desirous of coming together to support a neighbor in need. And we've got kids who are overseas defending this country, and we've got people at this table who are supporting their families, their loved ones, and most importantly, the troops who are in harm's way.

There's an organization called America Supports You. I would hope my fellow citizens would look on the web page, americasupportsyou.mil, to determine how you can help support our troops if you so desire. I would urge Americans to do that, and around the table are leaders of the different organizations that make up this umbrella group. We've heard from people that are helping families of the wounded. We're talking to people who are using their position in different fields, like the entertainment field, to go over and provide hope for our troops. We're talking to moms and wives of those who have volunteered to serve our country.

But I want to thank you all for joining us, and thank you for serving your country. I told the folks here that the politics in Washington can be rough. But make no mistake about it, I am determined to succeed. And we will implement a plan to achieve victory, which is necessary, and that they need to tell the troops that no matter how tough it looks here in the Nation's capital, that I know we're doing the right thing, and I know we will win.

I'll take a couple of questions. Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Iraq/U.S. Armed Forces

Q. Mr. President, General Casey saw you on Friday, and it's been reported that he's talked about withdrawing two brigades from Iraq by this year. Can you tell us what he recommended to you?

The President. First of all, I did meet with General Casey, and I met with him because it's very important for me, as well as Secretary Rumsfeld, to meet with our commander on the ground. I've told the American people our commanders will be making the decisions as to how to achieve victory, and General Casey, of course, is the lead person. So we had a good visit with him.

And we talked about a lot of things. The first thing we talked about was the joint operations with the Iraqi forces to secure Baghdad and how that's going. We talked about the actions we're taking in Ramadi. The coalition is in the lead in Ramadi, and we're trying to make sure Ramadi does not become a safe haven for Al Qaida. And so he explained to me the tactics on the ground, what we're doing to secure that city and to run the Al Qaida-types out.

We talked about the Iraqi training mission. And as you well know, our standards are, as Iraqis stand up, the coalition will be able to stand down. And he talked about that kind of progress.

But in terms of our troop presence there, that decision will be made by General Casey, as well as the sovereign Government of Iraq, based upon conditions on the ground. And

one of the things that General Casey assured me of is that whatever recommendation he makes, it will be aimed toward achieving victory. And that's what we want. And victory means a free Government that is able to sustain itself, defend itself. It's a Government that will be an ally in the war on terror. It's a Government that will be able to fight off Al Qaida and its desires to have a safe haven.

And so I did visit with General Casey, and I came away once again with my trust in that man. I've told the people here around the table that the decisions that I will make will be based upon the recommendations of people like General George Casey.

Toby [Tabassum Zakaria, Reuters].

North Korea

Q. Mr. President, how much closer do you believe North Korea is to launching the long-range missile, and how concerned are you about this? What if they just launch a satellite——

The President. Toby, I have said that the North Koreans should notify the world of their intentions, what they have on top of that vehicle and what are their intentions. We have not heard from the North Koreans, so I can't tell you what their intentions are. I have made clear to our partners on this issue—that would be Japan and South Korea and China and Russia—that we need to send a focused message to the North Koreans in that this launch is provocative. And I was pleased to hear that the Chinese have delivered that message to the North Koreans, and we would hope that the leader in North Korea listened to the Chinese.

So we don't know; we don't know. That's part of the problem. It's a nontransparent society that ought to be sharing its intentions with the rest of the world.

Hutch [Ron Hutcheson, Knight Ridder].

Environment

Q. I know you are not planning to see Al Gore's new movie, but do you agree with the premise that global warming is a real and significant threat to the planet that requires action——

The President. I think—I have said consistently that global warming is a serious problem. There's a debate over whether it's manmade or naturally caused. We ought to get beyond that debate and start implementing the technologies necessary to enable us to achieve a couple of big objectives: one, be good stewards of the environment; two, become less dependent on foreign sources of oil for economic reasons and for national security reasons.

That's why we're pressing for clean coal technology. That's why the hydrogen initiative is robust. In other words, we want our children being able to drive cars not fueled by gasoline but by hydrogen. That's why I've been a strong advocate of ethanol as an alternative source of fuel to run our cars. I strongly believe that we ought to be developing safe nuclear power. The truth of the matter is, if this country wants to get rid of its greenhouse gases we've got to have the nuclear power industry be vibrant and viable. And so I believe in—and I've got a plan to be able to deal with greenhouse gases.

April [April Ryan, American Urban Radio Networks].

Voting Rights Legislation

Q. Mr. President, what are you doing to ensure that the Voting Rights Act is reauthorized by the midterm elections, as you're saying that's one of your top priorities? And also, do you support foreign ballots—foreign language ballots?

The President. I am working very carefully with Members of Congress to implement that which I said when I signed the proclamation for Rosa Parks, is I want this Voting Rights Act extended. And so we're working with Members of the United States Congress to see if we can't get it done.

Bank Records/War on Terror

Q. Sir, several news organizations have reported about a program that allows the administration to look into the bank records of certain suspected terrorists. My questions are twofold: One, why have you not gone to Congress to ask for authorization for this program, 5 years after it started? And two, with respect, if neither the courts nor the legislature is allowed to know about these programs, how can you feel confident the checks and balances system works?

The President. Congress was briefed. And what we did was fully authorized under the law. And the disclosure of this program is disgraceful. We're at war with a bunch of people who want to hurt the United States of America, and for people to leak that program and for a newspaper to publish it, does great harm to the United States of America. What we were doing was the right thing. Congress was aware of it, and we were within the law to do so.

The American people expect this Government to protect our constitutional liberties and, at the same time, make sure we understand what the terrorists are trying to do. The 9/11 Commission recommended that the Government be robust in tracing money. If you want to figure out what the terrorists are doing, you try to follow their money. And that's exactly what we're doing. And the fact that a newspaper disclosed it makes it harder to win this war on terror.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:41 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea.

Remarks at a Reception for Black Music Month

June 26, 2006

Glad you're here. Thank you all. Welcome to the White House, and thank you for joining us as we celebrate Black Music Month.

I wish Laura were here, but she's got a good excuse. She's in New Orleans. She went down there to talk to the American Library Association's Annual Conference, and she spoke about the importance of rebuilding school libraries up and down the gulf coast of our country. She sends her best. I wish she could be here to hear the music. I know she's going to love it as much as I will love it.

I'm looking forward to introducing our artists here in a second. I do want to recognize Alphonso Jackson, who's a member of my Cabinet. Thank you for coming, and thank you for bringing us here. And it's good to see the Federal coordinator for the gulf coast rebuilding effort, Don Powell. Thank you for being here, sir. I welcome Chip Pickering from Mississippi and Congresswoman Marsha Blackburn from Tennessee. Thank you both for coming. I'm proud you're here.

It is always a special treat to be in the presence of Dr. Dorothy Height. Good to see you, Dr. Height.

And with us we have two great athletes, Alana Beard—thank you for coming, Alana—and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Proud you're here. I don't know whether you know this, but Kareem Abdul-Jabbar is a jazz expert, and he is working on a documentary about the connection between jazz and basketball. [*Laughter*] Pretty good combination. [*Laughter*]

During this month, we recognize the great contributions that black music has made to our Nation. That's why we're here. We express our gratitude to the artists whose works have inspired our Nation and have brought such beauty into the world.

Black music was often born of great pain, from the music of slaves who sang to warn others that the master was coming to the music of faith that helped African Americans endure tremendous suffering and overcome injustice. Black music is a really important part of our Nation's history and culture, and that's why we're celebrating it here today.

Some of the finest performances by black musicians have been heard right here in the White House, and we're going to continue that tradition today. During—in 1878, during the administration of Rutherford B. Hayes, soprano Marie Selika became the first black artist to perform here in the White House. A few years later, the Jubilee Singers of Fisk University became the first black choir to perform here. They moved President Chester Arthur to tears with a rendition of "Safe in the Arms of Jesus." Like the man they sang about, the Jubilee Singers could not find an inn that would welcome them here in Washington, DC. Those times have changed; thank goodness.

In more recent times, the White House has been graced by performances by artists like Louis Armstrong and Pearl Bailey, Ella Fitzgerald, Aretha Franklin, Shirley Caesar, Duke Ellington, and Lionel Hampton. These