

award to honor courage and fortitude and strength in promoting freedom.

And we have had an amazing discussion. My spirits are enriched by talking to freedom lovers and freedom fighters. We've got a man from the Sudan who talked eloquently about free press. We had a doctor from Zimbabwe who talked about the human condition and the need for the United States to make sure we stay engaged with the democracy movements and help people who are hungry.

I talked to two really unusual ladies, one from the Democratic Republic of Congo. She is very concerned about free elections, and she wants to make sure people in the rural part of her country are represented in free elections.

And then we had an amazing discussion with a lady from Sierra Leone but who's working in Liberia. And one of the most amazing stories is when she recounted the fact that she was escaping Liberia in the mid-1990s and had to get on a fishing boat to escape the authorities who wanted to bring—to do her harm because she expressed her desire for people to be free.

Again, I want to thank all of you for doing what you have done. I'm proud to be in your company. I'm proud to have you here in the Oval Office. I thank you for being witness to this universal fact: that liberty is universal in its application; that people everywhere desire to be free; that freedom is not just—belongs to the American citizens, freedom belongs to everybody. And you're courageous in your fight and your desire to spread the concept of freedom.

Congratulations on winning a very important award. Congratulations on being so courageous. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:22 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to National Endowment for Democracy's 2006 Democracy Award recipients Alfred Taban, Reginald Matchaba-Hove, Immaculee Birhaheka, and Zainab Hawa Bangura.

Remarks During a Run With Staff Sergeant Christian Bagge

June 27, 2006

The President. So I first met Christian when I went to Walter Reed—Brooke Army, San Antonio, Texas. And he said, "I want to run with you." He was in bed. He had lost both legs. I looked at him, like, you know, there's an optimistic person. But I could tell in his eyes that he meant it. And after a lot of hard work and a lot of compassionate care, this fine man is here on the South Lawn running with the President. And he ran the President into the ground, I might add. [Laughter]

But I'm proud of you. I'm proud of your strength; I'm proud of your character. Thank you for your service.

It's an amazing sight for me to be running with a guy who, last time I saw him, was in bed wondering whether or not—I was wondering whether or not he'd ever get out of bed. There was no doubt in his mind that he would.

Thanks for your service.

S. Sgt. Bagge. Your welcome, Mr. President.

The President. Good man. God bless you.

S. Sgt. Bagge. It's a privilege.

The President. We're not through running yet. Get out of the way. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:02 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. S. Sgt. Christian Bagge, USA, was injured in Iraq in June 2005 while serving in the Oregon National Guard.

Statement on Senate Action on a Proposed Constitutional Amendment To Prohibit Desecration of the American Flag

June 27, 2006

Today a bipartisan majority of United States Senators voted to protect our Nation's most important symbol through a Constitutional amendment to authorize Congress to prohibit the desecration of the American flag. Unfortunately, the final count fell short of the votes needed to send this important proposed amendment to the States for ratification.

By showing respect for our flag, we show reverence for the ideals that guide our Nation and we show appreciation for the men and women who have served in defense of those ideals.

I command the Senators from both parties who voted to allow the amendment ratification process to protect our flag to go forward, and continue to believe that the American people deserve the opportunity to express their views on this important issue.

NOTE: The statement referred to S.J. Res. 12.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Budget Amendments for International Assistance Programs

June 27, 2006

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed FY 2007 Budget amendments for International Assistance Programs. The total discretionary budget authority in my FY 2007 Budget would not be increased by these requests.

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

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

Remarks Following a Meeting With Military Personnel in St. Louis, Missouri

June 28, 2006

I want to thank you all for coming. I just had a discussion with fellow citizens in the Guard, Reserve, and active duty who have been in both Iraq and Afghanistan. I want to thank you for sharing your insights with me. Thank you for your service to the country.

I told these men and women that their service is necessary for the security of the United States of America and that they're serving in historic times. And one day, their children will be able to look back and say, "My dad or my mom went to Iraq and Af-

ghanistan and helped a young country become a democracy, and therefore, the world is more peaceful for it."

One of the things I am going to do is, I'm going to meet with the family members of these good people and express our country's gratitude for their service as well. A lot of times, military families don't get proper thanks, and I can't wait to meet your loved ones and tell them firsthand that the country appreciates your service.

One thing I told these good folks is that this country stands with the people wearing our Nation's uniform. We're with you. We know the work is hard, but the work is necessary. And we're winning—and we're winning. And the world is going to be better off because of your courageous service, and I thank you for it.

Thanks for letting me come by and visit. I appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:41 p.m. at the VFW Overland-St. Ann Memorial Post 3944.

Remarks at a Dinner for Senatorial Candidate James M. Talent in St. Louis

June 28, 2006

The President. Thanks for coming. Thanks a lot. Thanks for the warm welcome.

Audience Member. Four more years! [Laughter]

The President. No more wife. [Laughter]

Thanks for supporting Jim Talent. He is a decent, honorable, can-do man who deserves to be reelected to the United States Senate.

Laura and I are very fond of Jim and Brenda. Jim is very fond of Laura, to the point where he was hoping she would be the keynote speaker. [Laughter] But the Senator and I both married very well. You know, you cannot succeed in this line of work unless you've got a supportive family. It's really important. And the Talents have the right priorities—their faith and their family and their country. And that's another reason why he's a great United States Senator. So not only do I want to thank Jim for his service, I do want to