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President Bush. Thank you very much. Yes.

Q. It's also my birthday.

President Bush. Today's your birthday, too?

Q. Yes, sir.

President Bush. It is? Come on up. Let's have a birthday picture. Come up, come up, come up. [*Laughter*] Come on. Get up here. Anybody else have their birthday today? [*Laughter*] It's your birthday? Yes, sure. It is your birthday? Come on. [*Laughter*] It's amazing, how everybody's birthday is today.

[*All present sang Happy Birthday to the President and others celebrating birthdays.*]

President Bush. Dear Richard—he just told me he's 30 years old. [*Laughter*] Happy birthday. Happy birthday.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:55 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations; Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea; President Hu Jintao of China; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea.

Remarks Following a Meeting With United States Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad

July 6, 2006

The President. It's been my pleasure to sit here and talk to our Ambassador from Iraq. I want—first, Zal, I thank you for your service. I really appreciate your family supporting you on this very important mission. I know the Secretary of State and the National Security Adviser join me in saying, it gives us great comfort to know that we've got a man of your caliber there. It's a hard job. And Zal has earned the confidence of the new Iraqi Government, and I was able to see that firsthand in how the Prime Minister and other members of his administration related to him.

He brought back a report that is realistic. On the one hand, he said they've got a good Government—goal-oriented people who are working to achieve certain objectives. And I know that you've been impressed by Prime Minister Maliki's determination to succeed and his willingness to lay out a commonsense agenda and then hold people to account.

Zal also said it's still a dangerous place because there are people there that will do anything to stop the progress of this new Government. And you have to ask yourself, who's afraid of democracy? I mean, why would people be afraid of a peaceful civil society? And the answer is, people who want to not only harm Iraqis but want to harm us.

And I've assured Zal that—to assure the Iraqi people that when we give our word, we'll keep our word. And we intend to work closely with the Government and to help defend the people until this Government is more capable of defending itself.

And he talked about police training. There's more work to be done in training the police. And we talked about the training of the Army, and it's gone quite well. Zal is concerned about foreign influences in the country, as am I.

I do appreciate your briefing on the Prime Minister's recent trip in the neighborhood, which looked like a very successful trip. We, of course, are concerned that some in the neighborhood may want to derail the progress of a free Iraq. And that is troubling and something that we'll work on.

But, Mr. Ambassador, you represent our country with a lot of class and dignity. And so, thank you. You may want to say a few comments.

Ambassador Khalilzad. Thank you, Mr. President. I came today to also wish the President a happy birthday. Happy birthday, Mr. President. And it's an honor to serve the United States in Iraq. Under your leadership, we're working very hard to make sure Iraq succeeds because Iraq is the defining challenge of our time. And what happens in Iraq will shape the future of the Middle East, and the future of the Middle East will shape the future of the world.

So it's an honor to see you again. And happy birthday, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you, sir. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:12 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks,

he referred to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq.

Remarks Following a Dinner With Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago and Business Leaders in Chicago, Illinois

July 6, 2006

Laura said, "What do you want for your birthday?" I said, "I want to have dinner in Chicago with the mayor." [*Laughter*] Thank you all for joining us. We've had a wonderful discussion. Chicago is a fabulous town, Mayor. And you're awfully kind to host us here.

Somebody said, "Well, what's your birthday wish?" I've got a lot of birthday wishes. I hope our troops are safe. I hope Roger Ebert does well. That's a birthday wish. I know a lot of people here in Chicago are praying for him. It's been a heck of a birthday party tonight, and I appreciate you all joining me, and looking forward to having my cake.

Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:21 p.m. in the Chicago Firehouse Restaurant. In his remarks, he referred to Chicago Sun-Times film critic Roger Ebert who had emergency surgery on July 2. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's News Conference in Chicago

July 7, 2006

The President. Please be seated. Thank you. It's nice to be here in Chicago. Mr. Mayor, I thought you might have had enough of me last night. [*Laughter*] Thanks for the birthday party. I really enjoyed our dinner and enjoyed our conversation. Jesse, thanks for being here as well. It's awfully kind of you to come.

I do want to thank the trustees of this beautiful museum for opening up your facility for a press conference. I hope it doesn't ruin the atmosphere of the museum. I will try to make sure it doesn't. I'm looking forward to a tour of this museum after the press conference.

I'm sure you're wondering why I would have a press conference in Chicago. It's a fabulous city, plus I'd like to see what it's like to have a major press conference outside of Washington. It might do me some good. The truth of the matter is, it might do the White House press corps some good as well. So I welcome the Chicago reporters here. Thank you for coming.

I had a fine dinner last night at the Chicago Firehouse and a good breakfast today at Lou Mitchell's. It's really interesting sites here in Chicago, and it's a lot of fun going to them. And I want to thank the gracious hospitality of the restauranteurs and the people of Chicago for—by welcoming me.

I had some conversations with some of the business leaders last night and for breakfast, and there's kind of an interesting sense of optimism here in this part of the world, and the statistics bear that out. In the Chicago area, businesses have added over more than 74,000 new jobs over the past 2 years. And that's positive; it's a good sign. The unemployment rate in this area is 4.3 percent—that's below the national average. People are working. People are able to find jobs. Illinois created more jobs than any other State in the month of April. So the entrepreneurial spirit is strong here.

One of the things I detected from the business leaders, that there's a sense of optimism which encourages people to invest. And when you invest, you create the conditions for job growth. Major companies have announced plans to add even more jobs.

This morning we got some good news—the Nation added 121,000 new jobs for the month of June. That's over 5.4 million jobs since August of 2003; that's 34 months of job increases. In the first quarter, our economy grew at 5.6 percent. Productivity is high. People are better off. Things are working. And so the fundamental question we face in Washington is, how do we keep economic vitality alive? What do we do? What are the policies necessary to keep this growth strong?

And one policy is to keep taxes low. If you raise taxes, you take money out of the pockets of small businesses and entrepreneurs, which makes it harder to increase employment. One of the reasons I'm here at this museum is because one way to make sure we continue