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decisions on the part of state trading enterprises, including decisions on the quantity, value, or country of origin of any goods purchased or sold, except in a manner consistent with the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization (WTO Agreement) and the rights accorded to nongovernmental enterprise owners or shareholders.

The obligations that Vietnam will assume under the WTO Agreement, including Vietnam's protocol of accession, meet the requirements of section 1106(b)(2)(A) of the Act (19 U.S.C. 2905(b)(2)(A)), and thus my determinations under section 1106(a) do not require invocation of the nonapplication provisions of the WTO Agreement.

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

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., November 9, 2006]

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The President's News Conference

November 8, 2006

The President. Thank you. Say, why all the glum faces?

Yesterday the people went to the polls, and they cast their vote for a new direction in the House of Representatives. And while the ballots are still being counted in the Senate, it is clear the Democrat Party had a good night last night, and I congratulate them on their victories.

This morning I spoke with Republican and Democrat leadership in the House and Senate. I spoke with Republican leaders, Senator Frist and Senator McConnell and Speaker Hastert and John Boehner and Roy Blunt. I thanked them for their hard-fought contests. I appreciated the efforts they put in for our candidates.

I'm obviously disappointed with the outcome of the election, and as the head of the Republican Party, I share a large part of the responsibility. I told my party's leaders that it is now our duty to put the elections behind us and work together with the Democrats and independents on the great issues facing this country.

This morning I also spoke with the Democrats. I spoke with Senators Reid and Durbin. I congratulated them on running a strong campaign in the Senate, and I told them that, regardless of the final outcome, we can work together over the next 2 years. I also congratulated Congresswoman Pelosi and Congressman Hoyer. They ran a disciplined campaign. Their candidates were well-organized and did a superb job of turning out their vote.

I told Congresswoman Pelosi that I look forward to working with her and her colleagues to find common ground in the next 2 years. As the majority party in the House of Representatives, they recognize that in their new role, they now have greater responsibilities. And in my first act of bipartisan outreach since the election, I shared with her the names of some Republican interior decorators who can help her pick out the new drapes in her new offices.

I believe that the leaders of both political parties must try to work through our differences. And I believe we will be able to work through differences. I've reassured the House and Senate leaders that I intend to work with the new Congress in a bipartisan way to address issues confronting this country. I invited them to come to the White House in the coming days to discuss the important work remaining this year and to begin conversations about the agenda for next year.

The message yesterday was clear: The American people want their leaders in Washington to set aside partisan differences, conduct ourselves in an ethical manner, and work together to address the challenges facing our Nation.

We live in historic times. The challenges and opportunities are plain for all to see: Will this country continue to strengthen our economy today and over the long run? Will we provide a first-class education for our children? And will we be prepared for the global challenges of the 21st century? Will we build upon the recent progress we've made in addressing our energy dependence by aggressively pursuing new technologies to break

our addiction to foreign sources of energy? And most importantly, will this generation of leaders meet our obligation to protect the American people?

I know there's a lot of speculation on what the election means for the battle we're waging in Iraq. I recognize that many Americans voted last night to register their displeasure with the lack of progress being made there. Yet I also believe most Americans and leaders here in Washington from both political parties understand we cannot accept defeat.

In the coming days and weeks, I and members of my national security team will meet with the members of both parties to brief them on latest developments and listen to their views about the way forward. We'll also provide briefings to the new Members of Congress so they can be fully informed as they prepare for their new responsibilities.

As we work with the new leaders in Congress, I'm also looking forward to hearing the views of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, cochaired by Secretary James Baker and Congressman Lee Hamilton. This group is assessing the situation in Iraq and are expected to provide—and the group is expected to provide recommendations on a way forward. And I'm going to meet with them, I think, early next week.

The election has changed many things in Washington, but it has not changed my fundamental responsibility, and that is to protect the American people from attack. As the Commander in Chief, I take these responsibilities seriously. And so does the man who served this nation honorably for almost 6 years as our Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld. Now, after a series of thoughtful conversations, Secretary Rumsfeld and I agreed that the timing is right for new leadership at the Pentagon.

Our military has experienced an enormous amount of change and reform during the last 5 years while fighting the war on terror, one of the most consequential wars in our Nation's history. Don Rumsfeld has been a superb leader during a time of change. Yet he also appreciates the value of bringing in a fresh perspective during a critical period in this war. Don Rumsfeld is a patriot who served our country with honor and distinction. He's a trusted adviser and a friend, and I'm deeply grateful to his service to our country.

I've asked Bob Gates to serve as the Secretary of Defense. Bob is a former Director of the CIA and current president of Texas A&M University. If confirmed by the Senate, Bob will bring more than 25 years of national security experience and a stellar reputation as an effective leader with sound judgment. He's served six Presidents from both political parties and rose from an entry-level employee in the CIA to become the Director of Central Intelligence. During his service at the CIA and at the National Security Council, Bob Gates gained firsthand knowledge that will help him meet the challenges and opportunities our country faces during the next 2 years. He is serving as a member of the Baker-Hamilton Commission. He's a steady, solid leader who can help make the necessary adjustments in our approach to meet our current challenges.

I will have more to say about Secretary Rumsfeld and Bob Gates later today here at the White House.

Amid this time of change, I have a message for those on the frontlines. To our enemies: Do not be joyful; do not confuse the workings of our democracy with a lack of will. Our Nation is committed to bringing you to justice. Liberty and democracy are the source of America's strength, and liberty and democracy will lift up the hopes and desires of those you are trying to destroy.

To the people of Iraq: Do not be fearful. As you take the difficult steps toward democracy and peace, America is going to stand with you. We know you want a better way of life, and now is the time to seize it.

To our brave men and women in uniform: Don't be doubtful. America will always support you. Our Nation is blessed to have men and women who volunteer to serve and are willing to risk their own lives for the safety of our fellow citizens.

When I first came to Washington nearly 6 years ago, I was hopeful I could help change the tone here in the Capital. As Governor of Texas, I had successfully worked with both Democrats and Republicans to find commonsense solutions to the problems facing our State. While we made some

progress on changing the tone, I'm disappointed we haven't made more. I'm confident that we can work together. I'm confident we can overcome the temptation to divide this country between red and blue. The issues before us are bigger than that, and we are bigger than that. By putting this election and partisanship behind us, we can launch a new era of cooperation and make these next 2 years productive ones for the American people.

I appreciate your interest. Now, I'll answer some questions. Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

U.S. Armed Forces in Iraq

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Does the departure of Don Rumsfeld signal a new direction in Iraq? A solid majority of Americans said yesterday that they wanted some American troops, if not all, withdrawn from Iraq. Did you hear that call, and will you heed it?

The President. Terry, I'd like our troops to come home too, but I want them to come home with victory, and that is a country that can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself. And I can understand Americans saying, "Come home." But I don't know if they said come home and leave behind an Iraq that could end up being a safe haven for Al Qaida. I don't believe they said that. And so, I'm committed to victory. I'm committed to helping this country so that we can come home.

Now, the first part about——

Q. A new direction.

The President. Oh, a new direction. Well, there's certainly going to be new leadership at the Pentagon. And as I mentioned in my comments, that Secretary Rumsfeld and I agree that sometimes it's necessary to have a fresh perspective, and Bob Gates will bring a fresh perspective. He'll also bring great managerial experience.

And he is—I had a good talk with him on Sunday in Crawford. I hadn't—it took me a while to be able to sit down and visit with him, and I did, and I found him to be of like mind. He understands we're in a global war against these terrorists. He understands that defeat is not an option in Iraq. And I believe it's important that there be a fresh perspective, and so does Secretary Rumsfeld.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Resignation of Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Last week you told us that Secretary Rumsfeld will be staying on. Why is the timing right now for this, and how much does it have to do with the election results?

The President. Right. No, you and Hunt and Keil [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News] came in the Oval Office, and Hunt asked me the question one week before the campaign, and basically it was, "Are you going to do something about Rumsfeld and the Vice President?" And my answer was, they're going to stay on. And the reason why is, I didn't want to inject a major decision about this war in the final days of a campaign. And so the only way to answer that question and to get you on to another question was to give you that answer.

The truth of the matter is, as well—I mean, that's one reason I gave the answer, but the other reason why is, I hadn't had a chance to visit with Bob Gates yet, and I hadn't had my final conversation with Don Rumsfeld yet at that point.

I had been talking with Don Rumsfeld over a period of time about fresh perspective. He likes to call it fresh eyes. He himself understands that Iraq is not working well enough, fast enough. And he and I are constantly assessing. And I'm assessing, as well, all the time, by myself about, do we have the right people in the right place or do we—got the right strategy? As you know, we're constantly changing tactics, and that requires constant assessment.

And so he and I both agreed in our meeting yesterday that it was appropriate that I accept his resignation. And so the decision was made—actually, I thought we were going to do fine yesterday. Shows what I know. But I thought we were going to be fine in the election. My point to you is, is that, win or lose, Bob Gates was going to become the nominee.

Let's see here. Bret [Bret Baier, FOX News].

Bipartisan Cooperation in Congress

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You said you're interested in changing the tone and committed to changing the tone in Washington. Just a few days before this election, in Texas, you said that Democrats, "No matter how they put it, their approach to Iraq comes down to terrorists win; America loses." What has changed today, number one? Number two, is this administration prepared to deal with the level of oversight and investigation that is possibly going to come from one chamber or two in Congress?

The President. What's changed today is the election is over, and the Democrats won. And now we're going to work together for 2 years to accomplish big objectives for the country. And secondly, the Democrats are going to have to make up their mind about how they're going to conduct their affairs. And I haven't had a chance to talk with the leadership yet about these issues, but we'll begin consultations with the Democrat leadership starting Thursday and Friday.

David [David Gregory, NBC News].

Implications of 2006 Elections/War on Terror

Q. Mr. President, thank you. You acknowledged that this is a message election on the war in Iraq. And so the American public today, having voted, will want to know what you mean in terms of "course correction on Iraq." And particularly in light of this fact, that last week the Vice President pointed out that you and he aren't running for anything anymore, and that it's full speed ahead on Iraq. So which is it? Are you listening to the voters, or are you listening to the Vice President? And what does that mean?

The President. David, I believe Iraq had a lot to do with the election, but I believe there was other factors as well. People want their Congress—Congressmen to be honest and ethical. So in some races, that was the primary factor. There were different factors that determined the outcome of different races, but no question, Iraq was on people's minds. And as you have just learned, I am making a change at the Secretary of Defense to bring a fresh perspective as to how to achieve something I think most Americans want, which is a victory.

We will work with Members of Congress; we will work with the Baker-Hamilton Commission. My point is, is that while we have been adjusting, we will continue to adjust to achieve the objective. And I believe that's what the American people want.

Somehow it seeped in their conscious that my attitude was just simply, stay the course. "Stay the course" means, let's get the job done, but it doesn't mean staying stuck on a strategy or tactics that may not be working. So perhaps I need to do a better job of explaining that we're constantly adjusting. And so there's fresh perspective—so what the American people hear today is we're constantly looking for fresh perspective.

But what's also important for the American people to understand is that if we were to leave before the job is done, the country becomes more at risk. That's what the Vice President was saying—he said, "If the job is not complete, Al Qaida will have safe haven from which to launch attacks." These radicals and extremists have made it clear they want to topple moderate governments to spread their ideology. They believe that it's just a matter of time before we leave so they can implement their strategies. We're just not going to let them do that. We're going to help this Government become a government that can defend, govern, and sustain itself, and an ally in the war on terror.

Yes, sir.

Q. The message today is not full speed ahead? Is that right, that it's not——

The President. We've got another man with the mike, David, please.

Robert M. Gates

Q. Mr. President, thank you. Can I just start by asking you to clarify, sir, if, in your meeting with Steve and Terry and Dick, did you know at that point——

The President. I did not.

Q. ——you would be making a change on Secretary Rumsfeld?

The President. No, I did not. And the reason I didn't know is because I hadn't visited with his replacement—potential replacement.

Q. But you knew he would be leaving, just not who would replace him?

The President. No, I didn't know that at the time.

Q. Okay. May I ask you about Nancy Pelosi——

The President. The other thing I did know, as well, is that that kind of question, a wise question by a seasoned reporter, is the kind of thing that causes one to either inject major military decisions at the end of a campaign, or not. And I have made the decision that I wasn't going to be talking about hypothetical troop levels or changes in command structure coming down the stretch.

And I'll tell you why I made that decision. I made that decision because I think it sends a bad signal to our troops if they think the Commander in Chief is constantly adjusting tactics and decisions based upon politics. And I think it's important in a time of war that, to the extent possible, we leave politics out of the major decisions being made. And it was the right decision to make, by the way.

And secondly, I hadn't visited with Bob Gates. I told you I visited with him last Sunday in Crawford. You can't replace somebody until you know you got somebody to replace him with. And finally, I hadn't had my last conversation with Secretary Rumsfeld, which I had yesterday.

Representative Nancy Pelosi

Q. Mr. President, I'd like to ask you: Nancy Pelosi has been quite clear about her agenda for the first 100 hours. She mentions things like raising minimum wage, cutting interest rates on student loans, broadening stem cell research, and rolling back tax cuts. Which of those can you support, sir?

The President. I knew you'd probably try to get me to start negotiating with myself. I haven't even visited with Congresswoman Pelosi yet. She's coming to the Oval Office later this week; I'm going to sit down and talk with her. I believe on a lot of issues we can find common ground, and there's a significant difference between common ground and abandoning principle. She's not going to abandon her principles, and I'm not going to abandon mine. But I do believe we have an opportunity to find some common ground to move forward on.

In that very same interview you quoted, one of these three characters asked me about minimum wage. I said, there's an area where I believe we can make some—find common ground. And as we do, I'll be, of course, making sure that our small businesses are—there's compensation for the small businesses in the bill.

Q. What about tax cuts?

The President. Keil.

Vice President Cheney

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. In our discussion with you last week, which you've referenced here several times——

The President. Are you bringing this up so everybody else gets kind of jealous? [*Laughter*]

Q. Certainly. Certainly.

The President. Like Gregory, for example—he wishes he were there. [*Laughter*]

Q. This is a very competitive environment. No, but we asked you about the fate of Secretary Rumsfeld and Vice President Cheney. Vice President Cheney, of course, has made—takes many of the same positions that Secretary Rumsfeld did on the war. Does he still have your complete confidence?

The President. Yes, he does.

Q. Do you expect him to stay——

The President. The campaign is over. Yes, he does.

Q. And he'll be here for the remainder of your term?

The President. Yes, he will. Thank you.

Suzanne [Suzanne Malveaux, Cable News Network].

Bipartisan Cooperation in Congress

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. With all due respect, Nancy Pelosi has called you incompetent, a liar, the emperor with no clothes, and as recently as yesterday, dangerous. How will you work with someone who has such little respect for your leadership and who is third in line to the Presidency?

The President. Suzanne, I've been around politics a long time; I understand when campaigns end, and I know when governing begins. And I am going to work with people of both parties.

Look, people say unfortunate things at times. But if you hold grudges in this line

of work, you're never going to get anything done. And my intention is to get some things done. And as I said, I'm going to start visiting with her on Friday, with the idea of coming together.

Look, this was a close election. If you look at race by race, it was close. The cumulative effect, however, was not too close—it was a thumping. But nevertheless, the people expect us to work together. That's what they expect. And as I said in my opening comments, there comes responsibility with victory. And that's what Nancy Pelosi told me this morning. She said in the phone call she wants to work together. And so do I. And so that's how you deal with it.

This isn't—this isn't my first rodeo. In other words, I haven't—this is not the first time I've been in a campaign where people have expressed themselves, and in different kinds of ways. But I have learned that if you focus on the big picture, which, in this case, is our Nation and issues we need to work together on, you can get stuff done. For example, the No Child Left Behind Act is going to come up for reauthorization. There's an area where we must work together for the sake of our children and for the sake of a competitive America. And I believe we can get a lot done. And I know it's the spirit of the new leadership to try to get a lot done, and I look forward to talking to them about it.

Rutenberg [Jim Rutenberg, New York Times].

Implications of 2006 Elections

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You just described the election results as a "thumping."

The President. I said the cumulative—make sure—who do you write for?

Q. The New York Times, Mr. President.

The President. Oh, yes, that's right. [*Laughter*] Let's make sure we get it—the facts. I said that the elections were close; the cumulative effect——

Q. Is a thumping.

The President. ——thumping. [*Laughter*]

Q. But the results——

The President. It's a polite way of saying—anyway, go ahead. [*Laughter*]

Q. But the results are being interpreted as a repudiation of your leadership style in some quarters. I wonder what your reaction is to that. And do you—should we expect a very different White House? Should we expect a very different leadership style from you in these last 2 years, given that you have a whole new set of partners?

The President. You know, I really haven't—I'm still going to try to speak plainly about what I think are the important priorities of the country, and winning this war on terror is, by far, the most important priority. And making sure this economy continues to grow is an important priority. And making sure our children have a good education is an important priority.

Obviously, there's a shift in the Congress and, therefore, in order to get legislation passed, we've got to work with the Democrats. They're the ones who will control the committees; they're the ones who will decide how the bills flow. And so you'll see a lot of meetings with Democrats and a lot of discussion with Democrats.

And in terms of the election, no question Iraq had something to do with it. And it's tough in a time of war when people see carnage on their television screens. The amazing thing about this election, and what surprised me somewhat—which goes to show I should not try punditry—is that this economy is strong. And a lot of times, off years are decided by the economy. And yet, obviously there was a different feel out there for the electorate. The economy—the good news in the economy was overwhelmed by the toughness of this fight and toughness of the war.

And so, Jim, look, I understand people don't agree—didn't agree with some of my decisions. I'm going to continue making decisions based upon what I think is right for the country. I've never been one to try to fashion the principles I believe or the decisions I make based upon trying to—kind of short-term popularity. I do understand where the people—the heart of the people. I understand they're frustrated. I am too, as I said the other day. I wish this had gone faster. So does Secretary Rumsfeld. But the reality is, is that it's a tough fight, and we're going to win the fight. And I truly believe the only

way we won't win is if we leave before the job is done.

Yes, Jim.

Bipartisan Cooperation in Congress

Q. May I follow that, sir?

The President. I know, terrible principle. I'm sorry.

Q. Thank you, sir.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. You think I'm nuts? [*Laughter*] You think my sensibility has left me as a result of working hard on the campaign trail, Gregory? [*Laughter*]

Q. But to follow, we were speaking about the war, and during the campaign, two very different viewpoints of the war came out. You spoke a lot, as Bret mentioned, about what you saw as the Democratic approach to the war, which you were greatly concerned about. Are you worried that you won't be able to work with the Democrats, or do you feel like you have to prevail upon them your viewpoint?

The President. Well, I think we're going to have to work with them, but—just like I think we're going to have to work with the Baker-Hamilton Commission. It's very important that the people understand the consequences of failure. And I have vowed to the country that we're not going to fail. We're not going to leave before the job is done. And obviously, we've got a lot of work to do with some Members of Congress. I don't know how many Members of Congress said, "Get out right now"—I mean, the candidates running for Congress in the Senate. I haven't seen that chart. Some of the comments I read where they said, "Well, look, we just need a different approach to make sure we succeed"—well, you can find common ground there.

See, if the goal is success, then we can work together. If the goal is, get out now regardless, then that's going to be hard to work together. But I believe the Democrats want to work together to win this aspect of the war on terror.

I'm also looking forward to working with them to make sure that we institutionalize, to the extent possible, steps necessary to make sure future Presidents are capable of waging this war. Because Iraq is a part of the war on terror, and it's—I think back to Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower. I mean, Harry Truman began the cold war, and Eisenhower, obviously, from a different party, continued it. And I would hope that would be the spirit that we're able to work together. We may not agree with every tactic, but we should agree that this country needs to secure ourselves against an enemy that would like to strike us again. This enemy is not going away after my Presidency.

And I look forward to working with them. And I truly believe that Congresswoman Pelosi and Harry Reid care just about as much—they care about the security of this country, like I do. They see the—no leader in Washington is going to walk away from protecting the country. We have different views on how to do that, but their spirit is such that they want to protect America. That's what I believe.

Just like I talked about the troops. I meant what I said. Look, the people that's—are going to be looking at this election—the enemy is going to say, "Well, it must mean America is going to leave." And the answer is, no, that doesn't—what it means. Our troops are wondering whether or not they're going to get the support they need after this election. Democrats are going to support our troops just like Republicans will. And the Iraqis have got to understand, this election—as I said, don't be fearful. In other words, don't look at the results of the elections and say, "Oh, no. America is going to leave us before the job is complete." That's not what's going to happen, Jim.

Yes, sir, Fletcher [Michael Fletcher, Washington Post].

"District of Columbia Fair and Equal House Voting Rights Act of 2006"

Q. Thank you, sir. There's a bill that could come before the lameduck session of Congress that would extend voting rights to the District of Columbia, in Congress, and also give an extra seat to Utah. You've been passionate about democracy in Iraq. Why not here in DC, and would you support this bill?

The President. Yes, I haven't—it's the first I've heard of it. I didn't know that's going to come up from the lameduck.

Q. ——Congressman Davis's bill.

The President. Yes, well, it may or may not come up. I'm trying to get the Indian deal done, the Vietnam deal done, and the budgets done. But I'll take a look at it. It's the first I've heard of it. Thanks.

Let's see here. Yes, sir.

Iraq/Vietnam Analogy

Q. Mr. President, you mentioned the prospect that your successor would be dealing with the war. You'll be making your first trip to Vietnam in roughly a week. Some people are still—are looking at the war as another Vietnam war. Are they wrong to do so? And if so, why?

The President. I think they are. I think they are. First of all, Iraq is—after the overthrow of the tyrant, voted on a Constitution that is intended to unite the whole country. And then they had elections under that Constitution where nearly 12 million people voted for this unity Government. Secondly—which is different from Vietnam.

Secondly, in terms of our troops, this is a volunteer army. Vietnam wasn't a volunteer army, as you know. And in this volunteer army, the troops understand the consequences of Iraq and the global war on terror. That's why reenlistment rates are up, and that's why enlistment is high.

Thirdly, the support for our troops is strong here in the United States, and it wasn't during the Vietnam era. So I see differences; I really do. And you hear all the time, "Well, this may be a civil war." Well, I don't believe it is, and the Maliki Government doesn't believe it is. Zal, our Ambassador, doesn't believe it is. But we've got to make sure it isn't by implementing a strategy which helps—a politics strategy which helps unify the country, and a security strategy that makes sure that the Iraqis are better capable of fighting off the extremists and the radicals that want to stop progress in Iraq.

So I don't think it is a parallel.

Mike [Michael Allen, Time].

President's Decisionmaking

Q. Thank you, sir. During this campaign season some religious conservatives expressed support and appreciation for the work you've done. But some also expressed that they felt like they expended a lot of effort on your behalf without a lot of results. I wonder if you could tell us what parts of their agenda are still on your radar screen, and if you think they're right to be frustrated? And also, Mr. President, may I ask you if you have any metrics you'd be willing to share about your reading contest with Mr. Rove.

The President. I'm losing. I obviously was working harder in the campaign than he was. [*Laughter*]

Audience members. Oooooh!

The President. He's a faster reader.

You know, Michael, I must confess, I cannot catalog for you in detail the different criticisms. In this line of work you get criticized from all sides. And that's okay; it's just part of the job. And so I'm not exactly sure what you're talking about, but I can tell you that I believe the faith-based and community-based—the Faith and Community-Based Initiative is a vital part of helping solve intractable problems here in America. And I would hope that I could work with Congress to make sure this program, which has been invigorated, remains invigorated.

And the reason why I believe in it so much is that there are just some problems that require something other than government help, and it requires people who have heard a call to help somebody in need. And I believe we ought to open up grants to competitive bidding for these types of organizations, and we have done that. And it's very important that that program stay strong.

But, you know, Michael, you're probably following all these—the different lists of concerns people have with my Presidency, and I respect that. I just—frankly, I'm not sure exactly what you're talking about in this question. I'm sure there are some people who aren't perfectly content, but there are some people that aren't perfectly content from different parties and different philosophies. All I know to do is to make decisions based upon principles that I believe are important, and now work with Democrat leaders in the Congress because they control the committees and they control the flow of bills. And I'm going to do that for the good of the country.

Let's see here—yes, McKinnon [John McKinnon, Wall Street Journal].

Analysis of 2006 Elections

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. If you had any do-overs to do in this race——

The President. You don't get to do them. [*Laughter*] Sorry.

Q. Or if Mr. Rove had any do-overs to do in this race——

The President. You don't get do-overs. Anyway, go ahead.

Q. Well, what would they be? I mean, are there any tactical—[*laughter*].

The President. Look—yes, well—I, frankly, haven't analyzed the election nearly as much as some of you have. You know, again, I think when you really look close at the results—first of all, there's a lot of close elections. No question Iraq had an impact. But it's hard to win an election when you're trying to win a write-off—a write-in campaign in our State of Texas. I mean, you could have the greatest positions in the world on issues and be the most articulate person on an issue, but to try to get—to win on a write-in is really hard to do.

We had the race in Florida, the Foley seat. That's a hard race to win in a Republican district because people couldn't vote directly for the Republican candidate. And all I'm telling you, John, is that there's a—when you dig into the races, there's a—look, I had to go down to Houston, in Sugar Land, and act as the secretary of state: Take your pencil into the box, and then write it in. And my only—the reason I bring that up is, I'm not sure Iraq had much to do with the outcome of that election.

Now, it certainly did in other places. One of the interesting observations I had from last night was that if you take a look at New York State, Senator Clinton ran a very strong race, but she ran a race that appeared to me to be on—just a Senate race. She wanted to show people she had the capacity to help others win. And the same thing happened in Pennsylvania with Governor Rendell. He ran a very strong race, as did Senator-elect Casey. And my only point to you is, is that I'm sure Iraq had something to do with the voters' mind, but so did a very strong turnout mechanism in those two important States.

So they're just going to have to analyze all the different results. As far as do-overs, look, talk to them.

Ann [Ann Compton, ABC News].

Bipartisan Cooperation in Congress

Q. Americans have heard it before, "There's going to be cooperation; we're going to get along." What can you do to show Americans that there—that you'll stop and avoid any gridlock? Because they've seen it come anyway.

The President. Well, we had some pretty good success early on in this administration. We got the No Child Left Behind Act passed, which was an important piece of bipartisan legislation. We got some tax cuts passed with Democrat votes.

Q. ——partisan——

The President. Let me—I know you're anxious, but—but so we've just now got to show people we're capable of doing it. I mean, you're right; there's—people are skeptical, and the way you defeat skepticism is perform. And I was very pleased with my conversation with Congresswoman Pelosi. It was a very gracious conversation and—albeit a little early in the morning, I must confess, but nevertheless, it was a good one. And my fault, since I was the person who initiated the call.

But I do believe we can get some things done. I think we can set an agenda—I hope so. I hope so. I didn't come to Washington just to occupy the office; I came to get some positive things done on behalf of the country. And there are some big issues we got to deal with. No Child Left Behind is one. Entitlements, that's going to be an interesting issue to try to deal with. And it's going to be very important in entitlements for people to feel comfortable about bringing ideas to the table and—people being Republicans and Democrats. If we do not have Republicans and Democrats at the table for entitlements, nothing is going to happen.

And therefore, I've instructed Secretary Paulson to reach out to folks on the Hill to see if we can't at least get a dialog started that will enable us, hopefully, to move forward on a very important issue that will affect this country for a long time if we don't solve it. And that is the unfunded liabilities inherent in these entitlement programs.

We need to continue to talk about energy. Dependency upon foreign oil is a national

security and economic security problem, and it's a problem that requires bipartisan cooperation. I know the Democrats are concerned about this issue, as am I.

So, in other words, there's areas where I believe we can get some important things done. And to answer your question, though, how do we convince Americans that we're able to do it? Do it. That's how you do it. You get something done. You actually sit down, work together, and I sign legislation that we all agree on. And my pledge today is, I'll work hard to try to see if we can't get that done.

Herman [Ken Herman, Austin American-Statesman].

Analysis of 2006 Elections

Q. I wanted to ask you about the thumpin' you took at yesterday's rodeo. You said you were disappointed; you were surprised——

The President. There you go. Rutenberg, you notice that? Taking one——

Q. And that was "thumpin' " without a "g," correct? I just want to make sure we have it right for the transcript. [*Laughter*] You said you were surprised; you didn't see it coming; you were disappointed in the outcome. Does that indicate that after 6 years in the Oval Office, you're out of touch with America, for something like this kind of wave to come and you not expect it? And on a somewhat related note, does Nancy Pelosi look much like Bob Bullock to you?

The President. [*Laughter*] That's an inside joke; I'm not commenting on it.

Secondly, I'm an optimistic person, is what I am. And I knew we were going to lose seats; I just didn't know how many.

Q. How could you not know that and not be out of touch?

The President. You didn't know it, either.

Q. A lot of polls showed it.

The President. Well, there was a—I read those same polls, and I believe that—I thought when it was all said and done, the American people would understand the importance of taxes and the importance of security. But the people have spoken, and now it's time for us to move on.

Ken [Kenneth T. Walsh, U.S. News and World Report].

Social Security Reform

Q. Mr. President, you mentioned entitlements, and one of the big, hot-button issues for the Democratic Party is Social Security and the idea of partial privatization, which you have talked about. And I wonder if there's anything in your agenda in that way that you're willing to adjust in the spirit of bipartisanship or back off from, given how important that is to the core of the Democratic Party?

The President. I told—Ken, I told Hank Paulson to tell the Members that we'd sit down and we'd listen to everybody's ideas. I put out my ideas, as you recall, I think in the State of the Union last time. And we want to hear their ideas. And hopefully out of this concept of folks sitting around a table sharing ways forward, that we will come up with commonality, that we are able to then say to the American people, "We've helped solve this problem."

But this is a tough issue. Look, I fully understand how hard it is. Social Security is—people are generally risk-adverse when it comes time to Social Security. My problem with that is, is that the longer you wait, the more difficult the issue is going to become. And some will keep pushing it, and hopefully we can get something done.

Richard [Richard Wolffe, Newsweek].

National Security

Q. A little earlier you said that you truly believe that the Democratic leaders care about the security of this country as much as you do. Yet just about at every campaign stop, you expressed pretty much the opposite. You talked about them having a different mindset——

The President. I did.

Q. ——about having a different philosophy, about waiting—about being happy that America gets attacked before responding.

The President. What did you just say, "happy"?

Q. You said they will be satisfied to see America——

The President. No, I didn't say, "happy." Let's make sure.

Q. You left that impression, forgive me.

The President. With you. Go ahead.

Q. Well, I'm wondering, looking back at the campaign and previous campaigns, do you think that it's been harder to pull the country together after the election by making such partisan attacks about national security?

The President. Richard, I do believe they care about the security. I don't—I thought they were wrong not making sure our professionals had the tools, and I still believe that. I don't see how you can protect the country unless you give these professionals tools. They just have a different point of view. That doesn't mean they don't—want America to get attacked. That's why I said what I said.

Yes, Jackson [David Jackson, Dallas Morning News].

Immigration Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. On immigration, many Democrats had more positive things to say about your comprehensive proposal than many Republicans did. Do you think a Democratic Congress gives you a better shot at comprehensive immigration reform?

The President. You know, I should have brought this up. I do. I think we have a good chance. And thank you. It's an important issue, and I hope we can get something done on it. I meant to put that in my list of things that we need to get done.

I would hope Republicans have recognized that we've taken very strong security measures to address one aspect of comprehensive immigration reform. And I was talking to Secretary Chertoff today; he thinks that these measures we're taking are beginning to have measurable effects and that catch-and-release has virtually been ended over the last couple of months. And that's positive.

And that's what some Members were concerned about prior to advancing a comprehensive bill. In other words, they said, "Show me progress on the border, and then we'll be interested in talking about other aspects." Well, there's progress being made on the border in terms of security, and I would hope we can get something done. It's a vital issue. It's an issue that—there's an issue where I believe we can find some common ground with the Democrats.

Q. What are the odds for a guest-worker provision?

The President. Well, that's got to be an integral part of a comprehensive plan. When you're talking comprehensive immigration reform, one part of it is a guest-worker program, where people can come on a temporary basis to do jobs Americans are not doing. I've always felt like that would be an important aspect of securing the border. In other words, if somebody is not trying to sneak in in the first place, it makes—decreases the work load on our Border Patrol and lets the Border Patrol focus on drugs and guns and terrorists. But that's a—I appreciate you bringing that up. I should have remembered it.

Listen, thank you all very much for your time. I appreciate your interest.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 1 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq; U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad; and Gov. Edward G. Rendell and Senator-elect Bob Casey of Pennsylvania.

Remarks on the Resignation of Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld and the Nomination of Robert M. Gates To Be Secretary of Defense

November 8, 2006

The President. Good afternoon, and welcome to the White House. Earlier today I announced my intent to nominate Robert Gates to be the next Secretary of the Defense, and now I'm pleased to introduce him to the American people. I also am looking forward to paying tribute to the man he will succeed.

America remains a nation at war. We face brutal enemies who despise our freedom and want to destroy our way of life. These enemies attacked our country on September the 11th, 2001. They fight us in Afghanistan and Iraq, and they remain determined to attack our country again. Against such enemies, there's only one way to protect the American people: We must stay on the offense and bring our enemies to justice before they hurt us again.