

on sensitive issues like corn and beans. We recognize that the best hope to lift millions out of poverty is to spread prosperity through free and fair trade. The people of the United States understand that when we help our neighbors build a better life for themselves, we advance peace and prosperity for all of us.

Today, the most important ties between the United States and Mexico are not government to government; they are people to people. These ties include churches and faith-based institutions that serve people on both sides of the *frontera*. These ties include our colleges and universities, which run important exchange programs for students and teachers. These ties include our businesses, which trade one another—trade with one another and invest in each other's countries. And these ties include the families, who send an estimated \$20 billion in remittances each year to their relatives here in Mexico, one of the largest private economic initiatives in the world. These ties are vital, and they are growing.

Mr. President, geography has made our countries neighbors, but the choice we've made for each other is a choice for freedom. And that choice has made us friends. I'm honored to be in your country. I'm looking forward to our discussions over the next 2 days. You have set a very ambitious agenda that is going to require a lot of hard work. But I'm confident that by working together, we'll build a better life and a future of hope for our peoples.

Thank you for having me. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:04 a.m. at Hacienda Temozon. In his remarks, he referred to Margarita Esther Zavala Gomez del Campo, wife of President Calderon. President Calderon spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

**Remarks at a Luncheon Hosted by
President Felipe de Jesus Calderon
Hinojosa of Mexico in Merida,
Mexico**

March 13, 2007

Senor Presidente, thank you very much for your gracious hospitality. I think you picked a perfect place to invite Laura and me and our delegation. It's a beautiful land. It is a spectacular day. And our meetings were constructive. Thank you, First Lady, for your hospitality as well.

Relations between Mexico and the United States are *muy importante*. We've got a great history. We've got a strong tradition of working together. And my job, Mr. President, is to do all I can to work with you to advance progress on both sides of the border.

There are issues, of course, issues that we discussed today and will continue to discuss in a manner of respect and dignity. Perhaps the biggest issue concerning your country is the issue of migration. America is a country of law; we'll respect law, but America is also a hospitable country, a country that recognizes the value of each human being. And as the President of your grand country, I know you're deeply concerned about how your citizens are treated within our country. And my pledge to you and the people of Mexico is they'll be treated with respect and dignity.

The best way to do that is to pass a migration law that upholds the values of America and, at the same time, allows us to respect the rule of law. As I told you in private, as you expressed your deep concerns about whether or not America can pass such a law, that I will use all the efforts I can, working with both Republicans and Democrats, to pass such a piece of legislation.

We spent a lot of time talking about Mexico's important role in the world, and I thank you for your leadership, Mr. President. You're President of a great country. You will use your influence to foster social justice and prosperity and peace. I look forward to your leadership on such issues—I look forward to helping you as best I can, as best as you request to do so.

And I, too, would like to offer a toast. I'd like to offer a toast to the great people of

a great country, *nuestro amigo*, Mexico, and to your *salud*, Mr. President.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:45 p.m. at Hacienda Temozon. In his remarks, he referred to Margarita Esther Zavala Gomez del Campo, wife of President Calderon. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Calderon. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

**Remarks at a Dinner Hosted by
President Felipe de Jesus Calderon
Hinojosa of Mexico in Merida**

March 13, 2007

Mr. President, Mrs. Zavala, members of your government, Governor of Yucatan, the mayor of Merida, other government officials, distinguished guests: *Buenas noches, y gracias*. Laura and I are delighted to be back in Mexico. We're grateful for the warm hospitality of President Calderon and Mrs. Zavala. We appreciate the chance to dine in this beautiful setting, which calls to mind Mexico's rich history and its bright future.

For Laura and me, the connection to Mexico stretches back for decades. *Somos Tejanos*. We have come to admire your country, the people, and your culture. As Governor, I worked closely with my counterparts on this side of the border and made a lot of friends in Mexico. As President, Mexico was the first country I visited and the first country whose leader I welcomed for a state dinner at the White House. Over the past 6 years, I've traveled all across your nation—from here in Merida to Monterrey to Los Cabos on the Pacific Coast. And this evening the relationship between Mexico and the United States is as strong and is as vibrant as it has ever been, and President Calderon and I intend to keep it that way.

The ties between our countries are deep and lasting. We are united by the bonds of family. We are united by the growing commerce that crosses our border each day. And we are united in our faith in an Almighty God.

The accident of geography made our two countries neighbors, but common values have made us friends. The most important

value we share is our belief in democracy, and last year, the world saw Mexican democracy in action. Across the country, large numbers of voters turned out for an election that was open, honest, and really close. Come to think of it, it sounds familiar to me. [*Laughter*] Your fidelity to the democratic process was the mark of a nation growing in confidence and freedom. And in the end, the Mexican people chose a good man to be their President.

Shortly before his inauguration, President Calderon came to see me in the Oval Office. I was impressed by his character, his leadership, and his devotion to the Mexican people. He's an innovative thinker with a vision of justice and prosperity for all in this nation. And during his first 100 days as President, he's shown his commitment to delivering results for all the people he has served. In my conversations today, he shared his willingness to work with members of all political parties and with people from all sectors of the civil society.

Today we discussed the President's top priorities. I share those priorities. His top priority is to provide security throughout the country. He's taking bold steps to enforce the rule of law, and to crack down on organized crime and drugs, and reform the judicial system.

The United States is a strong partner in these efforts. We've got work to do on our side of the border. People provide drugs because there is a demand for drugs, and the United States must do a better job of reducing the demand for drugs. And at the same time, I look forward to close cooperation. We'll work with the President and other Presidents in our region to interdict the supply of drugs.

President Calderon also knows the importance of creating new opportunities for Mexico's economy. He's laid out innovative policies to combat poverty and to create jobs. I found one of his policies most interesting—rewarding Mexican companies that hire first-time workers. And I appreciate his strong commitment to housing and infrastructure in southern Mexico.

He's called for economic reforms that encourage competition and fight corruption. He understands the importance of free and