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on time, and we've had 200 years of practice. Prime Minister Maliki and other Iraqi leaders are dealing with the issues far more controversial and complicated, and they are trying to do it all at once, after decades of a brutal dictatorship. Iraq's leaders aren't perfect, but they were elected by their people. They want what we want: a free Iraq that fights terrorists instead of harboring them. And leaders in Washington need to look for ways to help our Iraqi allies succeed, not excuses for abandoning them.

The challenge is before us—the challenge before us is hard, but America can meet it. And the conflict has come at a cost, on behalf of a cause that is right and essential to the American people. It's a noble cause. It is a just cause. It is a necessary cause. I wouldn't have asked the young men and women of our military to go in harm's way if I didn't think success in Iraq was necessary for the security of the United States of America. I know it can be difficult to see sometimes, but what happens on the streets of Baghdad and in the neighborhoods of Anbar has a direct impact on the safety of Americans here at home. And that is why we're in this fight, and that's why we'll stay in the fight, and that is why we're going to win this fight.

One of the great blessings of this country is that our men and women in uniform understand it. One of those young men was Specialist First Class Steven Davis of Fayetteville, North Carolina. Steven came from a proud military family. His father and grandfather were veterans. His younger brother, his mother, and her father were all stationed with him in Iraq.

When Steven was killed by an insurgent grenade on the Fourth of July, their hearts were broken. And yet somehow this remarkable family found a way to put aside their grief and continue to serve our country. Steven's mother said that Steven was proud of what they were doing in Iraq, so 6 days after the funeral, she went back on duty as a medic. His father, Buck, a gulf war veteran, says he wants to go to Iraq today. This family represents the best of the American spirit—a spirit that shows we have the grit and the will to defend the American people.

One day years from now, another President will be in a room like this. That President will look out upon a sea of caps worn by those who show a quiet pride in their service. Some in that audience will include people who won the fight against fascism and nazism and communism. You'll be joined by younger veterans who have fought in places like Kandahar and Ramadi. And just like you, the new generation of veterans will be able to say proudly they held fast against determined and ruthless enemies, helped salvage an entire region from tyranny and terror, and made a safer world for the American people.

To those future members of the American Legion and to all of you, I offer the gratitude of our Nation, and I offer my prayers for a future of peace. Thank you. And may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:14 a.m. at the Reno-Sparks Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Paul A. Morin, national commander, American Legion; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; and President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran.

Statement on the National Economy

August 28, 2007

When we keep taxes low, spending in check, and our economy open—conditions that empower businesses to create new jobs—all Americans benefit. Census Bureau data released today confirms that more of our citizens are doing better in this economy, with continued rising incomes and more Americans pulling themselves out of poverty.

The Census data shows that income gains in 2006 were substantial and widespread across all income categories. And the largest percentage income gains occurred for people in the bottom 20 percent of incomes.

The data also shows that poverty levels improved significantly, with nearly half a million fewer people living below the poverty line in 2006 than in 2005. Moreover, the poverty rate in 2006 was lower than all but one year in the 1980s and 1990s.

The Census data also shows that challenges remain in reducing the number of uninsured Americans. Containing costs and

making health insurance more affordable is the best way to reverse this long-term trend. I have put forth a reform proposal that would fairly distribute the tax advantages to purchasing health insurance, encouraging more workers to purchase their own health insurance.

What American workers do not need right now are tax increases to fuel excess spending by the Congress. I encourage Democratic leaders in Congress to resist their urge to increase taxes on Americans and to live within the budget limits I've proposed. It's vital that we do not undermine an economy that has created more than 8.2 million new jobs over the past 4 years and is improving standards of living for so many American families.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

Remarks Following a Dinner With Elected Officials and Community Leaders in New Orleans, Louisiana

August 28, 2007

The President. Ms. Chase, thank you for having us here. Laura and I are thrilled to be here with the Governor and the mayor and the Senator, the Congressman, members of my Cabinet, distinguished leaders in this community, and quiet heroes who have helped bring optimism and hope to New Orleans.

We've got social entrepreneurs in our midst, artists in our midst, all of whom have dedicated their lives to the renewal of New Orleans. And we're so honored to be in this restaurant. I know you would want me to say that the food here is about as good as any place here in New Orleans. [*Laughter*] And I will say it. [*Laughter*]

Reverend Fred Luter, Jr. It is that good.

The President. It is good. And we're so honored that you gave us a chance to come to the renovated restaurant. I know you're opening in a couple of weeks.

Leah Chase. In a couple of weeks, yes.

The President. Well, we're thrilled that you would allow us to come and taste your beautiful food in this spectacular room. We love your art, but more importantly, we love your spirit. You're one of the leaders here in this community.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:55 p.m. at Dooky Chase's Restaurant. In his remarks, he referred to Leah Chase, owner, Dooky Chase's Restaurant; Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, Senator Mary L. Landrieu, and Representative William J. Jefferson of Louisiana; Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA; and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Alphonso R. Jackson. Also participating in the dinner were Donald E. Powell, Federal Coordinator, Office of Gulf Coast Rebuilding; Raymond S. "Coach" Blanco, husband of Gov. Blanco; Tommy Andrade, owner, Blanca, LLC; John Besh, executive chef, Restaurant August and Besh Steakhouse at Harrah's Casino; Dr. Dale Betterton, comanager, Operation Blessing Medical Clinic; Julia Bland, executive director, Louisiana Children's Museum; Drew Brees, quarterback, New Orleans Saints; Joseph C. Canizaro, chairman and chief executive officer, Columbus Properties; Daryn Dodson, IDEAcorps fellow, Idea Village; Norman C. Francis, chairman, and Kim M. Boyle, member, Louisiana Recovery Authority; Lt. Gen. Russel L. Honore, USA, commanding general, First United States Army; Jared Kahan, volunteer, AmeriCorps; Jay Lapeyre, chairman, Business Council of New Orleans; Agustin "Augie" Lopez, owner, Smilie's Restaurant; Rev. Fred Luter, Jr., pastor, Franklin Street Baptist Church; musician Irvin Mayfield; Father Nguyen The Vien, pastor, Mary Queen of Vietnam Church; and Becky Zaheri, president and founder, Katrina Krewe.

Memorandum on Assignment of Function Concerning Assistance to Afghanistan

August 27, 2007

Presidential Determination No. 2007–29

Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Director of National Drug Control Policy, and the Director of National Intelligence

Subject: Assignment of Function Concerning Assistance to Afghanistan

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and laws of the United States, including section 301 of title 3, United States Code, the function of the President under the heading "Economic Support