AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

these violent attacks and to stand with the citizens of Lebanon who continue to struggle to protect their freedom.

Remarks on the Resignation of Mike Johanns as Secretary of Agriculture

September 20, 2007

President Bush. Good morning. Mike Johanns has informed me that he plans to return home to Nebraska, which means that his service as Secretary of Agriculture must come to an end. Mike has been an outstanding member of my Cabinet. I knew he would be when I asked him to become the Secretary of Agriculture. I've known him for a long time. I've admired the fact that he is not only a decent person and an honest person, but he's a person who can get some things done.

So I accepted his resignation, and Laura and I bid Mike and Stephanie a warm farewell. And I thank him from the bottom of my heart for leaving a State he loves to come here to Washington, DC, to work in an—to work as the Secretary of Agriculture. You know, Mike brought with him a lot of practical farm experience. After all, he was the proud son of a dairy farmer. He understands the importance of the land. He worked tirelessly on behalf of farmers and ranchers.

And Mike Johanns did an outstanding job as the Secretary of Agriculture. He brought focus and energy to the Department. He was a champion of renewable fuels. He expanded the Department's commitment to conservation. He worked endlessly to open up foreign markets for American beef. He provided timely assistance to farmers and ranchers devastated by natural disasters. I couldn't have asked for a better Secretary of Agriculture.

He worked hard to put in motion a good farm bill. I remember when Mike came here to the Oval, he said to me, he said, "What I'm going to do is, I'm going to travel the country and reach out to the stakeholders to lay the foundation for farm legislation." And that's exactly what he did. And I got feedback from all around America that Mike Johanns listened. He wisely shepherded the process in such a way that we've got a good farm bill in front of the Congress. He set the framework for success, and I'm confident we can get a good bill passed.

So I want to thank you for your good work getting this teed up.

Secretary Johanns. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. He's got a good team over at the Secretary of—at the Department of Agriculture. In other words, Mike understands that you've got to surround yourself with good folks. And so I feel very comfortable asking Chuck Connor, the Deputy Secretary, to serve as the Acting Secretary. And I want to thank Chuck for his good work.

Mike came by the White House here a couple of days ago, and he asked for my advice—and I appreciate it. Everybody likes to have their counsel sought. And during the discussion, he told me he was interested in continuing to serve America, but in a different role. And I asked him if this was something he was seriously considering. In other words, sometimes you get these rumors out there in the political process where somebody feels like they've got to say, yes, I'm interested. But no question in my mind that Mike loves Nebraska, and he's serious about going home and possibly serving the Nation in a different capacity.

And my answer was—to Mike was, I support you, and I encourage you to follow your heart. If it's Mike's decision and Nebraska's choice, he would make an outstanding Member of the United States Senate. There is no doubt in my mind.

And so I want to thank you for your service; thank you for your friendship; thank you for your commitment to America's farmers and ranchers and our country. And Laura and I wish you all the very best.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:27 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Johanns.

The President's News Conference

September 20, 2007

The President. Good morning. In just 10 days, the State Children's Health Insurance Program, known as SCHIP, is set to expire.