

Week Ending Friday, December 21, 2007

Statement on Senate Confirmation of James B. Peake as Secretary of Veterans Affairs

December 14, 2007

I am pleased that the Senate unanimously confirmed Dr. James Peake to serve as Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Dr. Peake is a decorated veteran, highly skilled physician, and proven leader who has devoted his career to serving America's men and women in uniform. His decades of expertise in combat medicine and health care management have provided him with a thorough understanding of the Department's responsibility to care for America's veterans.

One of his first tasks as Secretary will be to ensure that my administration continues to swiftly implement the recommendations of the Dole-Shalala Commission on Wounded Warriors. I am confident that he will build upon our record of improving care, reducing bureaucracy, and ensuring that our veterans receive the benefits they deserve.

NOTE: The statement referred to former Senator Bob Dole and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala, Cochairs, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

December 15, 2007

Good morning. In a time of war, America's top priority should be to ensure that our troops on the frontlines get the funding they need. So beginning in February, I submitted detailed funding requests to Congress to fund operations in the war on terror. Congress has had months to pass this funding. Unfortunately, with just days to go before Members leave for their Christmas vacation,

they still have not come through with these funds.

This week, Congress considered a defense authorization bill. An authorization bill is a pledge to spend money. Under such a bill, Congress will make a promise to fund our troops in combat. But a congressional promise, even if enacted, does not pay the bills. It is time for Congress to provide our troops with actual funding.

The stakes are high for our men and women on the frontlines. Our troops are striking blows against the terrorists and extremists in Iraq and Afghanistan, and these funds are critical to their continued success. The funds I have requested include money to carry out combat operations against the enemy. They include money to train the Iraqi and Afghan security forces to take on more responsibility for the defense of their countries. They include money for civilian agencies deployed in the field with our military to help build local governments and create jobs. And they include money for intelligence operations to protect our troops on the battlefield.

Congress has had plenty of time to consider the emergency funds our troops need. Time is running out. And Pentagon officials say that continued delay in funding our troops will soon begin to have a damaging impact on the operations of our military. Congress's responsibility is clear: They must deliver vital funds for our troops, and they must do it before they leave for Christmas. Our men and women on the frontlines will be spending this holiday season far from their families and loved ones. And this Christmas, they deserve more than words from Congress; they deserve action.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 11:15 a.m. on December 14 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 15. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December

14 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Death of Representative Julia M. Carson

December 15, 2007

Laura and I are saddened by the death of Representative Julia Carson. Throughout her decade of service in the U.S. House of Representatives and her nearly 20 years in the Indiana General Assembly, Representative Carson served her constituents in Indianapolis with passion and commitment. She was revered as a champion for building strong and safe communities, working to end homelessness, improving financial literacy for all Americans, and helping her constituents achieve and maintain the dream of home ownership.

Julia was a dedicated and admired public servant who will be missed by her many friends and colleagues both at home in Indiana and in our Nation's Capital. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family and friends.

Remarks on the National Economy and a Question-and-Answer Session in Fredericksburg, Virginia

December 17, 2007

The President. Thank you, all. Please be seated. Ralph, thanks for the invitation. Thanks for the gift; it was planted by the first George W. [*Laughter*] I'm glad to be here at the Rotary Club. I have spent some quality times at rotary clubs, whether it was asking for votes or selling baseball tickets. [*Laughter*] I could never get admitted to any of the clubs in Texas cause my voice wasn't good enough. [*Laughter*] But I'm proud to be with you. Thanks for letting me come by and share some thoughts with you about our economy, what's happening in Washington. And if time permits, I'll be glad to answer some questions if you have any.

I also want to thank the chamber for having me as well. Appreciate what you're doing. People say—they're probably wondering why would—old George W. has got something

important to say; why would he bother to come to a place out in the country? And the answer is, because this is where jobs are created; this is where dreams are lived; this is where values are upheld. And so I'm proud to be with you. It kind of reminds me of being in Texas, to come to a place where there's just down-to-earth people that are trying to do what's best for their families and their communities. And so I'm honored to be with you. I appreciate you letting me come by.

Ralph, thanks for the invitation. I also want to thank Bob Hagin. And I'm proud to be here with Congressman Eric Cantor from Richmond, Virginia, as well as newly elected Congressman Rob Wittman. Appreciate you being here. Good luck; I'm looking forward to working with you. I want to thank the speaker of the House of Delegates—you call them delegates, right? Yes. Bill Howell, a good man; good to see you, Mr. Speaker. Appreciate you being here. Senator-elect Richard Stuart, is that right? Yes, appreciate you, Richard. Thanks for coming as well. John [James]* Lacy, past president of Rotary International has bothered to come over. Mr. Lacy, thank you for serving.

You know, I tell the people of our country every time I can that the great strength of America is not our military—although I intend to keep it strong—or the size of our wallets. But the great strength of America are the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens who take time out of their everyday lives to love a neighbor like they would like to be loved themselves. That's what rotaries mean to me.

People are saying, "Well, how can we best foster the well-being of the community in which we live? What can we do as loving human beings to work with our youth like you do at this—here at this rotary club?" And so I want to thank you for what you're doing. I thank you for adding to the great compassion of our country. Societies change one heart and one soul at a time. And I hope you have found what others have found—that if you're part of that helping somebody's live improve, it improves your own.

* White House correction.