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Contents

Addresses and Remarks

See also Meetings With Foreign Leaders
Intelligence reform legislation—373
Kuwait-America Foundation's Stand for Africa gala dinner—372
National Republican Congressional Committee dinner—368
New York City, Economic Club of New York and a question-and-answer session—376
Provincial Reconstruction Team leaders and brigade combat commanders, briefing—374
Radio address—345
Tennesse
Arrival in Nashville—354
National Religious Broadcasters convention in Nashville—354
U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce—362
Women's History Month and International Women's Day, celebration—351

Bill Vetoes

"Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008," message—346

Communications to Congress

See also Bill Vetoes
Canada-U.S. Taxation Convention, message transmitting protocol amending—376
Iran, message on continuation of national emergency—362

Communications to Federal Agencies

Unexpected Urgent Refugee and Migration Needs Related to Kenya, memorandum—348

Interviews With the News Media

Exchange with reporters in the Oval Office—348

Meetings With Foreign Leaders

Poland, Prime Minister Tusk—348

Notices

Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran—361

Proclamations

National Poison Prevention Week—384
Women's History Month—353

Resignations and Retirements

U.S. Central Command, commander, statement—361

Statements by the President

See also Resignations and Retirements
Death of Archbishop Rahho of Mosul—376
Farm legislation—375

Supplementary Materials

Acts approved by the President—387
Checklist of White House press releases—386
Digest of other White House announcements—385
Nominations submitted to the Senate—386

Editor's Note: The President was at Camp David, MD, on March 14, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Published every Monday by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408, the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* contains statements, messages, and other Presidential materials released by the White House during the preceding week.

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Week Ending Friday, March 14, 2008

The President's Radio Address

March 8, 2008

Good morning. This week, I addressed the Department of Homeland Security on its fifth anniversary and thanked the men and women who work tirelessly to keep us safe. Because of their hard work and the efforts of many across all levels of government, we have not suffered another attack on our soil since September the 11th, 2001.

This is not for a lack of effort on the part of the enemy. Al Qaida remains determined to attack America again. Two years ago, Usama bin Laden warned the American people, quote, "Operations are under preparation, and you will see them on your own ground once they are finished," end quote. Because the danger remains, we need to ensure our intelligence officials have all the tools they need to stop the terrorists.

Unfortunately, Congress recently sent me an intelligence authorization bill that would diminish these vital tools. So today I vetoed it. And here is why.

The bill Congress sent me would take away one of the most valuable tools in the war on terror, the CIA program to detain and question key terrorist leaders and operatives. This program has produced critical intelligence that has helped us prevent a number of attacks. The program helped us stop a plot to strike a U.S. Marine camp in Djibouti, a planned attack on the U.S. consulate in Karachi, a plot to hijack a passenger plane and fly it into Library Tower in Los Angeles, and a plot to crash passenger planes into Heathrow Airport or buildings in downtown London. And it has helped us understand Al Qaida's structure and financing and communications and logistics. Were it not for this program, our intelligence community believes that Al Qaida and its allies would have succeeded in launching another attack against the American homeland.

The main reason this program has been effective is that it allows the CIA to use specialized interrogation procedures to question a small number of the most dangerous terrorists under careful supervision. The bill Congress sent me would deprive the CIA of the authority to use these safe and lawful techniques. Instead, it would restrict the CIA's range of acceptable interrogation methods to those provided in the Army Field Manual. The procedures in this manual were designed for use by soldiers questioning lawful combatants captured on the battlefield. They were not intended for intelligence professionals trained to question hardened terrorists.

Limiting the CIA's interrogation methods to those in the Army Field Manual would be dangerous because the manual is publicly available and easily accessible on the Internet. Shortly after 9/11, we learned that key Al Qaida operatives had been trained to resist the methods outlined in the manual. And this is why we created alternative procedures to question the most dangerous Al Qaida operatives, particularly those who might have knowledge of attacks planned on our homeland. The best source of information about terrorist attacks is the terrorists themselves. If we were to shut down this program and restrict the CIA to methods in the field manual, we could lose vital information from senior Al Qaida terrorists, and that could cost American lives.

The bill Congress sent me would not simply ban one particular interrogation method, as some have implied. Instead, it would eliminate all the alternative procedures we've developed to question the world's most dangerous and violent terrorists. This would end an effective program that Congress authorized just over a year ago.

The fact that we have not been attacked over the past 6½ years is not a matter of chance. It is the result of good policies and the determined efforts of individuals carrying

them out. We owe these individuals our thanks, and we owe them the authorities they need to do their jobs effectively.

We have no higher responsibility than stopping terrorist attacks. And this is no time for Congress to abandon practices that have a proven track record of keeping America safe.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on March 7 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 8. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 7 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the "Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008"

March 8, 2008

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 2082, the "Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008." The bill would impede the United States Government's efforts to protect the American people effectively from terrorist attacks and other threats because it imposes several unnecessary and unacceptable burdens on our Intelligence Community.

Section 444 of the bill would impose additional Senate confirmation requirements on two national security positions—the Director of the National Security Agency and the Director of the National Reconnaissance Office. The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission) observed that the effectiveness of the Intelligence Community suffers due to delays in the confirmation process; section 444 would only aggravate those serious problems. Senior intelligence officials need to assume their duties and responsibilities as quickly as possible to address the pressing requirements of national security. Instead of addressing the 9/11 Commission's concern, the bill would subject two additional vital positions to a more protracted process of Senate confirmation. Apart from causing such potentially harmful delays, this unwarranted requirement for Senate confirmation would also risk injecting political pressure into these positions of technical expertise and public trust.

Section 413 would create a new Inspector General for the Intelligence Community. This new office is duplicative and unnecessary. Each intelligence community component already has an Inspector General, and the Inspector General of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence has been vested with all the legal powers of any inspector general to carry out investigations on matters under the jurisdiction of the Director of National Intelligence. There is no reason to commit taxpayer resources to an additional inspector general with competing jurisdiction over the same intelligence elements. Creating duplicative inspectors general, who may have inconsistent views on the handling of particular matters, has the potential to create conflicts and impede the Intelligence Community from efficiently resolving issues and carrying out its core mission. In addition, the creation of a new inspector general would add yet another position in the Intelligence Community subject to Senate confirmation, contrary to the 9/11 Commission's recommendations.

Section 327 of the bill would harm our national security by requiring any element of the Intelligence Community to use only the interrogation methods authorized in the Army Field Manual on Interrogations. It is vitally important that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) be allowed to maintain a separate and classified interrogation program. The Army Field Manual is directed at guiding the actions of nearly three million active duty and reserve military personnel in connection with the detention of lawful combatants during the course of traditional armed conflicts, but terrorists often are trained specifically to resist techniques prescribed in publicly available military regulations such as the Manual. The CIA's ability to conduct a

separate and specialized interrogation program for terrorists who possess the most critical information in the War on Terror has helped the United States prevent a number of attacks, including plots to fly passenger airplanes into the Library Tower in Los Angeles and into Heathrow Airport or buildings in downtown London. While details of the current CIA program are classified, the Attorney General has reviewed it and determined that it is lawful under existing domestic and international law, including Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions. I remain committed to an intelligence-gathering program that complies with our legal obligations and our basic values as a people. The United States opposes torture, and I remain committed to following international and domestic law regarding the humane treatment of people in its custody, including the "Detainee Treatment Act of 2005."

My disagreement over section 327 is not over any particular interrogation technique; for instance, it is not over waterboarding, which is not part of the current CIA program. Rather, my concern is the need to maintain a separate CIA program that will shield from disclosure to al Qaeda and other terrorists the interrogation techniques they may face upon capture. In accordance with a clear purpose of the "Military Commissions Act of 2006," my veto is intended to allow the continuation of a separate and classified CIA interrogation program that the Department of Justice has determined is lawful and that operates according to rules distinct from the more general rules applicable to the Department of Defense. While I will continue to work with the Congress on the implementation of laws passed in this area in recent years, I cannot sign into law a bill that would prevent me, and future Presidents, from authorizing the CIA to conduct a separate, lawful intelligence program, and from taking all lawful actions necessary to protect Americans from attack.

Other provisions of the bill purport to require the executive branch to submit information to the Congress that may be constitutionally protected from disclosure, including information the disclosure of which could impair foreign relations, the national security, the deliberative processes of the Executive, or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties. Section 326, for example, would require that the executive branch report, on a very short deadline and in accordance with a rigid set of specific statutory requirements, the details of highly classified interrogation techniques and the confidential legal advice concerning them. The executive branch voluntarily has provided much of this information to appropriate members of Congress, demonstrating that questions concerning access to such information are best addressed through the customary practices and arrangements between the executive and legislative branches on such matters, rather than through the enactment of legislation.

In addition, section 406 would require a consolidated inventory of Special Access Programs (SAPs) to be submitted to the Congress. Special Access Programs concern the most sensitive information maintained by the Government, and SAP materials are maintained separately precisely to avoid the existence of one document that can serve as a roadmap to our Nation's most vital information. The executive branch must be permitted to present this information in a manner that does not jeopardize national security. The executive branch will continue to keep the Congress appropriately informed of the matters to which the provisions relate in accordance with the accommodation principles the Constitution contemplates and the executive and legislative branches have long and successfully used to address information sharing on matters of national security.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 8, 2008.

Memorandum on Unexpected Urgent Refugee and Migration Needs Related to Kenya

March 7, 2008

Presidential Determination No. 2008–14

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Unexpected Urgent Refugee and Migration Needs Related to Kenya

By the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including sections 2 and 4(a)(1) of the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962 (the "Act"), as amended (22 U.S.C. 2601 and 2603), and section 301 of title 3, United States Code:

(1) I hereby determine, pursuant to section 2(c)(1) of the Act, that it is important to the national interest to furnish assistance under the Act, in an amount not to exceed $4.9 million from the United States Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund for the purpose of meeting unexpected and urgent refugee and migration needs, including by contributions to international, governmental, and nongovernmental organizations and payment of administrative expenses of the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration of the Department of State, related to humanitarian needs in Kenya and for Kenyan refugees in neighboring countries; and

(2) the functions of the President in relation to this memorandum under section 2(d) of the Act, and of establishing terms and conditions under section 2(c)(1) of the Act, are assigned to you, and you may further assign such functions to any of your subordinates, consistent with applicable law.

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

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., March 12, 2008]

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 10, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on March 13.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Donald Tusk of Poland and an Exchange With Reporters

March 10, 2008

President Bush. It's been my honor to welcome the Prime Minister of our very close ally and strategic partner, Poland. We'll both have opening statements, and then we'll take two questions a side.

I want to thank you for your candor, thank you for your friendship. The people of Poland stand as a great example of freedom and liberty. This is a nation with a proud history, a nation that has resisted tyranny and now lives as an example of a free society. And there are millions of Americans who are proud of their heritage, Mr. Prime Minister. They're proud to be called Polish Americans. And we welcome you.

I want to thank you for your nation's contributions to the liberation of people in Iraq and Afghanistan. Your troops have performed brilliantly, and they'll be coming home based upon success. And I thank your Government and I thank the people of Poland for the sacrifices. I also thank you to help the young democracy in Afghanistan survive and thrive and flourish. And someday, Mr. Prime Minister, people are going to say, Afghanistan did exactly the same thing that happened in Poland: The people realized the blessings of liberty, and out of those blessings flowed peace.

The Prime Minister and I had a long discussion about a lot of subjects. One in particular I want to talk about, and that is our mutual security. The United States recognizes the need for Polish—the forces to be modernized. It's important for our allies to—when they are worried about the modernization of their forces, that friends respond, and we're responding. The first part of a response, of course, is to take inventory of needs. And, Mr. Prime Minister, before my watch is over, we will have assessed those needs and come up with a modernization plan that's concrete and tangible.

And along those lines, we talked about the need for mutual security and that the significant threats of the 21st century—or perhaps the most significant is a launch of a missile

with dangerous materials in its warhead. Technologies are developing that will enable the free world to be able to defend itself from blackmail and/or strike from these such types of launches.

And we're in discussions with Poland about how we can help the mutual security of the region. I've assured the Prime Minister that any decisions made will reflect the sovereignty of Poland. I've assured the Prime Minister that this system is not aimed at Russia. And I will continue to work with President Putin to give him those assurances as well. This system is designed for the threats of the 21st century.

And so I want to thank you very much for your candor and your friendship. And we're glad you're here. Thank you, sir.

Prime Minister Tusk. I want to thank very much you, Mr. President, for your hospitality and genuine warmth. It doesn't really happen often that people of such a high position are so open and so friendly as you.

President Bush. Thank you.

Prime Minister Tusk. From the very beginning, I was absolutely convinced that this meeting can bring us definitely closer to the work for good solutions.

I am also very glad, Mr. President, that both during our meeting and also here, you appreciate very much the contribution we are making with our troops in Iraq and in Afghanistan. For us Poles, it is really a very big effort, and we really are happy that such an important ally appreciates it.

What really is most important from this meeting, Mr. President, that in the spirit of those talks and also in the agreement which we have made during this conversation, we can draw the conclusion from that that the United States can count on Poland whenever it needs, and Poland can count on the United States whenever Poland is in need. And this is our belief, the embodiment of the idea of solidarity in the international dimension. And I want to thank you very much for this.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you.

Prime Minister Tusk. And what is really important for both parties—we came to a conclusion, both, during the talks—and also the cooperation which we would like to develop together—is that both the missile defense system and the modernization of the Polish forces, as well as the reinforcement of the global security system, which also influences the Polish security system, that all these issues come in one package, and that this is really something which gives us very much good hope for the future. This is a very important declaration for us, and once again, I want to thank you for that.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Feller [Ben Feller, Associated Press].

Q. Mr. President——

President Bush. Hold on for a second, please.

Q. When——

President Bush. Ben. Excuse me, please. Ben.

Vice President's Visit to the Middle East

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Secretary Rice was able to help get peace talks restarted in the Mideast during her trip. So what is it now that you want Vice President Cheney to get? What is your specific goal for him?

President Bush. The Vice President will be on an extensive itinerary, as you know. His goal is to reassure people that the United States is committed to a vision of peace in the Middle East; that we expect relevant parties to obligate themselves—uphold their obligations on the roadmap; that we fully see the threats facing the Middle East—one such threat is Iran—and that we will continue to bolster our security agreements and relationships with our friends and allies.

The Vice President will be taking a very hopeful message to the Middle East, that progress in Iraq is necessary for peace in the Middle East. And so it's—I'm looking forward to his trip, and I'm really appreciative of the fact that he's going.

Do you want to call on somebody from the Polish media?

Missile Defense System

Q. Mr. President, is there any breakthrough as far as the missile defense system is concerned?

President Bush. Well, I think there's a commitment to a system that respects Polish sovereignty, will—that will ensure that the people of Poland will not be subjected to any

undue security risks, that the system is necessary to deal with the realities of the threats. Obviously, there's a lot of work to do because many times a strategy on paper is a little different from the details. And so our experts are working through the system to make sure that the people of Poland are comfortable with the idea. It's a—look, I mean—you know, I—this is the kind of issue that all kinds of rumors and worries can grow out of. And we just want to assure people that it's necessary, and at the same time, there will be this modernization effort that takes place.

Prime Minister Tusk. What is really very important is what we stressed in the conclusions of this meeting today, that we really want to stop the speculations on intentions expressed by the United States and expressed by Poland. Our joint intention is to cooperate in all aspects of global security, American security, and Polish security. And an element of this security is the missile defense system.

What I would call a breakthrough is my conviction that both the President of the United States and the American party understand quite clearly our expectations. And if I may use this expression, I think that you have set the perspective of Poland on the principle of the cooperation here. And as you said, Mr. President, all the technicalities pertaining to the face of the negotiations and all those technical issues, they will be solved by experts.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Matt [Matt Spetalnick, Reuters].

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Yes, sir. Back on the Middle East, what do you think of Israel's plan to build 750 new homes in a settlement near Jerusalem? And what, if any, threat or complication do you see to your administration's peace efforts?

President Bush. We expect both parties to—involved in the Middle Eastern peace process to adhere to their obligations in the roadmap. And those obligations are clear. And to this end, the Secretary of State is dispatching the general that we named to be the coordinator of roadmap activities to the Middle East—for him to conduct meetings with the relevant parties.

The key question is whether or not a vision can prevail that will enable people who reject violence and extremists—enable them to see a better tomorrow. That's what we're working toward. And, you know, this is a part of the world where people have heard promises before, and they've been vague promises. Now they've got a President and an administration willing to work for two states, two democracies, side by side in peace.

There are three major forces that are—we're now witnessing in the Middle East. Two of those forces adhere to peace: Israel and the forces of President Abbas. And then there's one force in the Middle East, and some suspect that they're funded from outside governments and outside movements, all aiming to destabilize democracy, all aiming to prevent the vision of—where people can live side by side in peace, all wanting to destroy Israel.

And the fundamental question is, will there be enough will and determination to reject those forces of extremism and to stand up and support those who long for peace? And our mission is exactly along those lines. And I'm optimistic that we'll be able to achieve a vision that shows a way forward, and I'm optimistic leaders will step forward and do the hard things necessary so people don't have to live in deprivation and fear. And so that's our focus, and that's our mission.

You want to——

[*At this point, Prime Minister Tusk spoke in Polish, and no translation was provided.*]

Visa Policy

Q. Mr. President, it's getting to be embarrassing for Polish politicians to talk about visas in the Oval Office, but it's even more embarrassing for my countrymen to apply for visas.

President Bush. Yes.

Q. And it would be really ironic if Poland would become a third missile defense site, and Polish citizens would still have to apply for visas. So can we expect that before your watch is over something will change, and maybe we'll convince the lawmakers on Capitol Hill to do something about this?

President Bush. Well, thank you very much. First of all, the Prime Minister, of

course, brought up the issue. And he was very firm about the need for a friend to treat a friend as a friend when it comes to visas.

Look, this is a tough issue. And we changed law. And now there are ways forward for the people applying for visas. A lot of it has to do with rejection rates. And as the Prime Minister noted, the rejection rates are changing quite dramatically. And so of course this will be taken into account.

I fully understand the frustrations. And if I were living in Poland, I'd be—and wanted to come to America, I'd be frustrated too. And the truth of the matter is, we're going from one era to the next. We're going from a time when the—during the Soviet era, when there was a different motivation by the people. And we're adjusting. And I fully understand the pace of adjustment doesn't meet expectations inside Poland.

And so I'm very sympathetic. But the law is changing. The paradigm is shifting. And I hope at some point in time, obviously, that the frustrations of our friends and allies are able to be eased with more moderate visa policy.

Thank you, sir. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:13 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia; Lt. Gen. William M. Fraser III, USAF, U.S. monitor of the Israeli-Palestinian roadmap peace plan; and President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority. Prime Minister Tusk spoke in Polish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at a Celebration of Women's History Month and International Women's Day

March 10, 2008

Thank you all. Thank you all. Please be seated. Welcome to the White House for this celebration of Women's History Month and International Women's Day, and we're glad you're here.

Every March, people around the world recognize accomplishments of strong, fearless women. I see a lot of many strong, fearless women in this room. [*Laughter*] And I feel right at home. After all, I was raised by one, and I married one. [*Laughter*]

My advice to the next President is to surround him or her—[*laughter*]—with strong, fearless women. That's what I've done. People have served—as Laura mentioned, people serving in senior positions in my administration have made great contributions to our country, people like Secretary Rice, Secretary Chao, Secretary Peters, Secretary Spellings, Trade Representative Schwab, White House spokesman Dana Perino.

We've got a lot of strong women throughout our Government, and that's the way it should be. And it's made my job a lot easier, and I appreciate them serving our country with such class and dignity.

I too welcome the Members of the United States Congress. Thank you all for coming. We're honored you're here. Thanks for serving.

Members of the diplomatic corps—Laura and I had a opportunity to meet representatives from our U.S. Armed Services who are here, and we've got representatives of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard. Thank you all for coming. Thanks for wearing the uniform. Appreciate it.

Appreciate the members of the diplomatic corps joining us. And I too want to congratulate the recipients of the International Women of Courage Award. Thank you all for coming. Why don't we have our award winners stand up. [*Applause*] Yes, thank you all. Thank you all.

During Women's History Month, we honor the courage, foresight, and resolve of women who have strengthened our democracy. Pioneers like Amelia Earhart, suffragists like Sojourner Truth, healers like Clara Barton, writers like Harriet Beecher Stowe: These women have helped our Nation live up to its ideals of liberty and justice for all. At the same time, they have changed the way America views its women, the way both men and women view America.

We take pride in the progress women have made here at home, and we know that millions of women abroad are still working to secure their basic rights. And as they do, the United States of America proudly stands with them. We do so because we know that liberty

is the birthright of every person. And we do so because it's in our national interest. Societies where half the population is marginalized, or worse, are less likely to be prosperous and hopeful and more likely to become incubators for hateful ideologies.

So the United States is working to help build more hopeful and just societies for women. In Africa, our Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, called PEPFAR, and our malaria initiative are saving millions from the disease that devastate women. Our Millennium Challenge Corporation provides microloans that help women start their own businesses. Our international education initiatives have trained thousands of teachers and have provided hundreds of thousands of scholarships to help girls go to school.

The United States works to help build more hopeful and just societies throughout the world and, in particular, the Middle East. In Afghanistan, the Taliban once beat women without reason and executed them without remorse. Today, because we acted, Afghanistan's women serve as teachers and doctors and journalists and judges. More than 80 members of Afghanistan's parliament are women. In Iraq, Saddam Hussein once used rape rooms to brutalize women and dishonor their families. Today, because we acted, Iraq's women voted in a free and democratic elections. They live under a Constitution that protects women's rights. Freedom is powerful, and freedom is precious, and freedom belongs to all, and freedom will yield the peace we long for.

The United States is proud to be a part of the global advance of women's rights. Yet one thing history shows us is that the cause of women's rights is inseparable from the cause of human rights. So on this International Women's Day, we honor the women who work to secure both their liberty and the liberty for others.

America honors women like Madawi Al Hassoun of Saudi Arabia. An educator turned entrepreneur, she was one of the first Saudi women to work alongside men in a mixed business environment. Ms. Hassoun was the first female director of the women's branch of one of Saudi's largest banks. She manages her own successful business now. Ms. Hassoun was also one of the first female candidates in Saudi Arabia to run for office. And today, she serves as an appointed member of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce. As she has broadened the possibilities of Saudi women, Ms. Al Hassoun has also worked to bring greater economic freedom and prosperity to her own nation. She's on the forefront of change, and the United States strongly supports her.

America honors Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia. Early in her life, this woman waited tables to put herself through school at Harvard. She became an economist who returned to Liberia to serve her country, only to see it destroyed by brutal warlords and dictators. In 2005, Liberians reclaimed their freedom and chose Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to become the first woman ever elected President on the continent of Africa. Laura and I just recently visited the President.

I was impressed by how strong she is as a leader, and she's committed to fighting disease and working to make Liberia's Government more transparent and honest. You know, the Liberians call President Johnson the "Iron Lady" and "Ma." [*Laughter*] I'm proud to call her friend. She's a great lover of liberty, and we will support her.

America honors women like Irina Kozulina. Irina's husband, Aleksandr Kozulin, is serving a 5-year prison sentence for protesting Belarus fraudulent 2006 elections. Irina worked relentlessly for her husband's freedom. In doing so, she became a leading voice for all political prisoners held captive by the Lukashenko regime.

Irina was also very prominent in the breast cancer awareness campaign in Belarus. A few weeks ago, the disease claimed her life. The Lukashenko regime refused to release her husband to be with his wife in his final days. That's the definition of brutality. And the United States calls upon that Government to release Aleksandr Kozulin immediately, just like they ought to release every other political prisoner in Belarus. It's important for people to understand that this good woman, Irina, set the stage for what we hope Belarus to become, a free and just and open society.

America honors women like Marta Beatriz Roque Cabello of Cuba. An economist and former math professor, Marta Beatriz is now a leader of a movement for a free Cuba. She

spent years in Castro's dungeons for her activism. Because she spoke out about the universality of freedom, she has spent time in jail. She was recently released from her prison term because of her poor health. Yet neither her health nor the threat of danger has deterred this good woman, this pioneer for liberty.

Just last week, Marta was one of the 10 opposition leaders beaten by Cuban police and security forces for distributing copies of the universal declaration for human rights. This courageous woman knows that freedom is not going to come to Cuba by trading one oppressive Castro regime for another. Today I have a message for the people of Cuba: *Viene el dia de su libertad*. Your day of freedom is coming. And until that day, the United States will stand with all the dissidents working together to bring freedom to Cuba, including a brave woman named Marta Beatriz Roque Cabello.

America honors women like Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma. For 12 of the last 18 years, this extraordinary woman has been kept under house arrest by Burma's brutal military regime. Her only crime was to lead a political party that enjoys the overwhelming support of the Burmese people. During the long and lonely years of Daw Suu Kyi's imprisonment, the people of Burma have suffered with her. Aung San Suu Kyi has never wavered. Her courage and her writings have inspired millions, and in so doing, have put fear into the hearts of the leaders of the Burmese junta.

And that's why the regime has called a vote in May to ratify a dangerously flawed constitution, one that bars Suu from ever leaving her country. Aung San Suu Kyi has said to the American people: "Please use your liberty to promote ours." We're doing all we can, and we will continue to do so until the tide of freedom reaches the Burmese shores and frees this good, strong woman.

Americans are inspired by the examples of these women and the women we honor here today. We will continue to support their work and the work of women across the world who stand up for the freedom of their people.

One of America's finest poets was a woman named Emma Lazarus, who is most famous for writing the verses carved into the base of the Statue of Liberty. Those verses describe the copper icon as "a mighty woman with a torch" to light the way for all "yearning to breathe free." During Women's History Month and at this celebration of International Women's Day, we are proud that the most recognizable symbol of America's love for freedom is "a mighty woman." And we reaffirm our commitment to light the way for all—both women and men—"yearning to be free."

And now, I'd like to ask Laura and Secretary Chao and Secretary Peters and the Members of Congress who are here to join me on stage as I proudly sign Women's History Month proclamation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:17 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to White House Press Secretary Dana Perino; President Aleksandr Lukashenko of Belarus; and former President Fidel Castro Ruz and President Raul Castro Ruz of Cuba. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Proclamation 8225—Women's History Month, 2008

March 10, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

During Women's History Month, we celebrate the courage, foresight, and resolve of women who have strengthened our democracy.

America has been transformed by strong women whose contributions shaped the history of our country. Amelia Earhart became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic, and she inspired generations of women to follow their dreams. Physicist Chien-Shiung Wu helped advance our knowledge and understanding of the world through her achievements in atomic research. Harriet Tubman fought racial injustice and opened doors for more Americans to participate fully in our society.

Today, women are continuing this legacy of leadership as entrepreneurs, doctors, teachers, scientists, lawyers, artists, and public officials. They are also providing guidance

and care to their loved ones and strengthening America's families and communities. We also remember the women of the United States Armed Forces who are serving our country with honor and distinction across the world.

This month, we honor the extraordinary women of our Nation's past and recognize the countless women who are demonstrating leadership in every aspect of American life.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 2008 as Women's History Month. I call upon all our citizens to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities that honor the history, accomplishments, and contributions of American women.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this tenth day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., March 12, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on March 13.

Remarks on Arrival in Nashville, Tennessee

March 11, 2008

The President. This is Dr. Christian, Dr. Karla Christian, who really symbolizes the best of America. She and a team of hers have performed a surgery on a little Iraqi girl who was discovered by United States marines. People in Nashville raised the money for the family; they were supported by the marines there in Iraq. Some of the marines raised money, and they sent this little girl, whose heart was ailing, to America, right here to Nashville. And Karla and her team healed the little girl, and she's back in Iraq.

And the contrast couldn't be more vivid. We got people in Iraq who murder the innocent to achieve their political objectives, and we've got Americans who heal the broken hearts of little Iraqi girls. Ours is a compassionate nation that believes in the universality of freedom. And ours is a nation full of loving souls that when they find a stranger in need will lend their God-given talents to help that stranger. And that's precisely what happened.

Karla G. Christian. Thank you.

The President. I want you to thank your team there for all the good work you've done.

Dr. Christian. Thank you for all you've done.

The President. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:29 a.m. at Nashville International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Karla G. Christian, associate chief of pediatric cardiac surgery and director of pediatric cardiac surgical education, Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt, and her patient, Amina Al'a Thabit.

Remarks to the National Religious Broadcasters Convention in Nashville

March 11, 2008

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thank you for the warm welcome. Nothing better than being introduced by a fellow Texan. [*Applause*] And it's good to see some of my Texas buddies here—[*applause*]—like my friend Evans from Dallas. Good to see you, Tony. Thanks for letting me come by.

This is kind of a rambunctious crowd. [*Laughter*] I really am pleased to be with you. For 64 years, this association has brought together some of the most memorable voices of the—our Christian community here in America. You've preached the blessings of grace and understanding and patience. I've needed all three during my time as President. [*Laughter*]

I was very young when I first learned about obedience to a higher power—and my mother sends her best to you. [*Laughter*] I am surrounded by strong women and have been all my wife. [*Laughter*] And speaking about a strong and gracious woman, Laura sends her love and best.

We have something else in common: Each of us has had doors opened to us by the same man. He led the way for America's religious

broadcasters. He brought the Gospel to millions, and many years ago, he helped me change my life. And today this good man is recovering from surgery in North Carolina, and please join me in sending our love and prayers to Billy Graham. A lot of Americans love Billy Graham, and I'm one. So, Billy, we're thinking about you.

He has led countless Americans to the grace and goodness of the Almighty, and each of you performs the same mission every day. You renew the poor in spirit. You bring comfort to those in anguish. And you show millions the path to salvation and the peace of God.

I thank you for guiding the faithful. I thank you for strengthening America's families. I thank you for standing up for our values, including the right to life. And I appreciate your firm belief in the universality of freedom. I believe and I know most of you, if not all of you, believe that every man, woman, and child on the face of the Earth has been given the great gift of liberty by an Almighty God. And today I want to speak about this precious gift, the importance of protecting freedom here at home, and the call to offer freedom to others who have never known it.

But before I do, I do want to thank Dr. Ron Harris and his wife, Judy—straight out of Arlington, Texas. Appreciate other members of the National Religious Broadcasters Executive Committee. I thank Dr. Frank Wright and his wife, Ruth.

I appreciate Members of Congress who have come today—Congressman Mike Pence of Indiana, Congressman Lincoln Davis of Tennessee, and Congresswoman Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee. Thank you all for coming. Proud to be with you.

This organization has had many important missions but none more important than ensuring our airways—America's airways stay open to those who preach the good news. The very first amendment to our Constitution includes the freedom of speech and the freedom of religion. Founders believed these unalienable rights were endowed to us by our Creator. They are vital to a healthy democracy, and we must never let anyone take those freedoms away.

I mention this because there's an effort afoot that would jeopardize your right to express your views on public airways. Some Members of Congress want to reinstate a regulation that was repealed 20 years ago. It has the Orwellian name called the fairness doctrine. Supporters of this regulation say we need to mandate that any discussion of so-called controversial issues on the public airwaves includes equal time for all sides. This means that many programs wanting to stay on the air would have to meet Washington's definition of balance. Of course, for some in Washington, the only options—opinions that require balancing are the ones they don't like. [*Laughter*]

We know who these advocates of so-called balance really have in their sights: shows hosted by people like Rush Limbaugh or James Dobson or many of you in here today. By insisting on so-called balance, they want to silence those they don't agree with. The truth of the matter is, they know they cannot prevail in the public debate of ideas. They don't acknowledge that you are the balance, that you give voice—[*applause*]. The country should not be afraid of the diversity of opinions. After all, we're strengthened by diversity of opinions.

If Congress truly supports the free and open exchange of ideas, then there is a way they can demonstrate that right now. Republicans have drafted legislation that would ban reinstatement of the so-called fairness doctrine. Unfortunately, Democratic leaders in the House of Representatives have blocked action on this bill. So in response, nearly every Republican in the House has signed onto what's called a discharge petition that would require Congress to hold an up-or-down vote on the ban. Supporters of this petition are only 24 signatures away.

I do want to thank Mike Pence, who is with us today, and Congressman Greg Walden for pressing this effort and defending the right for people to express themselves freely. And I urge other Members to join in this discharge petition. But I'll tell you this: If Congress should ever pass any legislation that stifles your right to express your views, I'm going to veto it.

We love freedom in America, and we're the leader of the world not because we try

to limit freedom, but because we've helped to spread it. You and I know that freedom has the power to transform lives. You and I know that free societies are more peaceful and more prosperous. You and I know that if given the chance, men and women and children in every society on Earth will choose a life of freedom, if just given a chance. Unless, of course, you don't believe freedom is a gift from the Almighty. The liberty we value is not ours alone. Freedom is not America's gift to the world; it is God's gift to all humanity.

It is no coincidence that the region of the world that is the least free is also the most violent and dangerous. For too long, the world was content to ignore oppression—oppressive forms of government in the Middle East in the name of stability.

The result was that a generation of young people grew up with little hope of improving their lives, and many fell under the sway of violent extremism. The birthplace of three of the world's great religions became the home of suicide bombers. And resentments that began on the streets in the Middle East killed innocent people in trains and airplanes and office buildings around the world.

September the 11th, 2001, was such a day. We saw firsthand how the lack of freedom and opportunity in the Middle East directly affects our safety here at home. Nineteen men killed nearly 3,000 people because someone convinced them that they were acting in the name of God. Murder of the innocent to achieve political objectives is wrong and must be condemned.

These murderers were not instruments of a heavenly power; they were instruments of evil. And we have seen their kind before. It's important not to forget the lessons of history. We must remember the extermination of Jews in Nazi death camps were—was evil. The crimes of Pol Pot were evil. And the genocide in Rwanda was conducted because people's hearts were hardened. This kind of enemy must be confronted, and this kind of enemy must be defeated.

This is the calling of our time. Generations are often called into action for the defense of liberty, and this is such a time. Since 9/11, we're on the offense. My most important duty and the most important duty of those of us who serve you in Government is to protect the innocent from attack. And so we're on the offense. My view is, is that if we press the enemy, if we bring them to justice, if we defeat them overseas, we won't have to face them here—is the best strategy to protect America in the short term.

But that only works in the short term. The best way to defeat the enemy in the long term is to defeat their hateful ideology with a vision based upon hope, and that is, a society is based upon liberty. If you believe in the universality of freedom, then you'll recognize that people, if given a chance, just given a chance, will seize the moment and marginalize the extremists and isolate the radicals.

Hopeful societies are those which will eventually provide the protection we want here in America. And it'll happen, unless America loses its vision and its nerve. It's going to happen, unless we forget the lessons of history.

I want to share one story with you. Some of you may have heard me tell you this before. But one of my best friends in the international community, someone with whom I spent a lot of time talking about how to defeat extremism and defend the peace, was the Prime Minister of Japan. And what I found most interesting was the history of my family. My father, like many of your relatives, signed up to fight the sworn enemy, the Japanese. And 60 years later, his son is at the peace table planning and thinking about how we can confront this form of extremism in the short term and the long term. Something happened between Ensign Bush and Bush President 43. And what happened was, Japan adopted liberty as the core of its political system.

Freedom can transform societies. Freedom can transform enemies into allies. And someday, if the United States is steadfast and optimistic, people will—a President will be able to say, amazing thing happened; I sat down at the table with a leader of Muslim's nations, all aiming to keep the peace, to spread freedom, and keep America secure.

We're engaged in this struggle all across the world. And of course, the two most notable theaters in this ideological struggle are Afghanistan and Iraq. Some seem to believe

that one of these battles is worth fighting and the other isn't. In other words, there is a good war and a bad war. You know, the enemy are fighting hard in both countries to seize power and impose their brutal vision. The theaters are part of the same war, the same calling, the same struggle. And that's why it is essential we succeed.

Seven years ago, Afghanistan was a haven for America's enemies. Under the protection of the Taliban, the September 11th—9/11 hijackers trained and plotted. We worked with—because we worked with brave Afghans, because we upheld doctrine that said, if you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist, we removed the Taliban from power, thereby freeing 25 million people from the clutches of a brutal, barbaric regime.

The camps used by the terrorists have been dismantled. The Taliban was removed from power. And then we took on a task that we knew would be as difficult but as essential for keeping our enemies from regaining power, and that is, we offered to help the Afghan people replace tyranny with freedom. We did the short-term job of denying safe haven, but we did something else. We said, we want to help you live lives based upon liberty. And it was a daunting task, when you really put it in perspective. The Afghan people had little experience with democracy. It's a foreign concept. We've grown up in it here. In Afghanistan, you say democracy, they're not exactly sure what you're talking about.

Afghan people under the Taliban didn't have any constitution or any of the normal institutions of a free and stable government. Afghanistan was one of the poorest countries in the world, with few natural resources and a population that thought it was condemned to unspeakable suffering.

In the entire nation, there were only 30 miles of paved road. Only 9 percent of the population had access to health care. Under the strict control of the Taliban, women were treated like chattel, and girls could not attend school. Children lived in hatred and misery, and they were not even permitted an act as simple as flying a kite. It was a backward, brutal society.

But we had better aspirations for the people of Afghanistan. We set our sights high because we believe in the universality of freedom. We trusted in the power of freedom to transform the country, a certain trust that has to go with basic principles in life. And we're seeing the results. Eight million Afghans went to the polls to elect a President for the first time in their history. Afghans drafted a new Constitution and elected a National Assembly. With the support of international partners, the Afghan economy has doubled in size. There are now more than 1,500 miles of paved roads. A majority of the population has access to health care. Women have seats in the parliament. Girls attend school again. And one small but telling sign is this: Afghan children are flying kites again.

A free society is emerging, and the fundamental question facing the United States of America and our friends and allies is, is it worth it and necessary? I believe it is necessary, and I strongly believe it's worth it. Afghanistan has got a lot of challenges. They got to overcome corruption; they got to fight narcotics trafficking; and they got to strengthen the Government at all levels. They face a vicious and brutal enemy that is determined to regain power and deny the people of Afghanistan their freedom.

We saw the nature of this enemy when Taliban extremists invaded an Afghan school. They kidnaped six teachers. They beat the schoolchildren with sticks to scare them away from attending classes. We saw the nature of this enemy when extremists beheaded the principal of an Afghan high school and forced his wife and children to watch. We saw the nature of this enemy last summer when Taliban extremists paid an Afghan boy to push a cart carrying explosives into a crowded marketplace, and the terrorists detonated the cart, killing the boy and Afghan security officials.

This enemy sees no value in human life. And they continue their campaign of bloody and horrific attacks, all attempting to demoralize the people of Afghanistan and all attempting to wait the coalition out. For the sake of humanity and for the sake of the safety of our people, for the sake of human life and human dignity, and for the sake of the security of the United States of America, we

will stop this murderous movement now, before it finds a new path to power. The temptation is to say—[*applause*]. I believe it is important for administrations to confront problems now and not pass them on to other people. And that's the choice I have made for the sake of peace and freedom.

Our forces made progress last year in partnering with local Afghans against the enemy in eastern Afghanistan, which was an insurgent stronghold. Now the Taliban and its allies are seeking to launch new attacks against the people. In other words, these are relentless killers. Their methods and their immorality have alienated many of the people who once supported them.

It's amazing what happens when there's a contrast—ideological contrast presented to people with clarity. Do you want to live in freedom, or do you want your little girl denied the opportunity to go to school? Afghans across the country are fighting back. More than 50,000 Afghans have stepped forward to serve the Afghan Army; 76,000 have joined the police force. They've invested in this fight, and they need our help. That's what they're saying—they want help. And we're going to give it to them. It's in our interests that we support these people.

In the year ahead, the United States will work with our allies and the Afghan people in an aggressive effort to counter the enemy. This spring, the United States is increasing our military commitment to the country. We're sending a Marine expeditionary unit and an infantry battalion, totaling more than 3,200 additional marines, to train Afghan forces and to support the offense against the Taliban in southern Afghanistan.

NATO allies and other partners are also in the fight. Many of these allies, particularly the Canadians and the Australians, the Dutch, the Danes, and the British, are taking on some of the most difficult missions in dangerous areas. You may have recently heard about one young Brit who fought against the Taliban. It was Prince Harry of Wales. When he returned to England, he said this: "If you spoke to a lot of the other guys who came off the plane with me, there are plenty of people willing to go back and serve their country." And we admire that spirit, and so do the people of Afghanistan.

In a few weeks, I'm going to attend the NATO summit in Bucharest. I'm going to thank our allies for standing with the people, the brave people of this young democracy. I will remind them that we're not only in a mission to protect our own security; we're on a humanitarian mission that will free young girls to be able to realize their dreams.

I will also ask NATO to join the United States in doing even more. Now is the time for nations to make the hard decisions necessary so our children can grow up in a more peaceful world. I will call upon more international assistance to help Afghanistan on the road to freedom. We know what's at stake, and we know what we have to do. And so we're going to help the people of Afghanistan realize the blessings of liberty.

The other front in this ideological struggle is Iraq. And just as we did in Afghanistan, we removed a lethal threat to our national security. The decision to remove Saddam Hussein was the right decision early in my Presidency; it is the right decision at this point in my Presidency; and it will forever be the right decision.

And again we took on a difficult task that we knew was essential to keeping America's enemies from gaining power. We did not take the easy path of replacing one dictator with another. Instead, we offered Iraqis a chance to build a future of freedom. In that effort, our coalition faced—also faced daunting challenges. Like Afghanistan, Iraq had little experience with true democracy. Iraqis held nationwide votes for President, but it turns out, only one candidate was on the ballot. In 1995, Saddam Hussein received 99 percent of the vote. And 7 years later, he did a little better—[*laughter*]—he got 100 percent of the vote. [*Laughter*]

As Iraqis lived through these grotesque charades, they were rounded up at random by secret police. Women were raped by Iraqi authorities. Citizens were mutilated and dumped into mass graves. And Shi'a and Sunni and Kurds were oppressed and pitted against one another.

Despite the divisions and challenges, I believed, as did many in my administration, that freedom has the power to transform this country, that freedom has the power to provide hope after despair. And so we reached

out to the population, and the Iraqi people responded. Together Shi'a, Kurds, and an increasing number of Sunnis joined America to advance a bold vision, and that is to build a lasting democracy in the heart of the Middle East.

Twelve million Iraqis braved threats of violence and went to the polls to elect a representative Government. You might remember those days of people waving purple-ink-stained fingers. Iraqis drafted one of the most democratic Constitutions in the Arab world. And hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have raised their hands and risked their lives to defend their nation.

The enemy saw these advances and were determined to stop them. They mounted horrific acts of violence designed to exploit sectarian divisions and incite further killing. And in these acts, we again saw the nature of the enemy. We saw the nature of this enemy when they killed a young boy and then boobytrapped his body so it would explode when his family came to retrieve him. We saw the nature of this enemy when terrorists put children in the backseat of a car so they could pass a security checkpoint and then blew up the car with the children still inside. We saw the nature of the enemy just over a month ago when they sent two mentally retarded, troubled Iraqi women wearing suicide vests into crowded marketplaces. The vests exploded, killing the women and dozens of innocent people.

Anyone who doubts the importance of defeating this vicious enemy need only imagine what would happen if we were driven out of Iraq before the job was finished. What would happen if they seized territory from—to be able to have safe haven? And what would happen if they seized oil fields and used their wealth to attack America and our allies?

These are vicious people who know no bounds of humanity. They would not hesitate to murder. It's essential for our citizens to understand this. And that is why this war must be fought, and that is why this war—this enemy must be defeated.

I wish I didn't have to talk about war. No President wants to be a war President. But when confronted with the realities of the world, I have made the decision that now is the time to confront, now is the time to deal with this enemy, and now is the time to spread freedom as the great alternative to the ideology they adhere to. [*Applause*] Thank you all.

Just over a year ago, things were not going well in Iraq. Terrorists and extremists were succeeding in their efforts to plunge Iraq into chaos. American peace and security required us to defeat this enemy, just as I said. So my administration reviewed our strategy and changed course, with victory in mind. I sent reenforcements into Iraq in a dramatic policy that's now being called the surge.

We also changed the way our troops were used. U.S. and Iraqi forces began living together among the Iraqi people to help drive the terrorists out. Our forces stayed around to ensure the terrorists did not return. We launched a civilian surge to help local governments deliver economic resources in the wake of the security gains. We launched a diplomatic surge, with an expanded and active role for international organizations like the United Nations and the G–8. We've encouraged its neighbors to help this young society flourish and recover from the brutality of a dictator.

The Iraqi people saw these efforts. They had renewed faith in America's commitment to the fight. As you can imagine, during that period of time, a lot of folks were wondering, "Is America going to stay with us? Do they understand our deep desire to live in freedom? Can we count on them?" And when they found out they could, they launched a surge of their own. Increasing numbers of Sunni leaders have turned against the terrorists and begun to reclaim their communities. The Government in Baghdad has stepped forward as well. They've added more than 100,000 new Iraqi soldiers and police during last year. They're beginning to pass laws in Baghdad. They passed a budget—on time. [*Laughter*]

Folks who were involved in the insurgency have now decided they want to be a part of their Government. The Iraqi people have begun to see what freedom offers. They've seen what the enemy plans, and they have chosen to stand on the side of freedom. And America stands with them.

Next month, General Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker will return to Washington to report on the progress in Iraq and offer their recommendations. And I will carefully consider their recommendations. I can report this to you, though, that since the surge began, sectarian killings are down; Al Qaida has been driven from many strongholds it once held. I strongly believe the surge is working, and so do the Iraqis.

And as a return on our success—in other words, as we get more successful—troops are able to come home. They're not coming home based upon defeat or based upon opinion polls or based upon focus groups or based upon politics. They're coming home because we're successful. And the pace of that withdrawal has been determined, and then the commanders will take a further assessment. But I want to assure you, just like I assure military families and the troops, the politics of 2008 is not going to enter into my calculation. It is the peace of the years to come that will enter into my calculation.

The gains in Iraq are tenuous; they're reversible; and they're fragile. And there is much more work to be done. This enemy is resilient, and they attack—they use asymmetrical warfare. They use suicide vests. Just yesterday the enemy killed eight of our soldiers in two separate attacks. And I know you join me in offering our prayers to their loved ones, that the good Lord will provide them strength and comfort during the ultimate test.

We mourn every loss of life. We also know that the reason why the enemy uses such brutal tactics is they're trying to shake our nerve. And frankly, that's not hard to do in America because we're a compassionate people. We value life, and we care. We really do want to reach out to others, and when we see this kind of horrific killing, it affects us, all of us.

It also must send a message to us that we must be determined and steadfast. We're determined to defeat this enemy, and you just got to know, so are the people of Iraq. Millions who have suffered decades of tyranny and torment now are beginning to see hope. And for the sake of the security and for the sake of peace and for the sake of generation of kids coming up, the United States will help the Iraqis succeed.

And the effects of a free Iraq and a free Afghanistan will reach beyond the borders of those two countries. I believe that success of these two countries will show others the way. It will show others what's possible. And we undertake this work because we believe that every human being bears the image of our Maker. That's why we're doing this. No one is fit to be a master, and no one deserves to be a slave.

People of all faiths and all backgrounds deserve the chance at a future of their own choosing. That's what America believes. After all, those were the ideals that helped create our Nation. Those ideals were an honorable achievement of our forefathers, and now it's the urgent requirement of this generation.

The work before our country is hard, and it has risks. It's just hard work. And yet I don't see that as a reason to avoid it. Our enemies are ruthless, but they're going to be defeated. They've got the capacity to blow people up through these suicides—but you notice none of the leaders ever are the suicide bombers, however. [*Laughter*] But we got something more powerful. We got determination, we got will, and we got freedom at our disposal.

Evil in some form will always be with us, and we must never be afraid to face it. I know you understand that. I also know that you understand that for those who are on the frontlines and for those who struggle against evil, they can be helped through prayer. And I appreciate your prayers. I appreciate your prayers to help comfort millions of people. I appreciate the fact that you pray for our troops and their families. And I appreciate the prayers that you have directed my way. I feel your prayer. I am—I can't tell you how meaningful they have been, to help Laura and me deal with—do our job. And I can report to you this: that the prayers of the people have affected us, and that being the President has been a joyous experience.

And so I thank you for what you do. I thank you for giving me a chance to come and share some of my thoughts with you. God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Ronald L. Harris, chairman, National Religious Broadcasters Executive Committee, who introduced the President; Anthony T. Evans, founder and president, The Urban Alternative; evangelist Rev. Billy Graham; Frank Wright, president, National Religious Broadcasters; radio show host Rush Limbaugh; radio show host and founder of Focus on the Family James Dobson; former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Resignation of Admiral William J. Fallon as Commander of United States Central Command

March 11, 2008

Admiral William Fallon has served our Nation with great distinction for 40 years. He is an outstanding sailor, and he made history as the first naval officer to serve as commander of Central Command.

From the Horn of Africa to the streets of Baghdad to the mountains of Afghanistan, the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coast guardsmen of Central Command are vital to the global war on terror. During his tenure at CENTCOM, Admiral Fallon's job has been to help ensure that America's military forces are ready to meet the threats of an often troubled region of the world, and he deserves considerable credit for progress that has been made there, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan.

With service in Vietnam and as Vice Chief of Naval Operations, commander of Pacific Command, and many other positions, Admiral Fallon has served this country with honor, determination, and commitment. I thank his wife, Mary, who knows that military service involves the whole family, and I wish them all the best as they begin the next chapter in their lives.

Notice—Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran

March 11, 2008

On March 15, 1995, by Executive Order 12957, the President declared a national emergency with respect to Iran pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701–1706) to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States constituted by the actions and policies of the Government of Iran. On May 6, 1995, the President issued Executive Order 12959 imposing more comprehensive sanctions to further respond to this threat, and on August 19, 1997, the President issued Executive Order 13059 consolidating and clarifying the previous orders.

Because the actions and policies of the Government of Iran continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States, the national emergency declared on March 15, 1995, must continue in effect beyond March 15, 2008. Therefore, in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency with respect to Iran. Because the emergency declared by Executive Order 12957 constitutes an emergency separate from that declared on November 14, 1979, by Executive Order 12170, this renewal is distinct from the emergency renewal of November 2007. This notice shall be published in the *Federal Register* and transmitted to the Congress.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 11, 2008.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:14 a.m., March 12, 2008]

NOTE: This notice was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 12, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on March 13.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran

March 11, 2008

To the Congress of the United States:

The crisis between the United States and Iran constituted by the actions and policies of the Government of Iran that led to the declaration of a national emergency on March 15, 1995, has not been resolved. The actions and policies of the Government of Iran are contrary to the interests of the United States in the region and pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. Iran remains the world's most active state sponsor of terrorism, and continues to provide lethal support to Lebanese Hizballah, HAMAS, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and numerous other terrorist organizations in the region, as well as to the Taliban in Afghanistan and various Iraqi militant groups. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to Iran and maintain in force comprehensive sanctions against Iran to respond to this threat.

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the Iran emergency declared on March 15, 1995, is to continue in effect beyond March 15, 2008.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 11, 2008.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 12.

Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

March 12, 2008

Gracias. Thank you. *Sientese. Gracias mi amigo* David. Thank you for having me back yet again to speak. This is an opportunity *de practicar mi Espanol*. [*Laughter*] Of course, a lot of people say I ought to be spending more time practicing my English. [*Laughter*] But I'm thrilled to be with you.

I really love the entrepreneurial spirit in all communities. And it's evident in the Latino community. As you know, I'm blessed to be a Texan, and I got to see firsthand, as Governor, the unbelievable initiative and drive of Hispanics who lived in my State. And it's the same thing all across the country. And so part of the purpose for me to come is to thank you for your helping others realize the blessings of owning a small business; thanks for creating jobs; thanks for setting good examples; and thanks for being my friend.

David, as you know, I've been to the Hispanic Chamber—I think this is my third time, but I know a lot of you personally. And this may be my farewell address to the Hispanic Chamber as President, but it's certainly not going to be my farewell to you as a friend.

I thank not only David but Augie Martinez. I thank the directors of the Hispanic Chamber. I thank my old buddy Hector Barreto, who is here with us, who—[*applause*]—Michael Barrera, thank you both. Appreciate you, Miguel.

And then there are members of my Cabinet who have come because today I'm going to discuss with you a very serious issue, an issue that matters a lot to your future and the future of this country. And so I welcome Secretary of Defense Bob Gates, Secretary of the Treasury Hank Paulson, Secretary of Agriculture Ed Schafer, Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez. Elaine Chao, Secretary of Labor, is with us. Susan Schwab of the USTR—Trade Representative is with us. This is not a Cabinet meeting. [*Laughter*]

These are people who are here to put an exclamation point on the subject I'm going to discuss with you today. And so I thank you all for coming. I appreciate your time.

I also want to welcome Carolina Barco, who is the Ambassador from Colombia, and other members of the diplomatic corps that have joined us.

A lot has changed since I first spoke to this group. I had to face some very difficult spending decisions, and I've had to conduct sensitive diplomacy. That's called planning for a wedding. [*Laughter*] *La boda*—[*laughter*]—*de mi ninita*. [*Laughter*]

I really appreciate the fact that we work together. I just want to review a couple of issues that have made a difference. First of all, we worked together to launch a period of sustained economic growth. I remember meeting with some right after the attacks, and we were wondering whether or not our economy could withstand a terrorist attack. After all, a recession was in place just as I came into office; then the terrorists attacked; then we had corporate scandals.

And a lot of folks were wondering whether or not this economy would be resilient enough to withstand those pressures. And it turns out, it was. And I want to thank you very much for supporting the tax cuts plans that had good effect on small businesses all across the United States during that period of time. I think when people take a look back at this moment in our economic history, they'll recognize tax cuts work. They have made a difference.

And this is what we're doing again. We've entered another period of difficult times. I am confident in the long term for the United States economy. I know we're resilient. I know we're entrepreneurial. I know we'll withstand these times. I want to thank you for supporting the economic stimulus package that we passed, which provides strong incentives for small businesses to expand and will put money into the pockets of the people who earned it.

Secretary Paulson has assured me—and I—he's a can-do guy—that the checks will be coming into the mail in the second week of May. The other thing I do want to assure you of is that if Congress tries to raise taxes, I'm going to veto it. We don't need tax increases.

I appreciate your strong support on No Child Left Behind. We agreed that a system that just simply moves children through without measuring is inexcusable. You recognized early that many Latino kids were denied, you know, the great promise of America because they didn't get the good education that we expect. And so we confronted this business about giving up on kids early. We demand accountability. We spent more money. But in return for the increased money, we expect schools to measure, and we expect schools to correct problems early, before it's too late.

No Child Left Behind is working. We've measured. Fourth grade—Hispanic fourth graders have set new records when it comes to reading and math. So rather than weakening No Child Left Behind, the United States Congress needs to strengthen No Child Left Behind for the sake of all our children. And I want to thank you for your support.

A Federal contracting process is open to more small and minority-owned businesses, thanks to our SBA guys who have been running the show, Steve and Hector. And we'll continue that practice of making sure that there's fairness when it comes to Federal contracting.

I appreciate your support on immigration law. I'm sorry that—[*applause*]—you know, I'm disappointed that Congress missed a good opportunity to uphold our values and uphold our laws at the same time. And I'm confident that the day will come when a President signs an immigration bill that secures our borders, respect our laws, and treats people with dignity.

And now I want to discuss trade with you. It's a sensitive subject in America, and it's an important subject. As business leaders, you understand that breaking down barriers to trade and investment creates opportunities for our workers—for American workers and employees and employers and consumers. We—trade adds to our prosperity, but as importantly, it adds to the prosperity of our trading partners. We want people who are interested in our goods and services to do well economically. We believe that the world benefits when prosperity is abundant throughout the world.

Trade also serves a broader strategic purpose. When we enter into free trade agreements, we reinforce commitments to democracy and transparency and rule of law. By

promoting a future of freedom and progress and hope, we create an alternative vision to those of the terrorists and extremists who prey on societies trapped in poverty and despair. In other words, trade helps democracies flourish; it helps enhance prosperity. And that helps us in our national security concerns.

My administration has made expanding trade a high priority. When I took office, America had free trade agreements in force with just three nations. Isn't that interesting—just three countries. Today, we have agreements in force with 14, and Congress recently approved another one with Peru. Three more agreements are on Congress's agenda this year: Colombia, Panama, and South Korea. All three are important, and the agreement with Colombia is especially urgent.

For more than a year, my administration has worked with both parties in Congress to seek a path to bring this agreement up for approval. We continue to stand ready to negotiate a bipartisan way forward. But time is running out, and we must not allow delay to turn into inaction. The Colombia agreement is pivotal to America's national security and economic interests right now, and it is too important to be held up by politics. There needs to be a vote on Colombia this year.

And that means that Members of the Congress must be ready to move forward with the agreement when they return from the Easter recess. Members of both parties should work with this administration to bring legislation to implement the Colombia agreement to the floor for approval. And they need to get the job done and get a bill to my desk.

And I'll tell you why. Because this agreement with Colombia will advance our national security and economic interests in these ways. Colombia is one of our closest allies in the Western Hemisphere. Under the leadership of President Uribe, Colombia has been a strong and capable partner, a strong and effective partner in fighting drugs and crime and terror. Colombia has also strengthened its democracy, reformed its economy. It has spoken out against anti-Americanism. This Government has made hard choices that deserves the admiration and the gratitude of the United States.

These actions have required courage, and they've come with costs. As we speak, Colombia is under assault from a terrorist network known as the FARC, which aims to overthrow Colombia's democracy and aims to impose a Marxist vision on the country. The FARC pursues this objective through bombing, hostage-taking, and assassination, much of it funded by drug trafficking. Since 2003, attacks by the FARC have killed or injured more than 1,500 civilians. Last summer, the FARC executed 11 Colombian lawmakers after holding them captive for 5 years. And the FARC continues to use jungle camps to hold hundreds of kidnaped victims, including three U.S. citizens.

President Uribe has waged an aggressive campaign against FARC terrorists, who do not respect national sovereignty or borders. Earlier this month, Colombian forces killed one of FARC's most senior leaders, a man believed to be responsible for trafficking cocaine and murdering hundreds of people.

And the response to all this action reveals the challenges that Colombia faces. The President of Venezuela praised the terrorist leader as a good revolutionary and ordered his troops to the Colombian border. This is the latest step in a disturbing pattern of provocative behavior by the regime in Caracas. It has also called for FARC terrorists to be recognized as a legitimate army, and senior regime officials have met with FARC leaders in Venezuela.

As it tries to expand its influence in Latin America, the regime claims to promote social justice. In truth, its agenda amounts to little more than empty promises and a thirst for power. It has squandered its oil wealth in an effort to promote its hostile, anti-American vision. And it has left its own citizens to face food shortages, while it threatens its neighbors.

The stakes are high in South America. As the recent standoff in the Andes shows, the region is facing an increasingly stark choice: to quietly accept the vision of the terrorists and the demagogues or to actively support democratic leaders like President Uribe. I've made my choice. I'm standing with courageous leadership that believes in freedom and peace. And I believe when the American people hear the facts, they will make their

choice and stand with a person who loves liberty and freedom.

And there is no clearer sign of our support than a free trade agreement. This agreement would help President Uribe show his people that democracy leads to tangible benefits. This agreement would help create new jobs in Colombia, which would make it harder to recruit people to violence and terrorism and drug trafficking. The agreement would signal to the region that America's commitment to free markets and free people is unshakable.

And now it calls on Congress to decide whether this agreement will take effect. People across the hemisphere are watching. They are waiting to see what Congress will do.

Some Members of Congress have raised concerns over the situation in Colombia. Again and again, President Uribe has responded decisively. He's responded to concerns about violence by demobilizing tens of thousands of paramilitary fighters. He's responded to concerns about attacks on trade unionists by stepping up funding for prosecutions, establishing an independent prosecutors unit, and creating a special program to protect labor activists. He's responded to concerns over labor and environmental standards by revising the free trade agreement to include some of the most rigorous protections of any agreement in history. As one Democratic House Member put it: "It's impossible for someone to go to Colombia and not be impressed with the strides they have made." Ladies and gentlemen, if this isn't enough to earn America's support, then what is?

If Congress were to reject the agreement with Colombia, we would validate antagonists in Latin America who would say that the America cannot be trusted to stand by its friends. We would cripple our influence in the region and make other nations less likely to cooperate with us in the future. We would betray one of our closest friends in our own backyard.

In the words of Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada: "If the U.S. turns its back on its friends in Colombia, this will set back our cause far more than any Latin American dictator could hope to achieve." Congress needs to listen to those wise words as they consider this important bill. Members of both parties should come together. Members of both parties should demonstrate their support for freedom in our hemisphere. And members of both parties should prove the—approve the Colombian free trade agreement.

These strategic benefits are not the only reason for Congress to approve our trade agreement with Colombia. The agreement will also bring economic gains for both countries. Today, virtually all exports from Colombia enter into the United States duty free, but U.S. exports to Colombia face tariffs up to 35 percent. Now think about that. Goods coming from Colombia to us enter our country virtually duty free, and yet goods going from the United States to Colombia are taxed.

Now, doesn't it make sense to pass an agreement that says, the Colombians will treat us the way we treat them? If you're a farmer or interested in exporting construction equipment or aircraft and auto parts or medical and scientific equipment, your goods will now go into Colombia duty free, which means you're more likely to be able to sell your goods into Colombia. And if you're working for one of those companies, it means you're more likely to be able to keep your job.

I can't understand a mentality that doesn't recognize that causing America to be treated equally is not in our interests. It is in our interests. Every day that Congress goes without approving this agreement is a day that our businesses, large and small, become less competitive. It's missed opportunity.

This agreement is especially important during a difficult period for our economy. Listen, last year, exports accounted for more than 40 percent of growth. Doesn't it make sense to open up markets, to continue to grow our economy with good exports? I think it does. And this is an opportunity for the United States Congress to send a clear message that they are concerned, like I'm concerned, about the state of our economy; they, like me, want to provide opportunities for our producers and our workers to be able to find new markets and expanded markets for U.S. goods and services.

This agreement will also benefit Colombia. It will give Colombian exporters the certainty that comes with permanent access. This will help stimulate investment and economic growth and higher standards of living for families in Colombia. And it will make it clear to the Colombian people, we're partners in prosperity, and we're partners in peace.

The time is coming when Members will get to vote yes or no. My administration is committed to working this agreement hard on the floor of the Congress. I firmly believe it is in our interests that this be passed. It's not in our political interests. We ought to just put politics aside and focus on what's best for the United States of America. And what is best for our country is to get this agreement approved soon.

Congress also ought to approve the other two trade agreements on their agenda after they approve this one. Congress needs to approve the trade agreement with Panama, which will open up U.S. access to one of the fastest growing economies in Central America and support a key democratic partner. Congress also needs to approve the free trade agreement with South Korea, which has the potential to boost U.S. exports by more than $10 billion while strengthening a key ally.

As Congress moves forward with these agreements, we will continue to press for an ambitious, successful Doha round at the WTO. We're prepared to lead to ensure Doha reaches a successful conclusion. We understand the role of the United States. We're not going to shirk our duty to lead. But we're not going to make unilateral concessions either. We want negotiations to come from—as a result of meaningful contributions by all folks. That's how you reach a successful round.

And so we challenged our trading partners to help forge a deal that opens up global trade flows and creates new opportunities for developed and developing nations alike. Our view is, the time for debating Doha is over. Now is the time for leaders to make tough choices that will allow these negotiations to advance.

Look, I know a lot of folks are worried about trade. There's neighbors worrying about neighbors losing jobs. People say, "Well, trade causes us to lose jobs." And I fully understand that. Sometimes trade causes people to lose jobs. Sometimes the fact that technology hasn't advanced as rapidly or the productivity of workers isn't as good as it should be has caused people to lose jobs.

But nevertheless, there is that concern. And so my question to the American people is, what's the best way to respond? One option is to stop trade, erect barriers, try to wall ourselves off from the world. Those costs of isolationist policies and protectionist policies would far exceed any possible benefit. Closing off our markets would drive up prices for American families, making it harder for people to sell goods in our country, would deny families choices that they've been used to. We want our consumers to have choices when they walk into markets. The more choices available, the better it is for a consumer. The more competition it is for a product, the less likely it is price will rise.

The other nations would retaliate, by the way, if they saw the United States throwing up barriers, and that would push jobs overseas faster. It could hurt millions of Americans who go to work each morning, who work for companies that rely upon exports or companies that rely upon foreign capital as their base of operations.

You know, some have called for a timeout from trade. I guess that's probably popular with the focus group. You know, they toss out the word timeout from trade. It's got this kind of catchy little title to it. In the 21st century, a timeout from trade would be a timeout from growth, a timeout from jobs, and a timeout from good results. And retreating from the opportunities of the global economy would be a reckless mistake that our country cannot afford.

And there's a better answer. And one of them shows faith in the American workers instead of trying to stand against the growth of global trade, instead of granting other people access to markets that we ourselves could have. Instead of squandering an opportunity, why don't we help educate people? Why don't we provide educational opportunities so workers will have the skills necessary to fill the high-paying jobs of the 21st century?

One reason I mentioned No Child Left Behind is, it's got to—this program has got to start early, and it is. We're setting high standards and measuring and correcting problems early, before it's too late. But there's more we can do. We provided more than a billion dollars for new initiatives to educate and prepare workers for the jobs of the 21st century. Yesterday Secretary Chao announced more than $100 million in new community-based job training grants. In other words, we're focusing money to help people get the skills necessary to fill the jobs that are available in America. And when you get education, you're a more productive worker, which means you're going to get paid more money. That's what that means.

These grants support community college programs—I'm a big supporter of community colleges—that provide training for jobs in high-growth fields. And that's our strategy. Now, the word you'll hear attached to that is trade adjustment assistance. That's another program aimed at helping people get the skills necessary to find work. We support it. We support reforming and reauthorizing the vital program as a key component of trade policy. And I look forward to working with Congress to sign a good bill that I can sign into law.

These agreements that I've talked about deserve support from both sides of the aisle. And today I want to make a direct appeal to the members of the Democratic Party. From Franklin Roosevelt to John F. Kennedy to Bill Clinton, Democrats have a long history of supporting trade. Opening markets has been a history and a cornerstone of Democratic policy. As President Clinton said, when he signed legislation to implement NAFTA 14 years ago: "We're on the verge of a global economic expansion that is sparked by the fact that the United States, at this critical moment, decided we would compete and not retreat." I fully support those strong words, those confident words, those optimistic words about America's ability to compete in the world. Thanks in part to the market-opening set in motion by the President, trade between the United States, Mexico, and Canada has more than tripled since 1993.

I mean, I know there's a lot of criticism of NAFTA, but I will tell you this: I grew up in Texas; I remember what the border was like. And I would ask people to go down to that border today and see the benefits, the mutual benefits of what trade has meant for people who, on both sides of the border, for years grew up in abject poverty. We may have some south Texans here today, and if you're old enough, you know exactly what I'm talking about.

The transformation has been remarkable because both sides have benefited. Both sides have realized the blessings of trade, as has Canada. All three of our economies, by the way, since that agreement was signed, have grown by more than 50 percent. More than 25 million new jobs have been created in the United States. The unemployment rate is lower than in previous decades. Workers, farmers, entrepreneurs have seen real improvements in their daily lives, including many Hispanic-owned businesses on both sides of the border.

Listen, NAFTA has worked. People shouldn't back away from NAFTA. It's been a positive development for a lot of people. And if you're worried about people coming to our country to find jobs, there's no better way to help somebody stay home than for there to be prosperity in their neighborhood. I'm convinced most people don't want to try to sneak into America to work. I'm convinced most people would rather have a job close to their—close to where they live. And trade helps increase prosperity. It's mutually beneficial for Canada, the United States, and America—I mean, and Mexico.

Now, look, I understand supporting free trade agreements is not politically easy. There are a lot of special interest groups that are willing to spend a lot of money to make somebody's life miserable when it comes to supporting free trade agreements. But I believe leadership requires people rising above this empty, hollow political rhetoric. If you're committed to multilateral diplomacy, you cannot support unilateral withdrawal from trade agreements. If you're worried—[*applause*]—if you are worried about America's image in the world, it makes no sense to disappoint the nations that are counting on us

most. If you care about lifting developing nations out of poverty, you cannot deny them access to the world's greatest engine of economic growth. If you're truly optimistic about our country's future, there's no reason to wall our Nation off from the opportunities of the world.

I appreciate your efforts in these matters. I feel strongly that trade is in our national interests. I know it's in your personal interests if you're businesspeople. Of course, as you prosper, people are more likely to find work. After all, 70 percent of the new jobs in America are created by small-business owners just like those present here.

I believe Congress will do the right thing. When it's all said and done, they'll take a hard look at the facts. They will take a look at the consequences of rejecting a trade agreement with our close ally. They'll take a good look at the consequences of sending the wrong message to the false populists of the region. They'll take a simple, logical look at how this can benefit our farmers and small-business owners and employers.

Thanks for helping us work the issue. Thanks for giving me a chance to come and speak to you. May God bless you, and may God bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:41 a.m. at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to David C. Lizarraga, chair, Augustine Martinez, interim president and chief executive officer, and Michael L. Barrera, former president and chief executive officer, U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; former Small Business Administration Administrator Hector V. Barreto; and President Hugo Chavez Frias of Venezuela.

Remarks at the National Republican Congressional Committee Dinner

March 12, 2008

Thanks for the warm welcome. I don't know about you, but I'm excited about the year 2008. I intend to finish strong with my head held high. And I intend to work to see to it that we keep the White House and elect John Boehner Speaker of the House of Representatives. [*Applause*] And evidently, you feel the same way.

I thank you all for coming tonight. I am really pleased that this event has turned out to be as successful as it has been. I send—I bring greetings from First Lady Laura Bush. She's—[*applause*]—yes, thank you. She's doing great. She's wedding planning right now, so I appreciate the invitation to be here. [*Laughter*]

You know, I was just thinking about how next year's dinner is going to be a little different from this one. First, you're going to be welcoming a new keynote speaker, President John McCain. And President McCain will start this dinner by saying, "Thanks for the introduction, Mr. Speaker." And I'll be watching it all on TV in Crawford. [*Laughter*]

I do want to thank my friend John Boehner. He has been a great leader for the Republicans in the House of Representatives. He's a good, solid, strategic thinker. I'm proud to call him friend, and I thank you for your service.

I want to thank the House leaders who are here: Roy Blunt, Adam Putnam, Darrell Issa. Issa, you did a heck of a job tonight. Thank you for doing this. I want to recognize my friend Tom Cole. Tom Cole has the vision and determination to effect change, and that is, elect Republicans to be the Speaker and leaders of the House of Representatives. I appreciate you coming, Tommy.

I want to thank Eric Cantor, David Dreier, Kay Granger, John Carter. I appreciate Sam [Ralph] * Hall, my fellow Texan, and Sam Johnson, my fellow Texan, and Ralph Regula for presenting the awards on all the veterans who are serving in Congress tonight. That'll happen after I leave, but nevertheless, I do want to extend my congratulations.

I thank Trace Adkins for singing here tonight. Trace wondered whether I was going to sing. I told him, no, I didn't think I'd sing; I thought I'd just do a little tapdance. [*Laughter*] And I also appreciate my friend, one of the great voices of all time, Sam Moore. Thank you, Sam, for being here.

I also want to welcome all the candidates who are running for office. You know, it's not an easy decision to make to run for the

* White House correction.

United States Congress, but it's a noble decision. And it's a tough decision for your families. And so I want to thank you for agreeing to run; I want to thank your families for agreeing to support you. My advice is, work hard, talk about what's in your heart, let the people know your values, and win. And I think you will. I think 2008 is going to be a fabulous year for the Republican Party.

And the reason why I believe that is because when the American people look at our ideals versus the ideals of the Democrats, when they look at what we believe versus what they believe, they're with us. We represent the values of the American people. Our ideas are the ones embraced by the folks. They may not be the ones that the pundits listen to, but they're the ones who are out working every single day to make America a great and hopeful place.

We believe in strong national defense, and we will do what it takes to keep our Nation safe from a terrorist attack. We believe in limited government. We believe in the collective wisdom of the American people to make the decisions on behalf of the American Government. We would rather trust you than the people in government to make the decisions for what's best for you.

I'm optimistic about this year because I know John McCain. I've known him for many years. I've seen his character and his leadership up close. I've campaigned with him, and I've campaigned against him. [*Laughter*] And I can tell you this: He's a tough competitor. I've seen in every decision he makes that he is guided by the national interests of the United States, not by self-interest. I know John McCain to be a man who will make decisions based upon sound principles, not based upon the latest focus group or political poll.

John McCain is running on a clear, consistent, and conservative agenda. He's a man of honor. He's a genuine hero. He has the wisdom and the experience necessary to be the Commander in Chief of our United States military forces. He loves this country. He's ready to lead this country. I'm proud to be his friend. I'm proud to be his supporter. And on Inauguration Day, I'll proud to be—say to John McCain, "Congratulations, Mr. President."

And I can assure you he doesn't want a lonely victory. He needs allies in the Congress to help enact his agenda. And he's going to work hard alongside these candidates and the incumbents to make sure we win. He'll be a great standard bearer. And I'm confident—I hope you go forth from this meeting with confidence cause I am confident. I firmly believe that we can retake the House. I know we'll hold the White House. And I know it's necessary for the United States of America that we do both.

Let me talk about some of the issues and why I think we'll win. We trust people. We Republicans believe you can make the best decisions for your life. On health care, we trust patients to make decisions, not bureaucrats in Washington, DC. When it comes to education, we trust parents to make the right decisions for their children, and we believe in strong accountability in our public schools. We refuse to accept mediocrity. We refuse to accept the status quo when not every single child in America is learning to read and write and add and subtract.

The American people need us because we'll appoint judges who will strictly interpret the Constitution and not use the bench from which to write law—judges like John Roberts and Sam Alito.

But I think the biggest issue in this campaign is going to be your taxes. I think the biggest issue in this campaign is which side of the political divide is going to let you keep your money and which side is going to raise your taxes. Now, we've got a record on which side will not raise your taxes. We've been through some tough economic times together. We've been through a recession and a terrorist attack and war and corporate scandal and natural disasters. And up until recently, this economy has been strong. We added jobs for 52 consecutive months. It's the longest uninterrupted job growth in the Nation's history. And the reason we did so in the face of these daunting challenges: We trusted the American people, and we cut taxes on every American who pays taxes.

And we're fixing to do so again. We've hit a rough patch, but we took the lead. We anticipated the problems. And thanks to the leadership of John Boehner and Roy Blunt,

they helped shepherd through over $160 billion of tax relief that will be reaching the mailboxes of the American people in the second week of May. Tax relief has worked in the past, and tax relief will work this time, when we get through this rough patch.

Now, apparently, the other side thinks this is a bad thing, because they want to let the tax cuts expire. Let me be clear about this. Milk expires; taxes increase. [*Laughter*] And we know the difference. And so will the American people when they realize that 116 million households will see their taxes rise by an average of $1,800 if the Democrats get their way in the House of Representatives.

Our message is this: We need a Republican President and a Republican Congress to prevent the Democrats from raising your taxes. We need to make the tax cuts permanent.

There's no bigger issue than protecting our country from harm. It is the most solemn responsibility that those of us who have been honored to serve you have. We must do everything in our power to make sure the enemy doesn't strike us again. And I fully understood that after September the 11th, that the temptation would be to dismiss any threat; the temptation would be that, "Oh, perhaps since we haven't been attacked, the threat doesn't exist."

Well, the threat does exist, and it requires steadfast, strong, clear-eyed leadership here in Washington, DC. One of the things that we must do is to make sure that the hundreds of people that are out working for you every night to protect you have the tools they need. If the enemy, if the extremists who want to do America harm, if the radicals who want to kill again, like they did before on our homeland, are making phone calls into the United States of America, we need to know who they're calling, what they're saying, and what they're planning.

The Congress came together last year and passed the Protect America Act to give our professionals the tools they need. Unfortunately, that act expired. But the threat to the United States of America has not expired. Unfortunately, Democratic leaders in the House are continuing to block bipartisan legislation that would give our intelligence officials the tools they need to quickly and effectively monitor terrorist communications.

And they are doing so despite the fact that legislation—good legislation to give our professionals the tools passed the United States Senate by an overwhelming majority of 68 to 29. Instead of holding a vote on this bill that would pass the House of Representatives, House leaders have introduced a highly partisan and deeply flawed bill of their own. Their bill would put in place a cumbersome court approval process that would make it harder to collect intelligence on foreign terrorists and could reopen dangerous intelligence gaps that we experienced last year.

Their bill fails to provide liability protection to companies believed to have assisted in protecting our Nation after the 9/11 attacks. Instead, the House bill would make matters worse by extending litigation for years to come. In fact, House leaders simply adopted the position that class-action trial lawyers are taking in billions of dollars of lawsuits they have filed.

We're under threat, ladies and gentlemen, and yet the House leaders blocked meaningful, substantial legislation that will help protect America for the sake of class-action trial lawyers. Companies that may have helped us save lives should be thanked for their patriotic service and should not be subjected to billion-dollar lawsuits.

This bill would require the disclosure of state secrets during the litigation process. This could lead to the public release of highly classified information that our enemies could use against us. The Democrat version of protecting America is a bad bill. It is irresponsible. It casts aside the bipartisan consensus that was reached in the United States Senate in favor of a partisan approach that has no chance of becoming law. House leaders know this, yet they're pursuing this anyway. This is bad public policy and another reason to elect Republicans to the House of Representatives.

There's a lot of folks working to protect you at home. But the enemy only has to be right one time, and therefore, the best way to protect the American people from further harm is to defeat the enemy overseas so we do not have to face them here at home. And

that's precisely the strategy that we're following.

We're on the offense. Wherever we can find a terrorist who would harm the American people, we'll bring him to justice. We're constantly pressing. And this war against the extremists is now being played out on two major theaters.

First is Afghanistan. I laid out a doctrine that said, if you harbor a terrorist, you're equally as guilty as the terrorists. The Taliban and—didn't believe us, and so the United States of America, after giving the enemy due warning, unleashed the fury of a great military. And in so doing, we cleaned out the terrorist training camps from which they launched attacks on the United States and freed 25 million people from the clutches of a barbaric regime.

This young democracy is struggling for its very existence against coldblooded killers, and it's in the interests of the United States that we stand strongly with these proud Afghan citizens, that we back them in their efforts, and that we make sure Al Qaida or any other extremist can no longer find a safe haven in the country of Afghanistan.

And then, of course, the other theater is Iraq. Removing Saddam Hussein was the right decision early in my Presidency; it is the right decision now; and it will be the right decision ever. And the fight's been tough in Iraq. And for those of you here—who are here who have served in that theater, I can't thank you enough for your sacrifices and your service to the United States of America.

There have been amazing gains made in that country. After all, they wrote one of the most modern constitutions in the history of the Middle East. Iraqis braved the violence to vote. And yet nearly a year ago, the terrorists and extremists were succeeding in their efforts to plunge the country into chaos.

So I had a tough decision to make. I reviewed our strategy. I fully understood that failure in Iraq would make America more vulnerable to attack, that failure in Iraq would create unbelievable chaos in a part of the world that has—that produced suicide bombers in the first place.

And so rather than retreating, I made the considered judgment to send reinforcements into the country, in a dramatic move that's now called the surge. Fourteen months after I ordered the surge of forces, sectarian killings are down, and Al Qaida is on the defense. U.S. and Iraqi forces have captured or killed thousands of extremists in Iraq, including hundreds of key Al Qaida operatives.

Progress in Iraq is fragile, and there's no question, it's going to take strong determination to prevail. Yet even the enemy recognizes they're on the wrong side of events. They're disheartened; they're demoralized; and they will be defeated.

When things were going poorly in Iraq early last year, Democrats called for withdrawal. Today, the situation has turned around, and Democrats are calling for withdrawal. It seems that no matter what happens on the ground, the opponents of the war have only one answer: retreat. You might even say that when it comes to withdrawing from Iraq, the Democrats' policy is, stay the course.

If we followed their advice a year ago, Iraq would be far different and a much more dangerous place than it is today, and the American people would be at greater risk. And if we followed their advice now, we would put at risk all the gains our troops have made over the past year. The United States Congress does need to act when it comes to Iraq, and they need to stand with our brave men and women in uniform and give them all the resources they need to do their job. And it—when it comes to standing with the United States military, there's no greater supporters than the Republicans in the House of Representatives.

The struggle we're engaged in is difficult for the American—some Americans to really understand the scope and the nature of the battle. We're involved in an ideological struggle between folks who murder the innocent to achieve political objectives, folks who have got a vision about what they would like to impose on the rest of the world, and particularly in the Middle East, and those of us who believe strongly in the power of liberty. I believe in the transformative power of liberty. I believe that if the United States of America does not lose its faith in the power of freedom to transform hopeless societies, that we will see the peace that we all want. I believe in the universality of freedom. I believe there's an Almighty, and I believe a gift of

that Almighty to every man, woman, and child is freedom.

I love to share the story, and I'm sure some of you have heard this before—but the story about my friendship with Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. He's the guy that we went down to Elvis's place in Memphis with. He is a good pal. He's no longer in power, but when he was in office, right after the attacks of September the 11th, he clearly saw the dangers and the opportunities. He saw the dangers that hopelessness was the only way that these ideologues could recruit suicide bombers. And he knew that the United States of America and our allies must be firm in our resolve to bring the terrorists to justice and, at the same time, spread the blessings of liberty.

And what's interesting about this story is that he was the leader of a country that my father fought against some 60 years prior. Think about that. Eighteen-year-old Navy Ensign George H.W. Bush, like many of your relatives, signed up to fight the Japanese. As a matter of fact, the war was so bitter that our vocabulary had slur words in it about the Japanese for years after the war ended. They were the hated enemy.

And yet 60 years later, his son, the son of a Navy fighter pilot, was at the table talking with the Prime Minister of the former enemy about the peace. Something amazing took place. And what happened was, Japan adopted democracy, a system of government with liberty at its core.

My friends, freedom is transformative. Freedom can transform an enemy into an ally. And someday, an American President will be thanking this Congress for its steadfast support of liberty, because he'll be sitting down at the table talking about keeping the peace for generations to come, and our children and our grandchildren will be better off for it.

I thank you for coming. I thank you for your prayers. May God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:38 p.m. at the Hilton Washington Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers Trace Adkins and Sam Moore.

Remarks at the Kuwait-America Foundation's Stand for Africa Gala Dinner

March 12, 2008

Thank you all. Mr. Ambassador, thank you for the invitation. You've got a beautiful place here. [*Laughter*] Rima, thanks very much. I'm honored to be with you. I'm a little late because Laura had me watching "Father of the Bride." [*Laughter*] And in that I didn't finish it, I'm going to make my remarks short and go home and watch it. It's going to be a big year for us. So the guy comes to see me, and he says, "I want to marry your daughter." I said, "Done deal." [*Laughter*]

It's also a big year for us because I'm absolutely convinced the momentum that we have started on the continent of Africa in dealing with HIV/AIDS or malaria is going to continue on for a long period of time. And I want to thank you all very much for supporting the initiative.

I do want to say something about our Secretary of State. I can remember early on in my administration—she was the National Security Adviser then—and she said, "I presume you're going to pay attention to Africa." And I said, "That's a good presumption because I believe to whom much is given, much is required." And the United States of America has been given a lot. And I firmly believe we're required to respond to human tragedy when we see it.

And there's nothing more tragic than a young baby dying because of a mosquito bite. And so I come to you optimistic about this initiative and thankful for the folks who are supporting Malaria No More. I too want to thank Ray Chambers for his leadership. I like it when people do well in the business world and then, rather than retire, decide to put something back into society. That's exactly what you've done, and we're very grateful for doing what you're doing.

I see Justice Alito is here. That's good. Hey, Sam, good to see you.

Youssou N'Dour—so, Youssou, I've been practicing my dancing recently—[*laughter*]—and singing. [*Laughter*] And I'm available for a few tips. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate the members of my Cabinet who are here and Members of Congress. I

too want to thank Admiral Mike Mullen for serving as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and his wife, Deborah. It's amazing to be the Commander in Chief of a group of people that are dedicated, selfless, and courageous like our military. And Admiral Mullen represents the very best of the U.S. military. I thank the diplomatic corps who is here as well.

So my friends in Texas say, "You know, don't we have enough problems here at home?" And my answer is, "We're wealthy enough and we're strong enough and we're good enough to take problems—take on problems here at home as well as in other parts of the world." And then I remind them that we're living in a very difficult period in the history of the world. After all, we're witnessing an ideological struggle between those who kill the innocent to achieve political objectives and those who believe in human dignity and human rights and human freedom.

And it's a tough time, and it's going to take awhile to prevail. But one thing is for certain, that this enemy we face cannot possibly find recruits based upon their vision. Their vision for life is so dark and so dim and so degrading that it's impossible for them to recruit unless they find hopeless situations. And there's nothing more hopeless for a mother to see a baby die needlessly. And there's nothing more hopeless than a pandemic that sweeps through a continent.

And so the initiative, the Malaria No More initiative, first and foremost, is a part of our efforts to make sure that peace prevails in the long term. And it's working; it's amazing. Admiral Ziemer is here. This guy can get the job done. See, I—one of the things that we pride ourselves on in this administration is, we like to not only be talkers; we like to be doers. We like to set out an agenda and then see to it that the agenda is accomplished.

And working on this malaria initiative, we can measure. You can measure how many nets have been purchased and distributed, how many pills have been distributed, how many countries have been affected. When we were in Tanzania, we were told that Zanzibar, which is a part of Tanzania, went from having their babies infected by malaria at the tune of 20 percent to 1 percent in 18 months. And so I am the kind of fellow that says, this is in our interests, and I expect the monies that we're spending to be spent well and to be spent wisely. And they are.

It's also in our moral interest. Our Nation is a better nation when we help people save lives. The collective will of the American people to help somebody who suffers, who they might not ever know, lifts our national spirit. And so on our trip to Africa, I tried to make sure that the people of Africa understood this wasn't a George Bush initiative or a Laura Bush initiative or a Condi Rice initiative; this was an initiative of the most compassionate people on the face of the Earth, the American people.

And you're helping this initiative go forward. And so I've taken a breather from the movie to come by—[*laughter*]—to thank you very much for standing strong with the forces of goodness and light and compassion. And the work you're doing is necessary, and it's important, and it's succeeding. And I hope you take great heart in that.

Thanks for letting me come by to say hi, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:22 p.m. at the residence of the Ambassador of Kuwait to the U.S. In his remarks, he referred to Kuwait's Ambassador to the U.S. Salim al-Abdallah al-Jabir al-Sabah and his wife, Rima al-Sabah; Raymond G. Chambers, founder, Malaria No More; musician and activist Youssou N'Dour; and Rear Adm. R. Timothy Ziemer, USN (Ret.), U.S. Malaria Coordinator.

Remarks on Intelligence Reform Legislation

March 13, 2008

Last month, House leaders declared that they needed 21 additional days to pass legislation giving our intelligence professionals the tools they need to protect America. That deadline passed last Saturday without any action from the House.

This week, House leaders are finally bringing legislation to the floor. Unfortunately, instead of holding a vote on the good bipartisan bill that passed the United States Senate,

they introduced a partisan bill that would undermine America's security. This bill is unwise. The House leaders know that the Senate will not pass it. And even if the Senate did pass it, they know I will veto it.

Yesterday the Attorney General and the Director of National Intelligence sent a leader to the Speaker explaining why the bill is dangerous to our national security. They cited a number of serious flaws in the bill, including the following.

First, the House bill could reopen dangerous intelligence gaps by putting in place a cumbersome court approval process that would make it harder to collect intelligence on foreign terrorists. This is an approach that Congress explicitly rejected last August when bipartisan majorities in both Houses passed the Protect America Act. And it is an approach the Senate rejected last month when it passed a new—new legislation to extend and strengthen the Protect America Act by an overwhelming vote of 68 to 29.

Now House leaders are proposing to undermine this consensus. Their partisan legislation would extend protections we enjoy as Americans to foreign terrorists overseas. It would cause us to lose vital intelligence on terrorist threats, and it is a risk that our country cannot afford to take.

Second, the House bill fails to provide liability protection to companies believed to have assisted in protecting our Nation after the 9/11 attacks. Instead, the House bill would make matters even worse by allowing litigation to continue for years. In fact, House leaders simply adopted the position that class-action trial lawyers are taking in the multibillion-dollar lawsuits they have filed. This litigation would undermine the private sector's willingness to cooperate with the intelligence community, cooperation that is absolutely essential to protecting our country from harm. This litigation would require the disclosure of state secrets that could lead to the public release of highly classified information that our enemies could use against us. And this litigation would be unfair because any companies that assisted us after 9/11 were assured by our Government that their cooperation was legal and necessary.

Companies that may have helped us save lives should be thanked for their patriotic service, not subjected to billion-dollar lawsuits that will make them less willing to help in the future. The House bill may be good for class-action trial lawyers, but it would be terrible for the United States.

Third, the House bill would establish yet another commission to examine past intelligence activities. This would be a redundant and partisan exercise that would waste our intelligence officials' time and taxpayers' money.

The bipartisan House and Senate intelligence and judiciary committees have already held numerous oversight hearings on the Government's intelligence activities. It seems that House leaders are more interested in investigating our intelligence professionals than in giving them the tools they need to protect us. Congress should stop playing politics with the past and focus on helping us prevent terrorist attacks in the future.

Members of the House should not be deceived into thinking that voting for this unacceptable legislation would somehow move the process along. Voting for this bill does not move the process along. Instead, voting for this bill would make our country less safe because it would move us further away from passing the good bipartisan Senate bill that is needed to protect America.

The American people understand the stakes in this struggle. They want their children to be safe from terror. Congress has done little in the 3 weeks since the last recess, and they should not leave for their Easter recess without getting the Senate bill to my desk.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:20 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Attorney General Michael B. Mukasey. He also referred to H.R. 3773.

Remarks Following a Briefing By Provincial Reconstruction Team Leaders and Brigade Combat Commanders

March 13, 2008

As you can see here on the screen in front of me, we've got assembled in Afghanistan—

thanks to Ambassador Wood—PRTs, which is Provincial Reconstruction Teams, made up of military and civilian personnel, all aiming to help the Afghans recover from unbelievable brutality of the Taliban and have a society that's capable of meeting the needs of its people. We've also got two members of the PRT here present with us.

Our strategy in Afghanistan is, one, to provide enough security so civil society can move forward. Any counter—effective counter-insurgency strategy will require more than just military action; it requires a military-civilian interface. And so if you look on the screen, you see brave and courageous Americans in uniform and not in uniform, because they're a part of this strategy to help Afghans, one, understand the blessings of good governance. In other words, the folks are attempting to fight corruption at the local level so that the local citizens are able to have a positive outlook about their government. We're also working to educate people, build roads, provide good health care. And our fellow citizens are there on the ground, in some difficult circumstances, all aiming to help this young democracy survive and thrive. And there are difficulties, but we're also making progress.

And the best thing we got going for us—not only do we have brave and compassionate citizens willing to serve, but we've also got an ideology based upon liberty, which stands in stark contrast to the ideology of the thugs and murderers called the Taliban. And the job of hand is to help these folks recover, help the Afghans realize there's a better future for them. And it's hard work, but it's necessary work for the security of our country.

And so it's been a great pleasure for senior members of my administration to hear the stories and to hear the issues that they face. I'm enriched by the experience, and I do want to thank you very much for serving our country. And as I mentioned to you earlier, please thank your families for them standing by you during these—during your time of service.

God bless you all, and thank you for your time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:27 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Statement on Farm Legislation

March 13, 2008

The Congress has agreed on legislation to extend current farm programs to April 18, 2008. I will sign this legislation to avoid serious disruptions that might result if the current law is allowed to expire without a responsible farm bill enacted in its place. Farmers and ranchers deserve to know the structure of policies that affect their day-to-day business activities, and right now they face uncertainty.

Throughout this process, my goal has been and remains to sign a good farm bill. Over 1 year ago, following listening sessions across the Nation, the Department of Agriculture unveiled a reform-minded and fiscally responsible approach to supporting America's farmers and ranchers. My proposal would provide agriculture producers with a safety net that better targets benefits and provides funding for emerging priorities. Today's farm economy is very strong, and Congress should not miss this opportunity to reform current farm programs.

My administration has been eager to work with Congress. We have offered legislative language and a list of potential spending offsets to ensure Congress does not increase taxes. And while insisting on significant program reforms, we have demonstrated flexibility on how to achieve real reform. I have also made it clear that any final farm bill that includes a tax increase or does not include reform will be met with a veto. These negotiations have taken place in good faith with the goal of reaching a final agreement that meets the needs of farmers and enjoys the support of America's taxpayers.

This legislation to extend current farm programs will provide more time for Congress to reach an agreement. If a final agreement is not reached by April 18, I call on Congress to extend current law for at least 1 year. While long-term extension of current law is not the desired outcome, I believe the Government has a responsibility to provide America's farmers and ranchers with a timely and predictable farm program, not multiple

short-term extensions of current law. Without a predictable policy, agriculture producers will be unable to make sound business decisions with respect to this year's crop.

I am eager to sign a farm bill that provides a safety net for farmers, includes significant farm program reform similar to the administration's farm bill proposal, and does not include tax increases. I have made clear the framework of an agreement that will garner my signature and urge Congress to pass a bill that meets these criteria.

NOTE: The statement referred to S. 2745, which was assigned Public Law 110–196.

Statement on the Death of Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho of Mosul

March 13, 2008

I send my condolences to the Chaldean community and the people of Iraq on the death of Archbishop Rahho. I deplore the despicable act of violence committed against the Archbishop of Mosul. The terrorists will continue to lose in Iraq because they are savage and cruel. Their utter disregard for human life, demonstrated by this murder and by recent suicide attacks against innocent Iraqis in Baghdad and innocent pilgrims celebrating a religious holiday, is turning the Iraqi people against them. We will continue to work with the Iraqi Government to protect and support civilians, irrespective of religious affiliation.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Protocol Amending the Canada-United States Taxation Convention

March 13, 2008

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith, for Senate advice and consent to ratification, the Protocol Amending the Convention Between the United States of America and Canada with Respect to Taxes on Income and on Capital done at Washington on September 26, 1980, as Amended by the Protocols done on June 14, 1983, March 28, 1984, March 17, 1995, and July 29, 1997, signed on September 21, 2007, at Chelsea (the "proposed Protocol"). The proposed Protocol would amend the existing income tax Convention between the United States and Canada that was concluded in 1980, as amended by prior protocols (the "existing Treaty"). Also transmitted for the information of the Senate is the report of the Department of State with respect to the proposed Protocol.

The proposed Protocol would eliminate withholding taxes on cross-border interest payments. In addition, the proposed Protocol would coordinate the tax treatment of contributions to, and other benefits of, pension funds for cross-border workers. The proposed Protocol also includes provisions related to the taxation of permanent establishments, so-called dual-resident corporations, income derived through certain entities that are considered fiscally transparent, and former U.S. citizens and long-term residents. The proposed Protocol further strengthens the existing Treaty's provisions that prevent the Treaty's inappropriate use by third-country residents. The proposed Protocol also provides for mandatory resolution of certain cases before the competent authorities.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the proposed Protocol and give its advice and consent to ratification.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 13, 2008.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 14.

Remarks to the Economic Club of New York and a Question-and-Answer Session in New York City

March 14, 2008

The President. Glenn, thanks for the kind introduction. Thanks for giving me a chance to speak to the Economic Club of New York. It seems like I showed up in a interesting moment—[*laughter*]—during an interesting time. I appreciate the fact that you've assembled to give me a chance to just share some ideas with you. I also appreciate the fact that

as leaders of the business and financial community, you've helped make this city a great place, and you've helped make our country really, in many ways, the economic envy of the world.

First of all, in a free market, there's going to be good times and bad times. That's how markets work. There will be ups and downs. And after 52 consecutive months of job growth, which is a record, our economy obviously is going through a tough time. It's going through a tough time in the housing market, and it's going through a tough time in the financial markets.

And I want to spend a little time talking about that. But I want to remind you, this is not the first time since I've been the President that we have faced economic challenges. We inherited a recession. And then there was the attacks of September the 11th, 2001, which many of you saw firsthand, and you know full well how that affected our economy. And then we had corporate scandals. And I made the difficult decisions to confront the terrorists and extremists in two major fronts, Afghanistan and Iraq. And then we had devastating natural disasters. And the interesting thing: Every time, this economy has bounced back better and stronger than before.

So I'm coming to you as an optimistic fellow. I've seen what happens when America deals with difficulty. I believe that we're a resilient economy, and I believe that the ingenuity and resolve of the American people is what helps us deal with these issues. And it's going to happen again.

Our job in Washington is to foster enterprise and ingenuity, so we can ensure our economy is flexible enough to adjust to adversity and strong enough to attract capital. And the challenge is not to do anything foolish in the meantime. In the long run, I'm confident that our economy will continue to grow because the foundation is solid.

Unemployment is low at 4.8 percent. Wages have risen; productivity has been strong. Exports are at an alltime high, and the Federal deficit as a percentage of our total economy is well below the historic average. But as Glenn mentioned, these are tough times. Growth fell to 0.6 percent in the fourth quarter of last year; it's clearly slow. The economy shed more than 80,000 jobs in 2 months. Prices are up at the gas pump and in the supermarket. Housing values are down. Hardworking Americans are concerned—they're concerned about their families, and they're concerned about making their bills.

Fortunately, we recognized the slowdown early and took action. And it was decisive action in the form of policies that will spur growth. We worked with the Congress. I know that may sound incongruous to you, but I do congratulate the Speaker and Leader Reid, as well as Boehner and Mitch McConnell and Secretary Paulson, for anticipating a problem and passing a robust package quickly.

This package is temporary, and it has two key elements. First, the growth package provides incentives for businesses to make investments in new equipment this year. As more businesses take advantage, investment will pick up, and then job creation will follow. The purpose was to stimulate investment. And the signal is clear, once I signed the bill, the signal to—folks in businesses large and small know that there's some certainty in the Tax Code for the remainder of this year.

Secondly, the package will provide tax rebates to more than 130 million households. And the purpose is to boost consumer spending. The purpose is to try to offset the loss of wealth if the value of your home has gone down. The purpose is to buoy the consumer.

The rebates haven't been put in the mail yet. In other words, this aspect of the plan hasn't taken to effect. There's a lot of Americans who've heard about the plan; a lot of them are a little skeptical about this "check's in the mail" stuff that the Federal Government talks about. [*Laughter*] But it's coming, and those checks, the Secretary assures me, will be mailed by the second week of May.

And so what are the folks, the experts—guys like Hubbard—anticipate to happen? I'm not so sure he is one now, but the people that have told me that they expect this consumer spending to have an effect in the second quarter and a greater effect in the third quarter. That's what the experts say.

The Federal Reserve has taken action to bolster the economy. I respect Ben Bernanke. I think he's doing a good job

under tough circumstances. The Fed has cut interest rates several times. And this week the Fed—and by the way, we also hold dear this notion of the Fed being independent from White House policy. They act independently from the politicians. And they should. It's good for our country to have that kind of independence.

This week, the Fed also announced a major move to ease stress in the credit markets by adding liquidity. It was strong action by the Fed, and they did so because some financial institutions that borrowed money to buy securities in the housing industry must now repair their balance sheets before they can make further loans. The housing issue has dried up some of the sources of credit that businesses need in our economy to help it grow. That's why the Fed is reacting the way they are. We believe the actions by the Fed will help financial institutions continue to make more credit available.

This morning the Federal Reserve, with support of the Treasury Department, took additional actions to mitigate disruptions to our financial markets. Today's events are fast-moving, but the Chairman of the Federal Reserve and the Secretary of the Treasury are on top of them and will take the appropriate steps to promote stability in our markets.

Now, a root cause of the economic slowdown has been the downturn in the housing market, and I want to talk a little bit about that today. After years of steady increases, home values in some parts of the country have declined. At the same time, many homeowners with adjustable rate mortgages have seen their monthly payments increase faster than their ability to pay. As a result, a growing number of people are facing the prospect of foreclosure.

Foreclosure places a terrible burden on our families. Foreclosure disrupts communities. And so the question is, what do you do about it in a way that allows the market to work and, at the same times, helps people? Before I get to that, though, I do want to tell you that we fully understand that the mounting concern over housing has shaken the broader market; that it's spread uncertainty to global financial markets; and that it has tightened the credit, which makes it harder for people to get mortgages in the first place.

The temptation is for people, in their attempt to limit the number of foreclosures, is to put bad law in place. And so I want to talk about some of that. First of all, the temptation of Washington is to say that anything short of a massive Government intervention in the housing market amounts to inaction. I strongly disagree with that sentiment. I believe there ought to be action, but I'm deeply concerned about law and regulation that will make it harder for the markets to recover; and when they recover, make it harder for this economy to be robust. And so we got to be careful and mindful that any time the Government intervenes in the market, it must do so with clear purpose and great care. Government actions are—have far-reaching and unintended consequences.

I want to talk to you about a couple of ideas that I strongly reject. First, one bill in Congress would provide $4 billion for State and local governments to buy up abandoned and foreclosed homes. You know, I guess this sounds like a good idea to some, but if your goal is to help Americans keep their homes, it doesn't make any sense to spend billions of dollars buying up homes that are already empty. As a matter of fact, when you buy up empty homes, you're only helping the lenders or the speculators. The purpose of government ought to be to help the individuals, not those who, like—who speculated in homes. This bill sends the wrong signal to the market.

Secondly, some have suggested we change the bankruptcy courts, the bankruptcy code, to give bankruptcy judges the authority to reduce mortgage debts by judicial decree. I think that sends the wrong message. It would be unfair to millions of homeowners who have made the hard spending choices necessary to pay their mortgages on time. It would further rattle credit markets. It would actually cause interest rates to go up. If banks think that judges might step in and write down the value of home loans, they're going to charge higher interest rates to cover that risk. This idea would make it harder for responsible first-time home buyers to be able to afford a home.

There are some in Washington who say we ought to artificially prop up home prices. You know, it sounds reasonable in a speech—I guess—but it's not going to help first-time home buyers, for example. A lot of people have been priced out of the market right now because of decisions made by others. The market is in the process of correcting itself; markets must have time to correct. Delaying that correction would only prolong the problem.

And so that's why we oppose those proposals, and I want to talk about what we're for. We're obviously for sending out over $150 billion into the marketplace in the form of checks that will be reaching the mailboxes by the second week of May. We're for that. We're also for helping a targeted group of homeowners, namely those who have made responsible buying decisions, avoid foreclosure with some help.

We've taken three key steps. First, we launched a new program at the Federal Housing Administration called FHASecure. It's a program that's given FHA greater flexibility to offer refinancing for struggling homeowners with otherwise good credit. In other words, we're saying to people: We want to help you refinance your notes. Over the past 6 months, this program has helped about 120,000 families stay in their homes by refinancing about $17 billion worth of mortgages. And by the end of the year, we expect this program to have reached 300,000 families.

You know the issue like I do, though. I'm old enough to remember savings and loans, and remember who my savings and loan officer was who loaned me my first money to buy a house. And had I got in a bind, I could have walked across the street in Midland, Texas, and say: I need a little help. Can you help me readjust my note so I can stay in my house? There are no such things as that type of deal anymore. As a matter of fact, the paper—you know, had this been a modern era, the paper that had—you know, my paper, my mortgage, could be owned by somebody in a foreign country, which makes it hard to renegotiate the note.

So we're dealing in a difficult environment—to get the word to people, there's help for you to refinance your homes. And so Hank Paulson put together what's called the HOPE NOW Alliance to try to bring some reality to the situation, to focus our help on helping creditworthy people refinance, rather than pass law that will make it harder for the market to adjust. This HOPE NOW Alliance is made up of industry—is made up of investors and service managers and mortgage counselors and lenders. And they set industry-wide standards to streamline the process for refinancing and modifying certain mortgages.

Last month, HOPE NOW created a new program. They take a look—they took a look at the risks, and they created a program called Project Lifeline, which offers some homeowners facing imminent foreclosure a 30-day extension. The whole purpose is to help people stay in their houses. During this time they can work with their lender. And this grace period has made a difference to a lot of folks.

An interesting statistic that has just been released: Members of the Alliance report that the number of homeowners working out their mortgages is now rising faster than the number entering foreclosure. The program is beginning to work; it's beginning to help. The problem we have is a lot of folks aren't responding to over a million letters sent out to offer them assistance and mortgage counseling. And so one of the tasks we have is to continue to urge our citizens to respond to the help, to pay attention to the notices they get describing how they can find help in refinancing their homes. We got toll-free numbers and web sites and mailings, and it's just really important for our citizens to understand that this help is available for them.

We've also taken some other steps that will bring some credibility and confidence to the market. Alphonso Jackson, Secretary of HUD, is proposing a rule that require lenders to provide a standard, easy-to-read summary statements explaining the key elements of mortgage agreements. These mortgage agreements can be pretty frightening to people; I mean, there's a lot of tiny print. And I don't know how many people understood they were buying resets or not. But one thing is for certain: There needs to be complete transparency. And to the extent that these contracts are too complex and people made

decisions that they just weren't sure they were making, we need to do something about it. We need better confidence amongst those who are purchasing loans.

And secondly, yesterday Hank Paulson announced new recommendations to strengthen oversight of the mortgage industry and improve the way the credit ratings are determined for securities and ensure proper risk management at financial institutions. In other words, we've got an active plan to help us get through this rough period. We're always open for new ideas, but there are certain principles that we won't violate. And one of the principles is overreacting by Federal law and Federal regulation that will have long-term negative effects on our economy.

There are some further things we can do, by the way, on the housing market, that I call upon Congress to do. By the way, Congress did pass a good bill that creates a 3-year window for American families to refinance their homes without paying taxes on any debt forgiveness they receive. The Tax Code created disincentives for people to refinance their homes, and we took care of that for a 3-year period. And they need to move forward with reforms on Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. They need to continue to modernize the FHA, as well as allow State housing agencies to issue tax-free bonds to homeowners to refinance their mortgages.

Congress can also take other steps to help us during a period of uncertainty—and these are uncertain times. A major source of uncertainty is that the tax relief we passed in 2001 and 2003 is set to expire. If Congress doesn't act, 116 million American households will see their taxes rise by an average of $1,800. If Congress doesn't act, capital gains and dividends are going to be taxed at a higher rate. If Congress doesn't make the tax relief permanent, they will create additional uncertainty during uncertain times.

A lot of folks are waiting to see what Congress intends to do. One thing it's certain that Congress will do is waste some of your money. So I've challenged Members of Congress to cut the number of—cost of earmarks in half. I issued an Executive order that directs Federal agencies to ignore any future earmark that is not voted on by the Congress. In other words, Congress has got this habit of just sticking these deals into bills without a vote—no transparency, no light of day; they just put them in. And by the way, this Executive order extends beyond my Presidency, so the next President gets to make a decision as to whether or not that Executive order stays in effect.

I sent Congress a budget that meets our priorities. There is no greater priority than to make sure our troops in harm way have all they need to do their job. That has been a priority ever since I made the difficult commitment to put those troops in harm's way, and it should be a priority of any President and any Congress. And beyond that, we've held spending at below rates of inflation—on nonsecurity spending, discretionary spending, we've held the line. And that's why I can tell you that we've submitted a budget that's in balance by 2012, without raising your taxes.

If the Congress truly wants to send a message that will calm people's nerves, they'll adopt the budget I submitted to them and make it clear they're not going to run up the taxes on the working people, and on small businesses, and on capital gains, and on dividends, and on the estate tax.

Now, one powerful force for economic growth that is under—is being questioned right now in Washington is whether or not this country is confident enough to open up markets overseas, whether or not we believe in trade. I believe strongly it's in our Nation's interest to open up markets for U.S. goods and services. I believe strongly that NAFTA has been positive for the United States of America, like it's been positive for our trading partners in Mexico and Canada. I believe it is dangerous for this country to become isolationist and protectionist. I believe it shows a lack of confidence in our capacity to compete. And I know it would harm our economic future if we allow the—those who believe that walling off America from trade to have their way in Congress.

And so I made it clear that we expect for Congress to move forward on the Colombia free trade agreement. And this is an important agreement. It's important for our national security interests, and it's important for our economic interests. Most Americans

don't understand that most goods and services from Colombia come into the United States duty free; most of our goods and services are taxed at about a 35-percent rate heading into Colombia. Doesn't it make sense to have our goods and services treated like those from Colombia? I think it does. I think our farmers and ranchers and small-business owners must understand that with the Government finding new markets for them, it'll help them prosper.

But if Congress were to reject the Colombia free trade agreement, it would also send a terrible signal in our own neighborhood. It would bolster the voices of false populism. It would say to young democracies: America's word can't be trusted. It would be devastating for our national security interests if this United States Congress turns its back on Colombia and a free trade agreement with Colombia.

I intend to work the issue hard. I'm going to speak my mind on the issue because I feel strongly about it. And then once they pass the Colombia, they can pass Panama and South Korea as well.

Let me talk about another aspect of keeping markets open. A confident nation accepts capital from overseas. We can protect our people against investments that jeopardize our national security, but it makes no sense to deny capital, including sovereign wealth funds, from access to the U.S. markets. It's our money to begin with. [*Laughter*] It seems like we ought to let it back.

So there's some of the things that are on my mind, and I appreciate you letting me get a chance to come by to speak to you. I'm—you know, I guess the best to describe Government policy is like a person trying to drive a car on a rough patch. If you ever get stuck in a situation like that, you know full well it's important not to overcorrect, because when you overcorrect, you end up in the ditch. And so it's important to be steady and to keep your eyes on the horizon.

We're going to deal with the issues as we see them. We're not afraid to make decisions. This administration is not afraid to act. We saw a problem coming, and we acted quickly with the help of Democrats and Republicans in the Congress. We're not afraid to take on issues. But we will do so in a way that respects the ingenuity of the American people, that bolsters the entrepreneurial spirit, and that ensures when we make it through this rough patch, our driving is going to be more smooth.

Thank you, Glenn, for giving me a chance to come. And I'll answer some questions.

Chairman of the Economic Club of New York R. Glenn Hubbard. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

As is the Club's tradition, we do have two questioners: On my left, Gail Fosler, the president and chief economist of the Conference Board; on my right, literally and metaphorically, Paul Gigot—[*laughter*]—the editorial page editor of the Wall Street Journal.

Gail, the first question for the President is yours.

Gail Fosler. Thank you, very much.

The President. Who picked Gigot? I mean, why does he—[*laughter*] All right. Excuse me. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Fosler. I'm glad you don't know me, Mr. President.

The President. Yeah, well—[*laughter*]. I'd be more polite; trust me. [*Laughter*] My mother might be watching. [*Laughter*]

Education/Trade/U.S. Foreign Policy

Ms. Fosler. I would like to probe your thoughts on trade. You raised trade in your speech very passionately. And the Conference Board is made up of 2,000 businesses around the world; about a third of them are outside of the United States. And they look at the move toward protectionism in the United States with great alarm, even the shift in the Republican Party toward protectionism. And you mention that a confident nation opens its borders, and there does seem to be a lack of confidence in this country. And I wonder if you would give us a diagnosis of why we find ourselves in the situation we do today?

The President. First of all, a lot of folks are worried about their neighbors losing work. In other words, they fear jobs moving overseas. And the best way to address that is to recognize that sometimes people lose work because of trade. And when that happens, the best way to deal with it is to provide educational opportunities so somebody can

get the skills necessary to fill the higher paying jobs here in the United States.

And I think, for example, of what happened to the textile industry in North Carolina. And stories like these really do affect how people think about trade. You know, some companies because of mismanagement, some companies because of trade couldn't survive. And it created a wholesale displacement of workers throughout North Carolina. And what the State of North Carolina did was, they wisely used their community college system to be able to fit needs and skills.

In other words, a community college system—the interesting thing about it, it's probably the most market-driven education system in the United States. Unlike some higher education institutions that are either unwilling or sometimes incapable of adjusting curriculum, the community college system is capable of doing that.

And North Carolina recognized they had a great opportunity to become a magnet for the health care industry. And a lot of their textile workers—with Government help, called trade adjustment assistance—went to community colleges to gain new skills. And it turns out that when you analyze what happened, just the added value, just kind of the increase in productivity and the relevancy of the job training, made the wages higher for those than they were in the textile industry. There's a classic example of how to respond, rather than throwing up trade barriers.

Secondly, a lot of people don't understand this fact: that by having our markets open, it's good for consumers. The more consumers get to choose, the more choice there is on the shelves, the less likely it is there will be inflation. And one of the great things about open markets is that markets respond to the collective wisdom of consumers. And so therefore, it makes sense to have more choice, more opportunities. And yet when you read "made from another country" on the shelves of our stores, people automatically assume that jobs are fragile. And so we've got to do a better job of educating people about the benefits of trade.

Third, it's—sometimes, when times are tough, it's easy to—it's much easier to find a—somebody else to blame. And sometimes that somebody else that's easier to blame is somebody in a distant land.

And so those are some of the fact—and plus it's easy politics. It's easy to go around and hammer away on trade. It's—and I guess if you're the kind of person that followed polls and focus groups, that's what your tendency to be. I'm the kind of person who doesn't give a darn about polls and focus groups, and I do what I think is right. And what is right is making sure that—[*applause*]. And sometimes if you're going to lead this country, you have to stand in the face of what appears to be a political headwind.

So those are some of the dynamics that makes it hard. And I'm troubled by isolationism and protectionism. As a matter of fact, I dedicated part of my State of the Union Address a couple of years ago to this very theme. And what concerns me is, is that the United States of America will become fatigued when it comes to fighting off tyrants, or say it's too hard to spread liberty, or use the excuse that just because freedom hadn't flourished in parts of the world, therefore it's not worth trying. And that, as a result, we kind of retrench and lose confidence in our—the values that have made us a great nation in the first place.

But these aren't American values; they're universal values. And the danger of getting tired during this world is any retreat by the America—by America was going to be to the benefit of those who want to do us harm. Now, I understand that since September the 11th, the great tendency is to say we're no longer in danger. Well, that's false; that's false hope. It's either disingenuous or naive, and either one of those attitudes is unrealistic.

And the biggest job we've got is to protect the American people from harm. I don't want to get in another issue, but that's why we better figure out what the enemy is saying on their telephones, if we want to protect you. Notice how I've deftly taken a trade issue and working in all my other issues. [*Laughter*]

But I'm serious about this business about America retreating. And I've got great faith in the transformative power of liberty, and that's what I believe is going to happen in

the Middle East. And I understand it undermines the argument of the stability-ites—people who say, you just got to worry about stability. And I'm saying, we better worry about the conditions that caused 19 kids to kill us in the first place.

And the best way to deal with hopelessness is to fight disease, like we're doing in Africa, and fight forms of government that suppress people's rights, like we're doing around the world. And a retreat from that attitude is going to make America less secure and the world more dangerous, just like a loss of confidence in trade.

And yet the two run side by side, isolationism and protectionism. I might throw another "ism," and that's nativism. And that's what happened throughout our history. And probably the most grim reminder of what can happen to America during periods of isolationism and protectionism is what happened in the late—in the thirties, when we had this America first policy and Smoot-Hawley. And look where it got us.

And so I guess to answer your question: There needs to be political courage, in the face of what may appear to be a difficult headwind, in order to speak clearly about the effects of retreat and the benefits of trade. And so I appreciate you giving me a chance to opine. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Hubbard. Thank you, Mr. President. The second and final——

The President. Never bashful; never short of opinions. [*Laughter*] Just like my mother. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Hubbard. The second and final question for the President is from Paul Gigot.

Monetary Policy/Energy

Paul Gigot. Welcome to New York, Mr. President. And I want to ask you about something you didn't—an issue you didn't address, which is prices.

The President. Which is what?

Mr. Gigot. Prices. Gasoline is selling for $4 a gallon in some parts of the country, but food prices are also rising very fast—grain prices, meat prices, health care prices. And the dollar is weak around the world, hitting a record low this week against the Euro. The price of gold is now about $1,000 an ounce. Many observers say all of this means that we have an inflation problem. Do you agree with them, and what can be done about it?

The President. I agree that the Fed needs to be independent and make considered judgments and balance growth versus inflation. And let me address some of those issues one by one.

We believe in a strong dollar. I recognize economies go up and down, but it's important for us to put policy in place that sends a signal that our economy is going to be strong and open for business, which will—you know, which supports the strong dollar policy, such as not doing something foolish during this economic period that will cause—make it harder to grow; such as rejecting—shutting down capital from coming into this country; such as announcing that—or articulating the belief that making the tax cuts permanent takes uncertainty out of the system.

Energy—our energy policy has not been very wise. You can't build a refinery in the United States; you can't expand a refinery in the United States. The Congress believes we shouldn't be drilling for oil and gas in a productive part of our country like ANWR because it will destroy the environment; which, in fact, it won't. Technology is such that will enable us to find more oil and gas. And so as a result of us not having, you know, been robust in exploring for oil and gas at home, we're dependent on other countries. That creates an economic issue, obviously, and it creates a national security issue.

And, look, I'm very—I'm an alternatives fuel guy; I believe that's important. As a matter of fact, we've expanded—mightily expanded the use of ethanol—a slight consequence if you rely upon corn to grow your hogs. But nevertheless, it's a—it is a policy that basically says that we got to diversify. But diversification does not happen overnight. You know, I firmly believe people in New York City are going to be driving automobiles on battery relatively quickly. And it's not going to be like a golf cart; it'll be a regular-sized vehicle that you'll be driving in. [*Laughter*] And I think it's coming. I think this technology is on its way.

But there's a transition period, and we, frankly, have got policies that make it harder for us to become less dependent on oil. You talk about the price of oil—yeah, it's high.

It's high because demand is greater than supply, is why it's high. It's high because there's new factors in demand on the international market, namely China and India. It's also high because some nations have not done a very good job of maintaining their oil reserves—some of it because of bureaucracy, some of it because of State-owned enterprise. And it's a difficult period for our folks at the pump, and there's no quick fix.

You know, when I was overseas in the Middle East, people said, "Did you talk to the King of Saudi about oil prices?" Of course I did. I reminded him two things: One, you better be careful about affecting markets—reminding him that oil is fungible; even though we get most of our oil, by the way, from Canada and Mexico, oil is fungible. And secondly, the higher the price of oil, the more capital is going to come into alternative sources of energy. And so we've got a plan that calls for diversification, but it's—our energy policy hadn't been very wise up to now.

Anyway, I'm going to dodge the rest of your question. [*Laughter*] Thank you for your time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 a.m. at the Hilton New York. In his remarks, he referred to King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Proclamation 8226—National Poison Prevention Week, 2008

March 14, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Since 1962, National Poison Prevention Week has helped to raise awareness about the dangers of potentially poisonous medicines and household chemicals. During this week, we underscore our commitment to protect our fellow citizens from accidental poisonings and to educate families about the preventive steps that can be taken to ensure the safety of our young people.

More than 2 million poisonings are reported each year across the country. In order to help prevent these poisonings, parents should place household chemicals out of the reach of children, keep items in their original containers, and read the labels and dosages on all products thoroughly before use. Installing carbon monoxide alarms in homes to help monitor air quality can also save lives.

To learn more about the ways to keep children safe and help prevent poisonings, I encourage all Americans to visit the Poison Prevention Week Council website at poisonprevention.org. In case of an emergency, individuals can contact the nearest Poison Control Center 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1–800–222–1222. By taking precautions, properly supervising children, and knowing what to do in an emergency, we can protect the health and well-being of more Americans.

To encourage Americans to learn more about the dangers of accidental poisonings and to take appropriate preventive measures, the Congress, by joint resolution approved September 26, 1961, as amended (75 Stat. 681), has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation designating the third week of March each year as "National Poison Prevention Week."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim March 16 through March 22, 2008, as National Poison Prevention Week. I call upon all Americans to observe this week by participating in appropriate activities and by learning how to prevent poisonings.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fourteenth day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., March 18, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on March 19.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

March 8

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush attended the Gridiron Club dinner at the Renaissance Washington, DC Hotel.

March 10

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

March 11

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Nashville, TN, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Fred Pancoast. He then met with Karla G. Christian, associate chief of pediatric cardiac surgery and director of pediatric cardiac surgical education, Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt.

In the afternoon, at a private residence, the President attended a Republican National Committee luncheon. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mimi Alemayehou to be the U.S. Director of the African Development Bank.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rear Adm. Jonathan W. Bailey to be Commissioner of the Mississippi River Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate William Clifford Smith to be a member of the Mississippi River Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Karen P. Hughes and Charles M. Younger as members of the Board of Visitors to the U.S. Military Academy.

March 12

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President participated in an interview with Susie Gharib of PBS's "Nightly Business Report."

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham of the Bahamas, Prime Minister David Thompson of Barbados, and Prime Minister Dean Barrow of Belize to the White House on March 20.

The White House announced that the President will host President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea and his wife, Kim Yoon-ok, at Camp David on April 18 and 19.

The President declared a major disaster in Missouri and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms and flooding from February 10–14.

March 13

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with National Mathematics Advisory Panel Chairman Larry R. Faulkner, who presented him with the panel's final report.

The White House announced that to commemorate Saint Patrick's Day, the President will host Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland at the White House on March 17.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Bush will travel to Ukraine, Romania, and Croatia in April.

The President declared an emergency in Illinois and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area struck by record snow and near record snow on February 5 and 6.

The President announced his intention to nominate Barbara McConnell Barrett to be Ambassador to Finland.

The President announced his intention to nominate David R. Hill to be Assistant Administrator (General Counsel) at the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate T. Vance McMahan to be Representative of the U.S. on the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members

of the Community Development Advisory Board: Darlene Bramon; William Bynum; J. French Hill; Farah M. Jimenez; Nancy J. Leake; Terri Ludwig; Neal A. McCaleb; L. Raymond Moncrief; and Edwin A. Rodriguez.

March 14

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then traveled to New York City, NY. Later, at the Hilton New York Hotel, he participated in separate interviews with the Wall Street Journal Editorial Board and Larry Kudlow of CNBC.

In the afternoon, at a private residence, the President attended a Republican National Committee luncheon. Later, he traveled to Camp David, MD.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lily Fu Claffee to be General Counsel of the Department of Commerce.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted March 11

Mimi Alemayehou,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. Director of the African Development Bank for a term of 5 years, vice Cynthia Shepard Perry, term expired.

Rear Admiral Jonathan W. Bailey,
NOAA, to be a member of the Mississippi River Commission.

Kiyo A. Matsumoto,
of New York, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of New York, vice Edward R. Korman, retired.

Cathy Seibel,
of New York, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of New York, vice Richard Conway Casey, deceased.

William Clifford Smith,
of Louisiana, to be a member of the Mississippi River Commission for a term of 9 years (reappointment).

Submitted March 13

G. Steven Agee,
of Virginia, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fourth Circuit, vice J. Michael Luttig, resigned.

Barbara McConnell Barrett,
of Arizona, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Finland.

David R. Hill,
of Missouri, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Roger Romulus Martella, Jr.

T. Vance McMahan,
of Texas, to be Representative of the United States of America on the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, with the rank of Ambassador.

Withdrawn March 13

Charles A. Gargano,
of New York, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Austria, which was sent to the Senate on November 7, 2007.

David R. Hill,
of Missouri, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Jeffrey R. Holmstead, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on December 3, 2007.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released March 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Released March 11

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on House of Representatives action on intelligence reform legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary on House of Representatives action to override the President's veto of intelligence reform legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 2478

Released March 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy U.S. Trade Representative John Veroneau, National Security Council Western Hemisphere Affairs Director Dan Fisk, and Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade Chris Padilla

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of President Lee Myung-bak and Mrs. Kim Yoon-ok of the Republic of Korea

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by the Prime Ministers of the Bahamas, Barbados, and Belize

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 2272

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Missouri

Fact sheet: U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement Essential to Our National Security

Released March 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Press Secretary Tony Fratto

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's travel to Ukraine, Romania, and Croatia in April, 2008

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary: President Bush to Welcome Prime Minister Ahern of Ireland

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Illinois

Fact sheet: Helping Afghanistan Achieve Sustainable Progress

Fact sheet: Protect America Alert: House Foreign Surveillance Bill Undermines Our National Security

Released March 14

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Tony Fratto

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary on House of Representatives action on intelligence reform legislation

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 2745 and S.J. Res. 25

Fact sheet: Taking Responsible Action To Help Homeowners and the Economy

Acts Approved by the President

Approved March 11

S. 2478 / Public Law 110–194
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 59 Colby Corner in East Hampstead, New Hampshire, as the "Captain Jonathan D. Grassbaugh Post Office"

Approved March 12

S. 2272 / Public Law 110–195
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service known as the Southpark Station in Alexandria, Louisiana, as the John "Marty" Thiels Southpark Station, in honor and memory of Thiels, a Louisiana postal worker who was killed in the line of duty on October 4, 2007

Approved March 14

S. 2745 / Public Law 110–196
To extend agricultural programs beyond March 15, 2008, to suspend permanent price support authorities beyond that date, and for other purposes

S.J. Res. 25 / Public Law 110–197
Providing for the appointment of John W. McCarter as a citizen regent of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution