

recommendations. And I'm looking forward to hearing them, and I'm looking forward to implementing them.

The United States has an opportunity to continue a trading agenda. As a matter of fact, we have an opportunity with three important countries: Colombia, South Korea, and Panama. Interestingly enough, all three of these countries are among Louisiana's top 10 foreign markets for exports. These agreements will be good for New Orleans's workers and businesses. And the mayor recognized that. He wrote a letter to our Speaker—wrote a letter to our Speaker, who is the leader in the Congress, and here's what he said: "Each of the future free trade agreements would provide unique opportunities for the city of New Orleans to increase international economic development."

Unfortunately, we had a setback in a very important free trade agreement with Colombia. The Speaker made a decision to block the free trade agreement. It's unfortunate decision, and the deal is dead unless she changes her mind. And that's bad for American workers, and it's bad for our security, and it's bad for the people here in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The economic argument for free trade with Colombia is very clear. Almost all Colombian products now enter America duty free, yet many of our products face steep tariffs in Colombia. Now think about that. All I suggest is that we level the playing field, that we be treated just like we treat others. Our products into Colombia face a tax, a tariff, which makes them more expensive. It makes it harder for our small businesses and farmers to be able to sell into Colombia. Yet their products come here virtually duty free. And so by approving this deal, it will level the playing field, but more importantly, it will help our entrepreneurs and help our workers.

There's another cost because of congressional inaction, and that is, Colombia is one of our strongest allies in our neighborhood. And it's important to support our friends. And it's important to send a clear message that we stand for rule of law and democracy, which is precisely what President Uribe believes in. He's fighting these terrorists and these narcotraffickers. He has strengthened

the rule of law. He's protecting his labor leaders. He is a strong, solid leader.

Yet if we turn down this deal or if this deal does not go forward, it would send a variety of messages: One, America can't be counted on to stand next to its friends; two, it will embolden the voices of false populism in our neighborhood; and three, it will make it harder for President Uribe to do what is necessary to make sure Colombia is a safe place for people to live. I fully understand that this is a tough political vote for some, but it's about time America sets aside petty politics and focuses on doing what's right for the United States of America.

So thanks for letting me come by, and thanks for hosting this very important meeting. I am confident the Prime Minister of Canada and the President of Mexico will really enjoy their stays in New Orleans. They will find what I have found, that it's a city not only of good food, good cheer, but it's a city of really fine people. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:36 p.m. at Gallier Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas J. Donohue, president and chief executive officer, U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Supriya Jindal, wife of Gov. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana; Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA; Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada; and President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico.

Proclamation 8242—National Day of Prayer, 2008

April 21, 2008

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

America trusts in the abiding power of prayer and asks for the wisdom to discern God's will in times of joy and of trial. As we observe this National Day of Prayer, we recognize our dependence on the Almighty, we thank Him for the many blessings He has bestowed upon us, and we put our country's future in His hands.

From our Nation's humble beginnings, prayer has guided our leaders and played a vital role in the life and history of the United States. Americans of many different faiths

share the profound conviction that God listens to the voice of His children and pours His grace upon those who seek Him in prayer. By surrendering our lives to our loving Father, we learn to serve His eternal purposes, and we are strengthened, refreshed, and ready for all that may come.

On this National Day of Prayer, we ask God's continued blessings on our country. This year's theme, "Prayer! America's Strength and Shield," is taken from Psalm 28:7, "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped." On this day, we pray for the safety of our brave men and women in uniform, for their families, and for the comfort and recovery of those who have been wounded.

The Congress, by Public Law 100-307, as amended, has called on our Nation to reaffirm the role of prayer in our society by recognizing each year a "National Day of Prayer."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 1, 2008, as a National Day of Prayer. I ask the citizens of our Nation to give thanks, each according to his or her own faith, for the freedoms and blessings we have received and for God's continued guidance, comfort, and protection. I invite all Americans to join in observing this day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of April, 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

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NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 22, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on April 24. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this proclamation.

**The President's News Conference
With President Felipe de Jesus
Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico and
Prime Minister Stephen Harper of
Canada in New Orleans**

April 22, 2008

President Bush. Thank you all. Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister, welcome to the great city of New Orleans. Thank you all for coming as well. New Orleans is one of America's really top cities. And they—the people of New Orleans appreciate the help you gave them right after Hurricane Katrina, and so I want to thank you very much for that. New Orleans has always been a crossroads for our continent. And today, there's no better place for our nations to look forward to a bright future, and that's what we're here to do.

I—one of the things are—you know, people ask, well, does it make sense for Mexico, Canada, and the United States to meet? Absolutely, it makes sense. We're neighbors. A prosperous neighborhood is in our interests; a secure neighborhood is in our interests. And we share common values. So I'm not surprised we've had good meetings. Plus, we like each other. It's easy to work with leaders who are straightforward and honest, tell you what's on their mind, and who care deeply about the people of their countries and who are problem-solvers. And that's how I have found this meeting and the previous meetings we've held.

We talked about trade. Mexico, Canada, and the United States made a bold decision in the early 1990s. Our countries decided to reduce our trade barriers through the North American Free Trade Agreement. That was a visionary move by previous leaders, a move that has benefited all three of our countries a lot. Trade has tripled. Our economies have grown by more than 50 percent.

Now is not the time to renegotiate NAFTA or walk away from NAFTA. Now is the time to make it work better for all our people. And now is the time to reduce trade barriers worldwide.

And so we spent time talking about the Colombia free trade agreement. Canada is negotiating a Colombia free trade agreement. Mexico has a free trade agreement with Colombia. And a lot of folks are waiting