

We are glad you feel vindicated, but I am proud to tell you, America is a better place because of you, Ben. Thank you for coming.

And so during Asia Pacific American Heritage Month, we thank you all for helping make America a better place. We thank you for loving our country the way you do. The way—thank you for being great contributors to the life of our fellow citizens.

We ask for God's continued blessings on you, your family, and all the citizens of our great land. Thanks for coming. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:53 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta; President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea; Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Christopher R. Hill; Tenzin Gyatso, the Dalai Lama of Tibet; President Hu Jintao of China; and Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda of Japan.

Remarks on Emergency Food Aid Programs

May 1, 2008

In recent weeks, many have expressed concern about the significant increase in global food prices. And I share that concern. In some of the world's poorest nations, rising prices can mean the difference between getting a daily meal or going without food.

To address this problem, 2 weeks ago, my administration announced that about \$200 million in emergency food aid would be available through a program at the Agriculture Department called the Emerson Trust. But that's just the beginning of our efforts. I think more needs to be done, and so today I am asking Congress to provide an additional \$770 million to support food aid and development programs. Together this amounts to nearly \$1 billion in new funds to bolster global food security. And with other security assistance programs already in place, we're now projecting to spend nearly—that we will spend nearly \$5 billion in 2008 and 2009 to fight global hunger.

This funding will keep our existing emergency food aid programs robust. We have been the leader for providing food to those who are going without in the past, and we

will continue to be the leader around the world. It will also allow us to fund agricultural development programs that help farmers in developing countries increase their productivity. And of course, this will help reduce the number of people who need emergency food aid in the first place.

As America increases its food assistance, it's really important that we transform the way that food aid is delivered. In my State of the Union Address this year, I called on Congress to support a proposal to purchase up to nearly 25 percent of food assistance directly from farmers in the developing world. And the reason you do that is, in order to break the cycle of famine that we're having to deal with too often in the modern era, it's important to help build up local agriculture. I ask Congress to approve this measure as soon as possible. It's a commonsense way to help deal with food emergencies around the world.

Now, other countries have a role to play as well. America is in the lead; we'll stay in the lead. And we expect others to participate along with us. We're working with our G-8 partners and other developed nations to secure commitments from their governments for additional food aid.

We're also working toward the conclusion of a successful Doha agreement that will reduce and eliminate tariffs and other barriers as well as market-distorting subsidies for agricultural goods. And the reason why getting a Doha round done is important is it'll end up reducing the cost of food, importing food; it'll make it cheaper for consumers all around the world. In other words, we want to change the system to make it easier for people to get less expensive food.

We're also urging countries that have instituted restrictions on agricultural exports to lift those restrictions. Some countries are preventing needed food from getting to market in the first place, and we call upon them to end those restrictions to help ease suffering for those who aren't getting food.

We're also urging countries to remove barriers to advanced crops developed through biotechnology. These crops are safe; they're resistant to drought and disease; and they hold the promise of producing more food for more people.

Now, here at home, we're working to ensure that our poorest citizens get the food they need. Since 2001, the administration, in working with Congress, has increased funding for nutrition assistance programs by 76 percent. We've adjusted food stamp benefits annually to cover price increases at the checkout counter. And last month, the Agriculture Department made available an additional \$150 million to respond to the food needs of those who depend on WIC, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children. With this new funding, we will have increased our support for WIC by 18.6 percent this year.

The American people are generous people, and they're compassionate people. We believe in the timeless truth, to whom much is given, much is expected. And so therefore, at home we will work to ensure that the neediest among us can cope with the rising food prices. And with the new international funding I'm announcing today, we're sending a clear message to the world that America will lead the fight against hunger for years to come.

Thank you very much for your interest. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:13 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Statement on the Situation in Burma *May 1, 2008*

The people of Burma have long awaited the opportunity to live in a true democracy. The referendum vote scheduled for May 10, 2008, could have been that opportunity. However, Than Shwe and his regime are ensuring that the referendum vote will be on a dangerously flawed Constitution and will not be free, fair, or credible. They continue to ignore calls from the Burmese people and the international community for a genuine process that could result in a legitimate Constitution reflecting the will of the people, and they continue to carry out a campaign to intimidate voters and to arrest those who dare speak out against the flaws of the referendum and draft Constitution.

The regime has not acted on any of the measures called for by the United Nations

Security Council and does not cooperate with Special Adviser Ibrahim Gambari. We have called for the early release of all political prisoners; implementation of measures to address the political, economic, humanitarian, and human rights issues that are of concern; and the creation of necessary conditions for a genuine dialog with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all concerned parties and ethnic groups in order to achieve an inclusive national reconciliation. Furthermore, the regime has refused offers from Mr. Gambari to provide technical assistance or international monitors for the pending referendum.

Laura and I are committed to work for the people of Burma and help in their struggle to free themselves from the regime's tyranny. I have signed a new Executive order that will block all property and interests in property of designated individuals and entities determined to be owned or controlled by, directly or indirectly, the Government of Burma or an official or officials of the Government of Burma. This Executive order expands existing authorities that allow the United States Government to target those who are responsible for supporting, empowering, and enriching the Burmese regime—a regime that exploits and oppresses the people of Burma.

The United States will continue to pressure Burma's rulers until they respond to the legitimate calls of the Burmese people for a genuine dialog leading to a democratic transition.

NOTE: The statement referred to Senior Gen. Than Shwe, Chairman, State Peace and Development Council of Burma; United Nations Special Envoy for Myanmar Ibrahim Gambari; and Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma.

Statement on World Press Freedom Day

May 1, 2008

May 3 marks World Press Freedom Day. Just and open societies protect and rely on the freedom of the press. That freedom is enshrined in the first amendment to the