

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this thirtieth day of May, 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 May 31, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on June 4.

The President's Radio Address

May 31, 2008

Good morning. Next week, Congress will return to Washington after its Memorial Day recess. I hope Members of Congress return rested, because they have a lot of work left on important issues and limited time to get it done.

Congress needs to pass a responsible war funding bill that puts the needs of our troops first, without loading it up with unrelated domestic spending. Our troops in Afghanistan are performing with courage and honor, delivering blows to the Taliban and Al Qaida. Our troops in Iraq have driven Al Qaida and other extremists from sanctuaries they once held across the country and are chasing them from their last remaining strongholds. Our men and women in uniform are risking their lives every day, and they deserve the resources and flexibility they need to complete their mission.

Congress needs to support our military families by passing an expansion of the GI bill that makes it easier for our troops to transfer unused education benefits to their spouses and children. It is critical for this legislation to support the All-Volunteer Force and help us recruit and retain the best military in the world.

Congress needs to ensure that our intelligence professionals have the tools to monitor terrorist communications quickly and effectively. Last year, Congress passed temporary legislation that provided these tools. Unfortunately, the law expired more than 3 months ago. Congress needs to pass long-term legislation that will help our intelligence

professionals learn our enemies' plans before they can attack and put an end to abusive lawsuits filed against companies believed to have assisted the Government after the attacks of September the 11th. And Congress needs to act soon so we can maintain a vital flow of intelligence.

Congress needs to approve the Colombia free trade agreement so we can open a growing market for American goods, services, and crops. Unfortunately, the House of Representatives is blocking a vote on this vital agreement. Unless this agreement is brought up for a vote, it will die. This will hurt American workers, farmers, and businessowners, and it will hurt our Nation's strategic interests in a vital region of the world.

Congress needs to confirm the good men and women who have been nominated to important Government positions. There are now more than 350 nominations pending before the Senate. These include highly qualified people I have nominated to fill vacancies on the Federal bench. And they include talented nominees who are needed to help guide our economy during a time of uncertainty. For example, three nominees to the Federal Reserve have been waiting for confirmation for more than a year. And because of Senate inaction, the Council of Economic Advisers is now down to a single member. This confirmation backlog makes it harder for Government to meet its responsibilities, and the United States Senate needs to give every nominee an up-or-down vote as soon as possible.

One nominee who needs to be confirmed right away is Steve Preston. A month has passed since I nominated Steve to be the next Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Unfortunately, Senators have stalled this nomination over an issue that has nothing to do with Steve or his qualifications for the job. With all the turbulence in the housing market, this is no time to play politics with such a critical appointment. So I call on the Senate to give Steve Preston a prompt vote and confirm this good man without further delay.

At a time when many Americans are concerned about keeping their homes, Congress needs to pass legislation to modernize the Federal Housing Administration, reform

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to ensure they focus on their housing mission, and allow State housing agencies to issue tax-free bonds to refinance subprime loans.

And at a time when Americans are concerned about rising gas prices, Congress needs to pass legislation to expand domestic energy production.

In all these areas, Congress has failed to act. The American people deserve better from their elected leaders. Congress needs to show the American people that Republicans and Democrats can compete for votes and cooperate for results at the same time. You sent your representatives to Washington to do the people's business. And you have a right to expect them to do it, even in an election year.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 11 a.m. on May 30 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 31. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 30 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Commencement Address at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina

May 31, 2008

Thank you. Thank you very much. Mr. President—President Shi, thank you for that kind introduction. Governor Sanford, Senator Graham, Congressman Inglis, members of the board of trustees, faculty, staff, members of the Furman community, parents, and most important, the class of 2008: Thank you for this kind invitation to be with you.

I congratulate the parents here who have sacrificed to make this day possible. When your child graduates from college, it is a glorious day for your family and a pretty good day for your bank account. *[Laughter]* I know the graduates will join me in thanking you for your love and support.

And I thank the members of the Furman faculty. I appreciate your devoting your career to improving the lives of young people. I know this is an institution where folks are

encouraged to make their voices heard. I too am a strong believer in free speech. And to prove it, I'm about to give you one. *[Laughter]*

For 4 years, this campus has been your life. You've studied hard, and I suspect some of you may have played hard. *[Laughter]* Along the way, some of you may have wondered whether this day would ever come. Well, it's finally here, and Laura and I send our heartfelt congratulations to the class of 2008.

I'm glad to be joined with my friend and outstanding leader of South Carolina, Governor Mark Sanford, class of 1983. Governor, I'm not going to ask if you ever got caught swimming in the fountains. *[Laughter]*

As the president said, 25 years ago, the Governor sat where you now sit, as a member of the graduating class. As it happens, as he mentioned, the commencement speaker that day was my dad. Now, that means some at Furman will have heard graduation speeches from two generations of Bushes. It's a great step forward for the Bush family and a great step backward for your English department. *[Laughter]*

And as the president mentioned, I have other family ties with Furman. In the early 1930s, a student named Willa Martin graduated from the women's college that was soon to become part of Furman. She went on to marry my mother's father. She also spent time as a columnist for the Associated Press, thus beginning the long history of warm relations between the Bush family and the media. *[Laughter]*

My administration also has another Furman connection. One of the first people I see almost every morning is a Furman grad and my Director of National Intelligence, Admiral Mike McConnell, class of 1966. I asked Mike if he ever took part in the "midnight serenade." He said, I'd like to tell you, but the information is classified. *[Laughter]*

It's a special time of your life. It's—you're going to find it's a time when you get a lot of free advice—some of it helpful, some of it not—like that one graduation speaker who urged the students to keep their ears to the ground, their shoulders to the wheel, and their noses to the grindstone. All I could