

May 14 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001

for that, I'm grateful. And for that, I welcome you to the White House and congratulate you on being true champs.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:22 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Nancy Alexander,

wife of Houston Comets owner Leslie Alexander; Val Ackerman, president, Women's National Basketball Association; and Houston Comets coach Van Chancellor, player Sheryl Swoopes, WNBA 2000 Player of the Year, and retired player Cynthia Cooper.

Remarks at the Peace Officers Memorial Service *May 15, 2001*

Thank you all very much. Please be seated. Gil, thank you very much for your friendship and your eloquence. It's my honor to be here. I'm pleased to be joined by three fine members of my Cabinet, General Ashcroft and Secretary O'Neill and Secretary Chao. I thank you all for joining us. I appreciate the Members of the United States Congress being here. Thank you for letting us share these beautiful grounds.

I'm so thankful for the beautiful voices that are here today. Officer Rodriguez, I've heard a lot of national anthems in my day; that was one of the greatest. Thank you very much, sir. Not bad for a New York cop. [*Laughter*] And Billy, thank you very much for sharing your God-given talents with us, as well.

It is an honor to welcome you all here on these beautiful grounds, and it's a honor to be among the people in law enforcement who are here today. And it's a special privilege to be able to say hello and God bless to the many widows and family members of the fallen officers. It's truly my privilege.

As President, I feel a special connection with the officers of the law. I meet many of you as I travel around our country, and of course, on a daily basis I'm surrounded by some of the finest men and women I have ever met in my life.

The same is true for all Americans, but in a less visible way. Everywhere, from the greatest city to the quietest of crossroads in America, there is someone working long,

hard hours to protect our citizens; someone who, when we're in trouble, will face a threat in our defense; someone who, when we are in danger, will rush to our aid, even in complete disregard to his or her own safety.

One of the names recorded on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial is that of Patrolman Mickey Cullinane of Sea Island City, New Jersey. He died trying to rescue a man lying at the bottom of a deep pit. A witness described the obvious dangers at the scene. He recalled everybody said, "You can't go down there." But some people can't see someone in trouble and walk away. Mickey did—he didn't walk away. He did what the courageous do.

In the daily lives of Americans, such moments of emergency are rare, thankfully rare. For most, the violent moments never come at all. And there's a reason for this, and it's simply not good fortune. The reason is you, the officers of the law, your bravery, and the courage you show every day in wearing the uniform.

And it's always been that way. Every generation of Americans has produced men and women willing to stand watch over the rest of us. Every generation has lived under your protection. And we must never take for granted the police officers of America.

We have a solemn obligation to give thanks and credit to law enforcement officers who are no longer with us. We honor, as well, the ones who have so bravely faced

injury and disability. And we're so grateful to those who have retired after honorable careers and, of course, to those who are on the job this very day.

At times, law enforcement must seem like the most thankless work you could ever do. But I'm here to tell you that yours is one of the great callings, and your country thanks you for it.

A Texas State trooper spoke for many last year after a colleague was struck down in the line of duty. America must hear what this man said. He said, "It's a rough thing, and people ask, 'Why do you do it?' It's the profession I chose, and I honestly think good officers are called by God."

For too many officers and their families, that calling has come at the highest price, in lives ended and hopes destroyed. For those who suffer it, this loss can never be measured. But long ago, we were told how to measure the men and women who make this sacrifice: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Each one of you chose your profession, understanding the risks. This memorial stands as a reminder of those dangers and

of how men and women died facing them. For each name, there was a family left behind. We must never forget how suddenly their pain comes and how long it lingers.

The widow of a U.S. marshal said, "Whenever men who spend their lives serving their country are killed in the line of duty, we all lose a piece of ourself. I lost a bigger piece than others."

We cannot today cover the grief or repay the sacrifice, but it is a way, a lasting way, to acknowledge the debt. And that is the best we can do, after others had given all there was to give. America honors their memory today, and we always will.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:36 p.m. on the West Grounds at the Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Gilbert G. Gallegos, national president, Fraternal Order of Police; Daniel Rodriguez, police officer, New York City Police Department; and country/western singer Billy Gilman. The Peace Officers Memorial Day and Police Week proclamation of May 8 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on Proposed Patients' Bill of Rights Legislation *May 15, 2001*

The bipartisan proposal introduced today by Senators Frist, Breaux, and Jeffords makes important progress in our efforts to provide patients with a strong and effective Patients' Bill of Rights.

This bipartisan Patients' Bill of Rights reflects the principles I laid out earlier this year. It provides strong patient protections for all Americans, ensures that doctors and patients make medical decisions, and holds health plans accountable by providing patients with meaningful remedies when they have been wrongly denied medical care. The bill also protects employers and their

employees from unnecessary litigation that would increase health care premiums and force too many Americans to do without health insurance.

Congress has been long divided over this issue. I applaud Senators Frist, Breaux, and Jeffords and the many patient and provider groups working with them for finding a commonsense compromise.

I am similarly encouraged by the bipartisan discussions on this issue between the administration and Speaker Hastert and