

Feb. 14 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001

our safety is threatened, and for the values and ideals our country represents when our allies and friends ask for help.

All Americans benefit from your service, and we'll always be grateful. Thank you for coming, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. at Yeager Field at the West Virginia National

Guard Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Allen E. Tackett, Adjutant General, West Virginia Army National Guard; Gov. Robert E. Wise of West Virginia; Com. Sgt. Maj. John J. Leonard, Jr., Senior Enlisted Adviser to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs; and M. Sgt. David (Mike) Eshbaugh, 167th Airlift Wing, West Virginia Air National Guard.

Telephone Remarks on Former President Ronald Reagan's 90th Birthday *February 15, 2001*

The President. Mrs. Reagan, hi, how are you today?

Former First Lady Nancy Reagan. [Inaudible]

The President. Good, thank you. Listen, I'm honored. I'm here in the Oval Office—

Mrs. Reagan. [Inaudible]

The President. Well, thank you. And I'm getting ready to sign a birthday card to the President, my first document I'll sign as the President, which is a joint resolution from the Congress—

Mrs. Reagan. Oh, how nice.

The President. —which expresses our deep gratitude and admiration for President Reagan.

Mrs. Reagan. How nice.

The President. We honor him with his greatness and his goodness. And we honor you, as well, for your strength of character and your service.

So I'm getting ready to sign right now—

Mrs. Reagan. Oh, this is very exciting.

The President. Well, thank you, ma'am. It's exciting for me, as well. It's an honor. And I look forward to sending the document and the pen that I use to you.

Mrs. Reagan. Oh, how nice. How nice.

The President. At any rate, it's great to talk to you.

Mrs. Reagan. Well, it's great to talk to you, too. And I can't thank you enough.

The President. Well, thanks a lot.

Mrs. Reagan. It's wonderful. Wait until I tell Ronnie.

The President. Give the President a hug and a kiss.

Mrs. Reagan. I will.

The President. Thanks a lot.

Mrs. Reagan. Thank you.

The President. Bye-bye.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:35 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House. H.J. Res. 7, approved February 15, was assigned Public Law No. 107-1.

Remarks to State Department Employees *February 15, 2001*

The President. Mr. Secretary, thank you very much. It's an honor to be here with you, and thank you all for that warm welcome.

As the Secretary mentioned, I'm focusing this week on America's national security. And few are more important to that mission than the people of the State Department, both Foreign Service and civil service. Our gathering here will be seen by some 10,000 State Department personnel in the Washington area. It will be seen by 37,000 committed men and women, including many Foreign Service national employees in 250 posts all over the world.

So to those in this room, those around the town, those across the world, thank you for what you do on behalf of the American people. You do so much to sustain America's position in the world and so much to foster freedom. And for that, we are grateful.

In a few moments I'll go upstairs to witness the swearing-in of 38 new Foreign Service officers. Our hope is that they draw strength and inspiration from your example, because you all are the finest diplomats in the world.

The flags that surround us here represent every country with whom the United States has diplomatic relations. They are a powerful reminder that you are one department of our Government that literally never sleeps. America's commitments and responsibilities span the world in every time zone. Every day you fulfill those responsibilities with quiet excellence. You solve problems before they become headlines. You resolve crises before a shot is fired. And when tragedy or disaster strikes, you are often the first person on the scene.

The other markers that surround us speak even more directly of your devotion to duty. They memorialize your colleagues who gave their lives to our country. The earliest are from the 18th century, understanding your long record of service and the long march to freedom. Others are all too recent, bitter reminders of the dangerous times we live in, like the ones marked Kenya. I know the example of these American heroes inspires you, just as seeing you all here today inspires me.

It's sometimes said that State is the one Federal department that has no domestic constituency. Well, whoever said that is wrong. Let me assure you that between me and Secretary Powell, you do have a constituency.

Speaking of the Secretary, I chose him to be our Secretary of State because he is a leader whose dignity and integrity will add to the strength and authority of America around the world. He is the absolute right man for the job.

The Secretary and I are counting on you, on your help, as we pursue a clear and consistent and decisive foreign policy, a foreign policy that serves both our vital interests and our highest ideals. Our goal is to turn this time of American influence into generations of democratic peace. This requires America to remain engaged with the world and to project our strength with purpose and with humility.

America will set its own priorities, so that they're not set by our adversaries or the crisis of the moment. We must work closely with our democratic friends and allies in Europe and Asia. We must engage Russia and China with patience and principle and consistency. We must build our trade relations across Africa and help nations that are adding to the freedom and stability of their continent.

And closer to home, we must work with our neighbors to build a Western Hemisphere of freedom and prosperity, a hemisphere bound together by shared ideals and free trade, from the Arctic to the Andes to Cape Horn. Building this hemisphere of freedom will be a fundamental commitment of my administration. Our future cannot be separated from the future of our neighbors in Canada and Latin America. Our bonds of language and family and travel and trade are strong, and they serve us all well.

Some look south and see problems. Not me; I look south and see opportunities and potential. When I travel to Quebec in April and meet with other hemispheric leaders

Feb. 15 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001

at the Summit of the Americas, I look forward to doing this: I look forward to discussing how we can build a century of the Americas. And I'll carry this message with me tomorrow when the Secretary and I go to Mexico for my first foreign trip as the President.

These are exciting times in Mexico, times of change and times of possibility. Mexico has seen a new birth of freedom, and trade is creating hope and economic progress. The door is open to a closer partnership with the United States. But nothing about this new relationship is inevitable. Only through hard work will we get it right.

President Fox and I will get started at his ranch tomorrow. I'm looking forward to hearing his ideas on expanding trade throughout the hemisphere, on safe and orderly migration, on expanding educational opportunity for all our children, and what we can do together to fight drug trafficking and other types of organized crime.

President Fox and I met as Governors, and I look forward to renewing and deepening our friendship. But I look forward even more to forging a deeper partnership between our two great nations, a partnership characterized by cooperation, creativity, and mutual respect.

I want to thank you all for welcoming me here today. I'm glad the Secretary invited me. I'm glad I responded positively. [Laughter] Oftentimes, those of us who hold high offices don't stop and say thank you as much as we should. So, today I'm doing just that. On behalf of the American people, thank you for the service to this great country, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:28 p.m. in the main lobby at the Harry S. Truman Building. In his remarks, he referred to President Vicente Fox of Mexico.

Remarks at the Swearing-In Ceremony for State Department Foreign Service Personnel *February 15, 2001*

Mr. Secretary, thank you very much. I'm so honored that you invite me to your place of business. [Laughter] Ambassador Davis, you remind me of my mother. [Laughter]

Thank you, Director General Grossman, as well. Family members, it is my honor to be here with you as you watch your loved ones get sworn in. And on behalf of every American, congratulations. You have just become a part of the best diplomatic corps in the world.

In the months and years ahead, Secretary Powell and I will be counting on you, and so will your fellow citizens. Throughout the decades of your career, we'll all be counting on you, even as you go about your work with little fanfare. When you succeed, most Americans, most of the time, will

never hear about it. A crisis that is averted just doesn't make a headline; a problem that is solved hardly ever leads the evening news. I have confidence—I have confidence, and so does the Secretary, that you will hold up the legacy of excellence found in this building.

As you take up your first assignments overseas, I want you to remember that you will be the image of America, the face and voice of her values. You will represent the strength of America, our compassion, and our humility. This is a high calling and a difficult one, and your country appreciates your work.

It is the duty of America to support you, as well. This room honors one of America's greatest diplomats, Ben Franklin. Franklin