

Message on the Observance of Juneteenth *June 19, 2002*

I send greetings to those celebrating Juneteenth.

June 19 provides an opportunity for all Americans to reflect on the ideal of freedom and to learn more about the end of slavery. On that day in 1865, Union soldiers led by Major General Gordon Granger landed in Galveston, Texas, with news the war had ended and that the enslaved were now free. The joyous, but belated, announcement came two years after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation declaring “that all persons held as slaves” within the rebellious states “are, and henceforward shall be free.”

The celebration of Juneteenth has its roots in Texas, but the holiday is now ob-

served in many parts of the country with picnics, family gatherings, parades, and community programs. The day is a fitting time to celebrate freedom from slavery and for all Americans to reflect on the rich contributions of African Americans to our Nation.

As we celebrate Juneteenth on June 19, I encourage all Americans to reaffirm their commitment to achieving equal justice and opportunity for all citizens. Laura joins me in sending best wishes on this special occasion.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Remarks at the President’s Dinner *June 19, 2002*

Thank you all for that warm welcome, and thank you for coming tonight. We’re here for the same reason. We want Denny Hastert to remain the Speaker of the House and Trent Lott to become the majority leader of the Senate. And I want to thank you for helping us achieve those two important goals. And I say they’re important because I believe that when we achieve those goals, we can do a lot for the American people.

I want to thank John Boehner for taking the lead role on this successful dinner. I want to thank George Allen from Virginia, the Senator from Virginia, for participating and helping. I want to thank Bill Frist and Tom Davis—Bill Frist of the Senate and Tom Davis of the House—for leading their respective committees to get these Members elected. I want to thank Richard Burr of North Carolina for his help and leader-

ship. Mr. Bob Ingram, thank you for your help. All the folks here, I appreciate your willingness to work hard to make this dinner a successful event. I appreciate Steve Wariner for his beautiful rendition of the National Anthem. And I want to thank my friends Amy Grant and Vince Gill for being here as well. Thank you all for coming.

Most of all, I’m pleased that the First Lady came. She’s done a heck of a job as First Lady for the United States of America. She has kept me in line. [*Laughter*] I appreciate her passion for the children of this country, her desire to help everybody learn to read, her calm, her steady hand, and her unabiding love. Thank you for coming.

I promised the American people that I’d do my best to change the tone in Washington, DC, to elevate the discourse, to bring people together to achieve big goals

for our country. And I believe, thanks to many Members of the United States Senate who are here and many Members of the United States House of Representatives who are here, we're making great progress toward that goal.

My deep desire for the American people is to provide security for our Americans. It starts, of course, with homeland security and the defense of our country. But before I talk about that, I want to talk about the security of a good America as well. That means job security.

I know, here in this town, people like to look at numbers all the time, and they analyze the status of America based upon this statistic or that statistic. My attitude is this: If somebody is looking for work and they can't find work, we've got a problem. I believe, if there's somebody who's willing to find a job and there's not a job, all of us in Washington, DC, must do everything in our power to increase the job base in America. And thanks to members in this audience, we started by cutting the taxes on the American people.

There was an interesting vote the other day on the floor of the Senate. You see, earlier this year, both Houses sent a tax relief bill to my desk that not only reduced the rates on the working people and did something about the marriage penalty, it repealed the death tax, because, you see, we think the death tax is unfair to American entrepreneurs. It's unfair to American farmers and American ranchers. And because of a quirk in the law, this death tax repeal doesn't stay repealed. It's kind of hard to explain that to the fellows in Crawford, Texas, who own their farms. But nevertheless, it doesn't stay repealed. And yet the Senate, thanks to the leadership of Trent Lott, brought a vote up. Our side was firmly—firmly—I mean firmly, for the permanent repeal of the death tax. Their side wasn't. The question is, who stands on the side of the people? We do.

Part of economic security is to make sure everybody gets a good education in Amer-

ica. I appreciate Senator—Congressman John Boehner's leadership as chairman of the Education Committee and want you to know that by working together, we passed an education bill that sets high standards for every child in America. You see, we believe that if you lower the bar, you get low standards and bad results. We believe every child can learn. But we, for the first time, said that if you receive Federal money, if you take taxpayers' money, you must show us whether or not children are learning to read and write and add and subtract. And if they are, we will praise you, but if not, you better change on behalf of the American people.

We've done some good in one House. We're stalled in another House on some important legislation to enhance the economic security of the American people. We need a—actually, I take that back. Both Houses acted to pass terrorism insurance. Mr. Leader Lott, I want to thank you for your leadership on that issue. It's important that we encourage construction around America, to encourage the creation of more jobs through construction by having terrorism insurance—by the way, a bill that does not encourage frivolous and junk lawsuits that impede economic progress and hurt jobs in America.

I appreciate so very much the work on an energy bill. Listen, this country needs an energy bill. We need to do a better job of conserving, no question about it. We need to enhance renewables. But we need to reduce supply from countries that don't like us. It is not in our national security to be importing oil from countries around the world.

Part of making sure that we've got economic security in America is to make sure that when we reauthorize the welfare reform package, that we encourage people to work. You see, if you have low expectations, you say it's okay not to work. We're the people who have high expectations for every American, regardless of where they're from in America. And we understand that

with a job, you get dignity. We must make sure we insist upon work as the cornerstone for any welfare reform package.

No, there's a lot to do. And there's going to be a lot to do next year as well. And one of the reasons we need to make sure Leader Lott heads the United States Senate is so that the nominees—the good nominees, the qualified nominees I send up for the judiciary all across America gets a fair hearing, a vote, and confirmation.

And finally, to make sure we've got good economic security for everybody in America, we've got to make sure Congress holds the line on spending. I know there's going to be some tough choices on these appropriations bills, but I want to make sure that everybody understands with clarity that the budget the House passed is the limit on spending for the United States Congress.

I appreciate the Members being here to work on the security of our Nation by enhancing job security, by doing everything we can to grow the job base. You see, we understand the role of Government isn't to create wealth. That's what we understand. We understand the role of Government is to create an environment in which the small business can flourish, in which the entrepreneur can do well, in which people who want to work for the American Dream can realize that dream. And thanks to the Members here, Members in this audience, we've done a pretty darn good job of enhancing the environment for economic vitality all across America.

And we've got to do a good job of protecting our homeland. Every morning, I go to the Oval Office—that is, after I get Laura her coffee—[laughter]—Equal and milk, I want you to know. [Laughter] I don't mean to be putting any pressure on you boys out there, but—[laughter]—it's a good habit to get into. [Laughter] And I go to the Oval Office with Spot the dog. Barney doesn't get to go. He's only a year and a half, and Laura did design a new rug for the Oval Office. [Laughter]

The first thing I do when I sit at this fantastic desk in this beautiful office—and I mean it's beautiful; it's a great shrine to democracy—is read a threat assessment. It makes me realize that the enemy is still interested in hurting America. My most important job is to protect the security of America, to do everything in our power to make sure the enemy doesn't hit us again.

And we're making progress; we're making progress. We've got the FBI and the CIA talking like they've never talked before. And that's important, and that's important. It's important because we fight a shadowy enemy. We fight people who send youngsters to death, and they try to hide in a cave and kind of slink around, trying to hurt people who love freedom. And so, therefore, it's important for us to do the very best job we can to collect intelligence abroad and share it with our domestic agencies. The FBI is changing its culture. It's still—by the way, you need to know, it's still going to go after crooks and criminals and mobsters. But its most important job now is to protect our homeland, is to chase down any lead, follow any hint, to do everything in our power to make sure we protect innocent lives here in America.

You're probably wondering why I asked the Congress to make a very difficult decision to join me with restructuring the homeland defense. I didn't run—remember, I didn't say, "Elect me. I'm going to do everything I can to make Government bigger." And so, therefore, the idea of creating a new Cabinet department probably sent some puzzling signals.

I also, however, believe in accountability and results. I didn't think you sent me up here just to talk. I thought you sent me up here to get things done on behalf of the American people. And so, therefore—so therefore, I'm asking Congress to reorganize all the agencies involved—or most of the agencies involved in the defense of our homeland into one single agency. There are

over 100 different agencies that have something to do with the homeland, and they're scattered everywhere, which makes it awfully hard to align authority and responsibility. It makes it hard to say with certainty we're going to get the results the American people expect.

And I'd like to cite two examples of how the signals can get mixed. One, the Coast Guard—the Coast Guard does an incredible job for America, by the way—one of their most important functions is to protect our borders. If the defense of our homeland is the number one priority, then the Coast Guard ought to be a part of that priority, since they can do a good job of preventing things from coming into our country that we don't want to come in. And yet the Coast Guard is a part of the Transportation Department, and the Transportation Department's primary function is not the defense of the homeland. Or take the Customs, the Customs people—they're important. If we change their priority to defending the homeland, which we're going to do, you wonder out loud why they're a part of the Treasury. The Treasury's primary function is not the protection of the homeland.

For the good of the security of America, I urge the Members of Congress to think what's best for the country, not what's best for their particular committee, and allow us to reorganize a singular function, all aimed at protecting the American people from attack.

And I appreciate so very much the cooperation we've received, and we look forward to continuing to work with the Members on some of the difficult problems that exist to get this job done. But you also need to know that the best way to protect the homeland, the best way to secure America from further attack, is to hunt the killers down one by one and bring them to justice. And that's what we're going to do.

I sent a significant increase in the defense budget up to the Hill for a reason,

and I appreciate the Members here, because I know they agree with what I'm about to say. First, anytime we commit one of our troops into harm's way, that person deserves the best pay, the best training, the best possible equipment. And secondly, the size of the increase indicates that we're—America is in this fight for the long haul. There is—none of us have one of those desk calendars, and pop the date, and all of a sudden it says, you've got to quit. That's not what it says. As a matter of fact, if there was anything it said on my desk calendar, it would say, stay at it, Mr. President. Freedom needs America.

The enemy hopes we quit. They must have thought we were so soft and so materialistic and so self-absorbed that after September the 11th, all we would do is call our favorite plaintiff's attorney and file a few lawsuits. *[Laughter]* They didn't understand what America is all about. They didn't understand, when somebody tries to take away our freedom, we respond. They don't understand that we love our values. They can't understand that we love freedom of religion. We value the fact that people can worship freely in America or speak their mind or write any kind of editorial they want. And when it comes to somebody messing with America, trying to threaten us and threaten our freedoms, we will respond. And we will respond for however long it takes, because we love freedom in this country.

I fully recognize the task is not going to be easy. It's going to require a lot of patience and discipline on behalf of the American people. The task is difficult now, because we're hunting people down one by one. It's difficult when you think about some of the true threats that really face our country. Imagine the scenario when a regime which hates freedom, a regime which has in the past poisoned her own people, and a regime that's attempting to develop weapons of mass destruction, teams up with one of these shadowy terrorist networks. Then all of a sudden, there's the

possibility of blackmail, international blackmail, holding freedom-loving nations hostage. For the good of our country, for the sake of our future, we cannot allow the world's worst regimes to develop and hold us hostage with the world's worst weapons.

And we're making progress. We routed this Taliban, which should allow you to say to your children, "America—we don't go into countries to conquer. We go in to liberate." It's a proud moment for the history of our country when we liberated the country of Afghanistan and allowed young girls to go to school for the first time in their lives.

We've assembled this vast coalition to cut off their money. We've arrested, detained, hauled in, however you want to put it, over 2,400 of these killers. We're making progress. We're making progress. But there's a lot more. And they just need to know, loud and clear from the President of the United States, we got you on the run, and we're going to keep you on the run until we get you and bring you in.

I believe—I believe that out of the evil done to America can come incredible good. I truly believe that. I believe that if we remain steadfast and strong and resolute, we can achieve peace in the world.

I know sometimes my rhetoric gets a little west Texan. Laura reminds me, I've got to tone her down at times. [*Laughter*] But you need to know my drive is for peace. I love peace. I want our children and your grandchildren to grow up not only in a peaceful America but peace all around the world, peace in the Middle East and peace in South Asia. And I believe this great country, if we're steadfast and strong, if we stand to our principles and stick to our guns, that we can help achieve peace.

And I believe at home—I believe at home America can not only be safer, but it can be a better place. I say that with confidence because I've got a good feel about the American people. I understand the great heart and compassion of the American people. You see, in our land of

plenty, there are pockets of despair and hopelessness. There are people in this great country addicted to drugs and alcohol. There are young children who can't read, people wondering what this American Dream business is all about. And so long as there's pockets of hopelessness and despair, all of us have an obligation to do something about it.

And I believe out of the evil can come incredible good, because I have seen a spirit arise in this country, where people now understand that they've got to serve something greater than yourself. And that means loving a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself.

It's my honor to travel this country and see hundreds and thousands of our fellow citizens and see them respond when I remind them if they're interested in fighting evil, if you want to fight evil in America, you can do so by doing some good. You can do so by simple acts of kindness and decency. You can do so by mentoring a child or helping a shut-in. You can do so by going to your church or mosque or synagogue and organizing a group of people to take care of the homeless.

It's this millions of acts of kindness all across our country that take place on a daily basis that truly define the great character and strength of America and the American people. No, I believe—I believe out of the evil done to America on September the 11th will come not only a peaceful world, but I believe that this great Nation can work miracles through love and compassion in places where there is despair and hopelessness. And I want you all to join in that. I really do. I'd like you to go home to your communities and redouble your efforts to help somebody in need, to redouble your efforts to make a gesture of kindness and compassion. Tell your children you love them on a daily basis.

See, what's happening in America is, the culture is slowly but surely beginning to shift away from "If it feels good, do it,"

and “If you’ve got a problem, blame somebody else,” to a culture in which we all understand we’re responsible for the decisions we make. If you’re a mom or a dad, you’re responsible for loving your children. If you’re a proud American, you’re responsible for helping a neighbor in need. If you run a corporation in America, you’re responsible for being honest on your balance sheet with all your assets and liabilities.

But most of all, in order to be a patriot in this country, it is important to serve something greater than yourself. And it’s happening. And it’s happening because I’m fortunate enough to be the President of

the greatest nation—I mean the greatest nation—on the face of the Earth.

Thank you for coming. May God bless you all, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:16 p.m. at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Bill Frist, chairman, National Republican Senatorial Committee; Representative Tom Davis, chairman, National Republican Congressional Committee; Robert A. Ingram, chief operating officer and president of pharmaceutical operations, GlaxoSmithKline; and country music artists Steve Wariner, Amy Grant, and Vince Gill.

Remarks at the White House Fitness Expo June 20, 2002

Please be seated—except for those of you behind me. [Laughter] Welcome to the White House, and thanks for joining us as we launch a new national initiative designed to help the American people live longer, live healthier, and live better lives.

Better health is an individual responsibility, and it is an important national goal. We’re making great progress in preventing and detecting and treating many chronic diseases, and that’s good for America. We’re doing a better job with heart disease and cancer and diabetes. We’re living longer than any generation in history. Yet we can still improve, and we can do more. And it’s not all that difficult to do. When it comes to your health, even little steps can make a big difference.

I really appreciate the First Lady for joining us. She is—she’s a regular exerciser. I appreciate Tommy Thompson, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, for being here. Tommy told me the other day, even at his advanced age he’s thinking about running a marathon. [Laughter] I appreciate very much

Gale Norton, who’s the Secretary of the Interior, for being here as well, Gale. Thank you both for coming.

I want to thank all the athletes who are here, and physical fitness experts and Olympians and Paralympians and President’s Council on Physical Fitness are joining us today. I’m honored you’re here.

This is an important message that we’re sending to America. When America and Americans are healthier, our whole society benefits. And that’s important to know. If you’re interested in improving America, you can do so by taking care of your own body.

This year, heart disease will cost our country at least \$183 billion. If just 10 percent of adults began walking regularly, we could save billions in dollars in costs related to heart disease. Research suggests that we can reduce cancer deaths in America by one-third simply by changing our diets and getting more exercise. The evidence is clear: A healthier America is a stronger America.

And today I’m taking two actions to put a new emphasis on health and fitness in