

history, Afghans have observed Nowruz. But the Taliban had forbidden Afghans from following this treasured part of their heritage. Next week, for the first time in many years, Afghans will be free once more to celebrate this time-honored tradition.

Afghanistan's observance of the traditional New Year honors an ancient and sto-

ried history and marks a time of renewal. As the season changes, may the observance of Nowruz serve as a special time for Afghans to enjoy their newfound freedom and the company of family and friends.

Best wishes for a memorable Nowruz.

Statement on Senate Action on Campaign Finance Reform Legislation *March 20, 2002*

Like many Republicans and Democrats in the Congress, I support commonsense reforms to end abuses in our campaign finance system. The reforms passed today, while flawed in some areas, still improve the current system overall, and I will sign them into law.

The legislation makes some important progress on the timeliness of disclosure, individual contribution limits, and banning soft money from corporations and labor unions, but it does present some legitimate constitutional questions. I continue to believe the best reform is full and timely disclosure of campaign contributions.

Statement on Proposed Housing Affordability Legislation *March 20, 2002*

I commend Chairman Oxley, Housing Subcommittee Chairwoman Roukema, and Congressman Green for introducing H.R. 3995, the "Housing Affordability for America Act of 2002," and look forward to working with them on the bill in the legislative process. Increasing housing opportunities for all Americans is a high priority for my administration. In particular, I am committed to increasing the opportunities for minority families to become homeowners.

The purchase of a home is a unique commitment that benefits the homeowner and the community and ultimately the Nation. My budget contains proposals designed to increase homeownership and affordable housing opportunities. Through their hard work on the "Housing Affordability for America Act of 2002," Chairman Oxley, Chairwoman Roukema, and Congressman Green have joined in this worthy effort.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives on Emergency Appropriations and Allocation of Emergency Response Funds
March 20, 2002

Dear Mr. Speaker:

In accordance with the requirement included in Public Law 107-63, the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, FY 2002, I hereby request \$346.0 million in emergency appropriations previously provided under title II for the Department of Agriculture for rehabilitation and wildfire suppression activities of the Forest Service.

I hereby designate these funds as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985. The entire amount is being designated as an emergency requirement to make \$200.0 million available immediately to repay funds previously borrowed for emergency wildland fire suppression activities.

Furthermore, in accordance with provisions of Public Law 107-38, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Re-

covery from and Response to Terrorist Attacks on the United States, FY 2001, I hereby authorize a transfer from the Emergency Response Fund totaling \$27.2 million to the General Services Administration.

I have previously authorized the transfer of over \$19.9 billion in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. With this action today, all the funds that were made available to me from the Emergency Response Fund have been transferred for urgent needs.

The details of these actions are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. I concur with his comments and observations.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 21.

Remarks Following a Breakfast Meeting With the Vice President and an Exchange With Reporters
March 21, 2002

The President. Good morning. Thank you all for coming. I just had a breakfast with Vice President Cheney, and as you all know, he's returned from a lengthy and successful trip to the Middle East, the first trip I asked him to go on. I sent him to the region because this is an incredibly important part of the world, and it's a turbulent part of the world. And the Vice President took a lot of messages on behalf of our administration and made some really good progress. I'm really proud of how he

handled himself and how he delivered the message.

As a result of this trip, and as a result of working with General Zinni, there is some progress being made in the Middle East. And I want to thank the Vice President for being very firm and deliberate and convincing both parties that the Tenet plan and ultimately the Mitchell plan is a way to achieve what we all want in the world, which is a peaceful resolution to this long-standing conflict.