

Remarks Following a Meeting With Congressional Leaders July 24, 2002

Legislative Agenda

The President. Today I've had the honor of talking to Members of the United States Congress—these good folks happen to be Democrats—about how to leave behind a legacy of a more secure America. We're talking about an incredibly important piece of legislation that will be voted on this Friday. It's a legislation to create a Department of Homeland Security; it's really a piece of legislation to make America a safer place.

And I want to thank the leaders who are here for their willingness to put partisanship aside and focus on what's best for the American people. I believe we're going to get a good bill on Friday out of the House. I ask the Senate to vote on the bill before they go home for their August vacation.

Secondly, we're making progress on a piece of legislation which will enable us

to say that we passed laws to help protect investors, 401(k) stockholders, from corporate fraud. This Government—this Government will investigate, will arrest, and will prosecute corporate executives who break the law. And the Justice Department took action today.

And finally, I am hopeful that after a lot of work, we can get a trade bill up on the floor of the House and the floor of the Senate before they go home for August as well. This is an important part of a legislative package necessary to help create jobs and keep the economy going.

Today was a day of action and a day of accomplishment in Washington, DC. And I want to thank the Members for that.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:55 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Statement on Northern Ireland July 24, 2002

I strongly support Prime Minister Tony Blair's statement in the House of Commons today. The United States joins with his Government and the Government of Ireland in holding paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland accountable when there is clear, convincing evidence of their use of violence or preparations for it.

The United States strongly backs the Good Friday agreement as the blueprint for peace and prosperity in Northern Ireland. Since its signing 4 years ago, the agreement has brought significant gains to the people of Northern Ireland, and it is a beacon of hope for people everywhere seeking to overcome histories of violence,

terror, and sectarian strife. It is the responsibility of all parties, including those associated with paramilitaries and those who are not, to work together to uphold the agreement and its institutions.

I condemn the recent violence that has marred the lives of the people of Northern Ireland, and I commend those political and civic leaders who have worked to stop it. Paramilitaries must end their violent activities, cease all preparations for them, and recognize the political process as the only valid vehicle for change. Those who cling to the violent ways of the past cannot be allowed to derail Northern Ireland's progress towards a more peaceful future.