

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Michael O. Leavitt as Administrator
of the Environmental Protection Agency
October 28, 2003

I am pleased the Senate acted today to confirm Governor Mike Leavitt as my new Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. Governor Leavitt is an exceptional leader who shares my commitment to reaching out across partisan lines to get things done. I know he will work closely with me to build upon my administration's

initiatives to make our air and water cleaner, protect the land, and use technology to improve our environment while our economy grows and creates jobs. I thank Chairman Inhofe and Senator Reid for their leadership in ensuring Governor Leavitt's confirmation.

Statement on Signing the Check Clearing for the 21st Century Act
October 28, 2003

Today I have signed into law H.R. 1474, the "Check Clearing for the 21st Century Act." This Act is intended to update and modernize the Nation's check payment and collection systems. Section 16(b) of the Act purports to require executive branch officials to submit to the Congress recommendations for legislative action. The executive branch shall construe section 16(b) in a manner consistent with the President's authority under the Recommenda-

tions Clause of the Constitution to submit for the consideration of the Congress such measures as the President shall judge necessary or expedient.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
October 28, 2003.

NOTE: H.R. 1474, approved October 28, was assigned Public Law No. 108-100.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Protocol Amending the Sri Lanka-
United States Taxation Convention
October 28, 2003

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith, for Senate advice and consent to ratification, the Protocol Amending the Convention Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income signed at Colombo on

March 14, 1985, together with an exchange of notes, signed at Washington on September 20, 2002 (the "Protocol"). I also transmit, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State concerning the Protocol.

The Protocol would amend the Convention to make it similar to tax treaties between the United States and other developing nations. The Convention would provide maximum rates of tax to be applied to various types of income and protection from double taxation of income. The Convention, as amended by the Protocol, also provides for resolution of disputes and sets forth rules making its benefits unavailable

to residents that are engaged in treaty shopping.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to this Protocol in conjunction with the Convention, and that the Senate give its advice and consent to ratification.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
October 28, 2003.

Remarks on Medicare Reform Legislation October 29, 2003

The President. Thank you all for coming. Good morning. Welcome to the White House. I'm glad you're here. We're meeting at an historic time, and the reason why is, after years of debate and deadlock, the Congress is on the verge of Medicare reform. And that's important. Prescription drug coverage for our seniors is within reach. Expanded coverage for preventive medicine and therapy is within our reach. More health care choices for seniors are within our reach.

Though a few difficult issues remain, the Congress has made tremendous progress. And now is the time to finish the work. The Congress needs to finalize legislation that brings our seniors the best of modern medicine. I want to sign the legislation into law before the year is out.

And the point person for this administration in working with the Congress to move the legislation along is Tommy Thompson, our Secretary. He has done a fabulous job. If he looks tired, it's because he's showing up early—[laughter]—and going to bed late, working for the seniors of America.

I want to thank Tom Scully, who is the Administrator—Scully is the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. I appreciate you coming.

We've got other members of my administration who are concerned about the health of all Americans, including our seniors: Rich Carmona, the Surgeon General—thank you, General; the head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Julie Gerberding. Thank you, Julie, for being here. It's good to see you. The Director of the National Institutes of Health, Elias Zerhouni—Dr. Zerhouni is with us.

We've got a lot of other important people here, too many to name. But I have just come from a roundtable discussion with some seniors and some people involved in the process, a corporate executive who is from Caterpillar, who assures me that corporations have no intention of—if there's a Medicare reform bill signed by me, corporations have no intention to what they call dump retirees into a system they don't want to be dumped into. And I appreciate that commitment by Rich Lavin. Thank you for bringing that up.

I want to thank Jim Parkel from Fairfield, Connecticut, who is the president of the AARP, for being here. I appreciate my friend Jim “Buddha” Martin for being here today. He's very much concerned about the health of our citizens. And thank you all for coming. This is an important moment, as I said.