

The truth of the matter is, the first teacher a child has is a mom or a dad. And we want our parents to understand how important it is to read to their children. But we also want the education system to focus early in a child's education. We want them reading. We want to dash the false expectations that certain children can't learn to read.

We want to improve preparation for college and the workforce. We want there to be high high school graduation rates. In other words, we're going to raise the standards. That's what this Commission is going to do. It's going to work with the leadership to say, "How can we work together to raise the standards and expect the best?"

Under this order, Secretaries Norton and Paige will organize a national conference to discuss ways to meet our goal. In other words, there's not going to be just a group of people huddled in Washington. We're going to call in citizens and get input. We want what they call community buy-in. We want people understanding the mission. We also want to make sure we achieve high academic achievement while maintaining the strong and vibrant tradition of cultural learning. Learning to read and honoring a culture go hand in hand; they're not mutually exclusive. And that's an important part—[applause].

I told you I'm an optimistic person. I believe when America sets a goal and puts

our mind to it, we can achieve those goals. I also know that every parent of every heritage shares the great dream of a better life for their children. It's a common dream we all have, and it's an important dream to recognize as real in all communities. We will continue the Federal Government's longstanding commitment to the sovereignty of American Indians and Alaska Natives. And we will continue our government-to-government cooperation as we work to meet this very vital goal.

So thank you for coming. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share some thoughts with you. And thank you for witnessing the signing of this Executive order. For those who are part of the authorship, I appreciate your input. I appreciate your willingness to make your views known.

And now I'm going to sign this Executive order. And if the Members of the Congress would like to come up and serve as witnesses, I'd be honored.

[At this point, the President signed the Executive order.]

The President. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Radio Address May 1, 2004

Good morning. A year ago, I declared an end to major combat operations in Iraq, after coalition forces conducted one of the swiftest, most successful and humane campaigns in military history. I thanked our troops for their courage and for their professionalism. They had confronted a gathering danger to our Nation and the world.

They had vanquished a brutal dictator who had twice invaded neighboring countries, who had used weapons of mass destruction against his own people, and who had supported and financed terrorism. On that day, I also cautioned Americans that, while a tyrant had fallen, the war against terror would go on.

One year later, despite many challenges, life for the Iraqi people is a world away from the cruelty and corruption of Saddam's regime. At the most basic level of justice, people are no longer disappearing into political prisons, torture chambers, and mass graves because the former dictator is in prison, himself. And their daily life is improving. Electricity is now more widely available than before the war. Iraq has a stable currency, and banks are thriving. Schools and clinics have been renovated and reopened, and powerplants, hospitals, water and sanitation facilities, and bridges are being rehabilitated. Iraq's oil infrastructure is being rebuilt, with the Iraqi oil industry already producing about 2.5 million barrels per day.

On the ground in Iraq, we have serious and continuing challenges. Illegal militias and remnants of the regime, joined by foreign terrorists, are trying to take by force the power they could never gain by the ballot. These groups have found little support among the Iraqi people.

Our coalition is implementing a clear strategy in Iraq. First, we will ensure an atmosphere of security as Iraqis move toward self-government. Our coalition supports the efforts of local Iraqis to negotiate the disarmament of the radicals in Fallujah. We've also made it clear that militias in Najaf and elsewhere must disarm or face grave consequences. American and coalition forces are in place, and we are prepared to enforce order in Iraq.

The second element of our strategy is to return sovereignty to the people of Iraq on the schedule that we agreed to with the Iraqi Governing Council. Like any proud people, Iraqis want to manage their own affairs, and that is a goal we share. On June 30th, a sovereign Iraqi interim government will take office. Iraqis will as-

sume all administrative duties now performed by the coalition. Since February, United Nations Special Adviser Lakhdar Brahimi has been consulting with Iraqis on how best to form that interim government. The United States fully supports his mission.

As the transfer of sovereignty approaches on June 30th, we are likely to see more violence from groups opposed to freedom. We will not be intimidated or diverted. On July 1st and beyond, our reconstruction and military commitment will continue.

In the cause of a free and stable Iraq, our service men and women are working hard and sacrificing greatly. And families of the brave troops who have fallen must know that their loss is not in vain. We will finish our work in Iraq, because the stakes for our country and the world are high. The failure of Iraqi democracy would embolden terrorists around the globe, increase dangers to the American people, and extinguish the hopes of millions in the Middle East. The success of Iraqi democracy would send forth the news from Damascus to Tehran that freedom can be the future of every nation. And democracy will succeed in Iraq, because our coalition is strong, because our resolve is firm, and because the people of Iraq desire and deserve to live in freedom.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:57 a.m. on April 30 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 1. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 30 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner
May 1, 2004

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Thank you for the invite. Thank you, Carl. I'm glad you got a taste of Mother. [Laughter] I was going to start off tonight telling some self-deprecating jokes. [Laughter] But then I couldn't think of any mistakes I had made to be self-deprecating about. [Laughter]

In my recent press conference, John Dickerson of Time Magazine asked the question about what I considered my biggest mistake. It's an excellent question that totally stumped me. [Laughter] I guess looking at it practically, my biggest mistake was calling on John. [Laughter] Or take that one about Cheney and me answering questions together. That was a toughie. [Laughter] So from now on, Dick and I will be holding joint press conferences. [Laughter]

We could do it that way, or we could do it this way: You could ask the question, then I could tell Bob Woodward—[laughter]—and he could tell you. [Laughter]

I thought about giving an economics speech tonight. It really gets me when the critics say I haven't done enough for the economy. I mean, look what I've done for the book publishing industry. [Laughter] You've heard some of the titles: "Big Lies;" "The Lies of George W. Bush;" "The Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them." [Laughter] I'd like to tell you I've read each of these books, but that would be a lie. [Laughter]

Laura and I always look forward to this event because of the good spirit that brings us together. And I appreciate that, Carl, you reflecting that spirit tonight. This year, we are also mindful that our country is in a period of testing and sacrifice. As I speak, men and women in uniform are taking great risks, and so are many journalists who are being faithful to their own sense of duty.

When we think of the great war journalists, we often think of an earlier era: Edward R. Murrow reporting from wartime London; Joe Rosenthal with his camera at Iwo Jima; or Ernie Pyle, sending columns home from Europe and the Pacific and dying with the men whose stories he told.

In every field in every generation, we tend to view the best as belonging to the past. Yet, in our time, that's not right or fair. Many of us were privileged to know Michael Kelly and to read his clear words and to feel the moral conviction behind them. David Bloom passed through our midst with incredible energy, enthusiasm, and tenacity in getting the story. Others, like Michael Weisskopf, have shown incredible presence of mind and courage that won our admiration. This generation of wartime journalists has done fine work and much more, and they will be remembered long after the first draft of history is completed.

The same is true of our military. We are nearing important days of remembrance. Soon, we will mark the 60th anniversary of D-day, in the company of men who have lived long and can tell you the names of the boys who did not. Later this month, we will dedicate the World War II Memorial here in Washington and look back on a generation that saved the liberty of the world. These events will have an added meaning because America is again asking for courage and sacrifice.

As we honor veterans who are leaving us, we also honor qualities that remain. The generation of World War II can be certain of this: When they are gone, we will still have their kind wearing the uniform of the United States of America.

The loss of Army Corporal Pat Tillman last week in Afghanistan brought home the sorrow that comes with every loss and reminds us of the character of the men and