

Address to the Nation on the Iraqi Elections *January 30, 2005*

Today the people of Iraq have spoken to the world, and the world is hearing the voice of freedom from the center of the Middle East.

In great numbers and under great risk, Iraqis have shown their commitment to democracy. By participating in free elections, the Iraqi people have firmly rejected the anti-democratic ideology of the terrorists. They have refused to be intimidated by thugs and assassins. And they have demonstrated the kind of courage that is always the foundation of self-government.

Some Iraqis were killed while exercising their rights as citizens. We also mourn the American and British military personnel who lost their lives today. Their sacrifices were made in a vital cause of freedom, peace in a troubled region, and a more secure future for us all.

The Iraqi people, themselves, made this election a resounding success. Brave patriots stepped forward as candidates. Many citizens volunteered as pollworkers. More than 100,000 Iraqi security force personnel guarded polling places and conducted operations against terrorist groups. One news account told of a voter who had lost a leg in a terror attack last year and went to the polls today despite threats of violence. He said, "I would have crawled here if I had to. I don't want terrorists to kill other Iraqis like they tried to kill me. Today I am voting for peace."

Across Iraq today, men and women have taken rightful control of their country's des-

tiny, and they have chosen a future of freedom and peace. In this process, Iraqis have had many friends at their side. The European Union and the United Nations gave important assistance in the election process. The American military and our diplomats, working with our coalition partners, have been skilled and relentless, and their sacrifices have helped to bring Iraqis to this day. The people of the United States have been patient and resolute, even in difficult days.

The commitment to a free Iraq now goes forward. This historic election begins the process of drafting and ratifying a new constitution, which will be the basis of a fully democratic Iraqi Government. Terrorists and insurgents will continue to wage their war against democracy, and we will support the Iraqi people in their fight against them. We will continue training Iraqi security forces so this rising democracy can eventually take responsibility for its own security.

There's more distance to travel on the road to democracy. Yet Iraqis are proving they're equal to the challenge. On behalf of the American people, I congratulate the people of Iraq on this great and historic achievement.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. from the Cross Hall at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Swearing-In Ceremony for Margaret Spellings as Secretary of Education

January 31, 2005

Please be seated. Thanks for coming. Laura and I are pleased to be here at the Department of Education with Margaret Spellings. Madam Secretary, thanks for inviting us over.

I have known Margaret for a long time, before we both came to Washington. When I was the Governor of Texas, she was the senior adviser for education, and at the White House she has been my senior domestic policy adviser. For more than 10 years, she's been right down the hall or by my side, and now I look forward to having her take her seat in the Cabinet Room.

It's good to be here with members of her family. I've known her husband for a while, Robert Spellings. It's good that Robert and Britain are with us. Mary and Grace are with us as well, Margaret's daughters. Her parents, John and Peg Dudar, are here, as are other members of her family. Welcome to Washington, DC.

I'm pleased Members of the Congress have come. I am so grateful that Senator Ted Kennedy and Senator Mike Enzi are with us today. Thank you both for coming. I appreciate Congressmen John Boehner, Ralph Regula, and Mac Thornberry from Texas for being here. You're very gracious to take time to be here. Thank you all for being here.

Looking around, I see other nominees for the Cabinet and members of our administration, all fans of Margaret. I see a few Texans have come up from the great State. Thank you all for being here. We're honored you're here. I know Margaret is especially honored you're here.

She will be an outstanding Secretary of Education. She has been involved in all our efforts to strengthen American public schools. She was instrumental in getting the No Child Left Behind Act passed, that will

help raise standards in our public schools. She believes, as I do, that every child can learn, and that every school must teach.

In the past 4 years, we have made great strides. Today, children across America are scoring higher on State reading and math tests. The achievement gap in America is closing. We've made important progress, but Margaret understands there is still more work to be done.

We will maintain the high standards of No Child Left Behind. We will extend those high standards and accountability to America's public high schools. Today, only about 60 out of every 100 students entering our public high schools ever make it to graduation 4 years later. Margaret understands, as do I, that is unacceptable. We're committed to ensuring that every high school student succeeds and leaves with the skills he or she needs to succeed in college or the workplace.

Because most new jobs in our 21st century economy will require post-secondary education or training, Margaret understands we need to make higher education more affordable and accessible for all Americans. We will reform the student aid system and increase college assistance for low-income students. We'll increase the maximum award for Pell grants and make them available to students year-round. And we will expand access to community colleges, so that more Americans can develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the workplace.

Margaret is the right person to carry out a reform agenda. She is talented. She is smart. She is capable, and she is a lot of fun to be around. *[Laughter]* She is a mom. She has a personal stake in the success of our Nation's schools. She knows that to build on the progress of No Child Left Behind, the Government, the President,