

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,

and the Secretary of Education and those who work in this building must listen to those closest to our children—their parents, their teachers, and their principals. She will be a thoughtful and determined leader of this Department. The people who work in this building will find out that they are very lucky to have been led by the likes

of Margaret Spellings. I am proud to welcome her into my Cabinet.

Margaret.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:47 a.m. at the U.S. Department of Education. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Spellings.

Remarks Honoring the 2004 National Basketball Association Champion Detroit Pistons

January 31, 2005

Thank you all. Please be seated. Gosh, what an honor it is to welcome the mighty Detroit Pistons to the White House. With all the fans here and the players, I guess you'd expect to hear somebody ringing the gong. [*Laughter*] I love to welcome champs to the people's home.

I also am glad to welcome members of the Michigan delegation: Senator Levin, thank you for coming; Congressman Kildee; Congressman Levin—that would be Senator Levin's brother. [*Laughter*] Joe Knollenberg is here. Thanks for coming, Joe. It's great to see you. Congressman Carolyn Kilpatrick—that would be the mom of the mayor. [*Laughter*] I'm sure the mayor was there during the celebration. Candice Miller is with us. Thank you all for coming. I'm honored that you're here to welcome your favorite team.

I'm proud to be on the—sharing the stage with Coach Larry Brown. The guy must know what he's doing, you know? [*Laughter*] He's NCAA champs with the Kansas Jayhawks and now is a professional basketball coach that won the NBA crown.

Bill Davidson—I've known Bill Davidson in the past. He is a true gentleman, a great civic leader in the Detroit area. Mr. Davidson, thank you for being here. Congratulations on the championship. Oscar Feldman,

part-owner of the Pistons is with us. Thank you for coming, Oscar.

Joe Dumars and Bill Laimbeer—both of them came to the White House as champs. As I recall, you came here in '89 and '90—I'm aware of who was living here then. [*Laughter*] Welcome back. Congratulations to Joe as the president of basketball operations—Mr. President. And Bill, of course, is the coach of the Shock, who we welcomed here to the Rose Garden last—2 years ago.

Tom Wilson, the president of Palace Sports and Entertainment. I want to thank all the players and your families who've come. Welcome. I hope you've gotten a tour of this majestic place. It's a special place to work and live.

I want to congratulate Chauncey Billups for being the NBA Championship Series MVP.

So nobody expected you to win. I know how you feel. [*Laughter*] You won because you put a team together. You had people willing to serve something greater than yourself, and it's a wonderful example for kids on playgrounds or people in all walks of life. I guess you kind of just played it the right way. I think that's what the coach says, "Play it the right way." That's how we should live life. That's what champs do. They set an example.