

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.

As you know, a lot of kids look at you. They see you as the big star. They wonder what life should be like, and every time you set an example for a kid to make a right choice in life, you're helping save a life. And I want to thank you for the extent that you do that.

I also appreciate the fact that you've been involved in great causes like teaching children how to read. I can't think of a more important cause than lending a gift of knowledge to a child. I remember the time in Houston, Texas, when a woman walked up to me and she said, "Reading is the new civil right." I thought that was such a powerful phrase. If you believe that, if you believe you liberate people by teaching them to read, consider yourself liberators as a result of being in the program, "Read To Achieve."

I want to thank you for setting an example for the tsunami relief effort. As you might remember, I tapped two former Presidents, 41 and 42—that would be my dad and President Clinton—to join together to help raise money. I suspect basketball players probably have a little more pull than they do. And so I want to thank you for setting an example of serving people who hurt. In other words, you have taken

your great championship status and converted it to good, and that's good.

And so we're here to congratulate you for being the great champs that you are. And by the way, I also want to thank you for providing entertainment for our troops overseas. I don't know if you know this or not, but a lot of people overseas support professional basketball. Professional basketball provides great relief from their duty and entertainment, a reminder of what life is like back home, and I suspect a lot of them are Detroit Pistons fans as well.

So thank you for what you're doing, supporting those who have helped make this world a more peaceful and free place. In other words, welcome to the White House, and congratulations for being called champs. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:05 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Kwame M. Kilpatrick of Detroit, MI, son of Representative Carolyn C. Kilpatrick; Bill Davidson and Oscar Feldman, owners, and Joe Dumars, president of basketball operations, Detroit Pistons; and Bill Laimbeer, head coach, Detroit Shock, Women's National Basketball Association.

## *Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union February 2, 2005*

Mr. Speaker, Vice President Cheney, Members of Congress, fellow citizens:

As a new Congress gathers, all of us in the elected branches of Government share a great privilege: We've been placed in office by the votes of the people we serve. And tonight that is a privilege we share with newly elected leaders of Afghanistan, the Palestinian Territories, Ukraine, and a free and sovereign Iraq.

Two weeks ago, I stood on the steps of this Capitol and renewed the commit-

ment of our Nation to the guiding ideal of liberty for all. This evening I will set forth policies to advance that ideal at home and around the world.

Tonight, with a healthy, growing economy, with more Americans going back to work, with our Nation an active force for good in the world, the state of our Union is confident and strong.

Our generation has been blessed by the expansion of opportunity, by advances in medicine, by the security purchased by our