

that's precisely why the assessment team is going to Iraq, to make sure that at this historic moment in the history of Iraq, there is a focused, determined strategy to help the new Government and the new and the—the new Government to stand up the forces necessary to defend themselves because ultimately the success in Iraq is going to be the willingness of the Iraqi citizens to fight for their own freedom.

Q. So you're not dissatisfied?

The President. I think we're making great progress. We're having elections on January the 30th. It's going to be an historic moment. I suspect if you were asking me questions 18 months ago and I said there was going to be elections in Iraq, you would have had trouble containing yourself from laughing out loud at the President. But here we are at this moment, and it's exciting times for the Iraqi people. And it's so exciting, there are some who are trying to intimidate people from going to the polls.

And I appreciate—listen, our military is doing great work over there.

Q. And the Sunnis?

The President. Well, I talked to President Yawr the other day. He's a Sunni. I said, "How's your campaign going?" He said, "It's going fine." He's out there trying to convince people to vote for him. There are Sunnis throughout the different tickets and slates, and we, of course, hope everybody votes. And our job is to try to provide as much security along with the Iraqis to give people a chance to express their will. And

no doubt about it, there are people trying to kill people who want to vote. That's—and they make it clear, "If you vote, we'll kill you." But it's very important to understand why they're doing that, John. They're doing that because the thought of a democracy in that part of the world is the most frightening thing to the terrorists. They cannot stand the thought of freedom in their midst. And there's a reason, because free societies are societies that actually listen to the will of the people. The people get to decide the course of their—of the history of their country, not a few tyrants who are willing to use brutality in order to set the direction of the country. And we're going to stand with those who love freedom. And we'll stand with those who want to vote.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:30 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Ghazi al-Ujayl al-Yawr of the Iraqi Interim Government. Reporters referred to Lt. Gen. Thomas F. Metz, USA, commander, Multi-National Corps—Iraq; President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; and King Abdullah II of Jordan. A reporter referred to Gen. Gary E. Luck, USA (Ret.), head of a Department of Defense Iraqi security forces development assessment team. The Executive order of January 7 establishing the President's Advisory Panel on Federal Tax Reform is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on the Nomination of Robert B. Zoellick To Be Deputy Secretary of State

January 7, 2005

The President. I am so pleased that upon the recommendations of the Secretary of State Designee Rice that Bob Zoellick has agreed to serve as Deputy Secretary of

State upon confirmation by the Senate. Condi Rice and Bob Zoellick will form one of the really strong, capable foreign policy teams our country has ever had.

I've known Zoellick for a long time. He's a—he is a fine public servant. I asked him to serve as our trade minister, and he did a fantastic job. And as he departs to the State Department, upon Senate confirmation, I want to assure the American people this administration is committed to free trade. I look forward to finding a replacement for Bob Zoellick that will be able to carry on our desire to spread free trade around the world.

In the meantime, I look forward to a quick confirmation for Condi and Bob so they can go over to the State Department and carry on the foreign policy of this administration. Thank you all very much.

Thanks for serving.

Ambassador Zoellick. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Glad you're going to do it.

Ambassador Zoellick. Thanks.

Secretary-designate Rice. Mr. President—

The President. Good choice.

Secretary-designate Rice. Thank you, sir.

The President. Thank you all. See you in Detroit.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:11 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks in a Discussion on Asbestos Litigation Reform in Clinton Township, Michigan

January 7, 2005

The President. Thank you. Thanks for coming today. Please be seated. We've got a lot of work to do here. [*Laughter*] Thank you for such a warm greeting, and I want to thank some of our fellow citizens for joining me here on the stage. We're about to have an interesting conversation on a vital issue that confronts our country, and that has to do with asbestos litigation. And I want to thank you all for joining us.

I think you're going to find their stories to be very interesting and very compelling as to why this country needs to act and to solve a problem. One of the reasons people run for office, or at least the main reason they run for office, should be to see problems and solve problems so that the country is better off because of our actions.

I want to thank Al Lorenzo and the good folks here at Macomb Community College for allowing us to use your beautiful facility. I believe that the community college system is a vital part of making sure that America remains a competitive place to do

business. After all, one of the ways to ensure that our business sector is strong and viable is to have a workforce that is skilled—that is trained for the skills of the 21st century. And there is no better place than the community college system of America to provide those skills for jobs which actually exist. So thanks for having us here. I'm honored to be here.

Today I traveled from Washington on mighty Air Force One with four Members of the United States Congress from Michigan. I hope they came down to hear this presentation. I suspect they might have liked the accommodations. [*Laughter*] But I'm proud of all four. Congressman Mike Rogers is with us today. Thank you, Mike. Thad McCotter is with us. Congressman, thank you for coming. Joe Knollenberg is with us—Congressman Knollenberg. And finally, Congresswoman Candice Miller has joined us. Thank you, Candice. [*Applause*] It sounds like they've heard of you. That's good. And you brought along husband, Don. I appreciate Don. Don and I visited