

Remarks at a Swearing-In Ceremony for Alberto R. Gonzales as Attorney General at the Department of Justice
February 14, 2005

Good morning. Laura and I are pleased to be here with Al Gonzales, his wife, Becky, and his wonderful family. Thank you all for coming. I turned to Al and said, "It seems like they're cheering pretty loud." He said, "Most of them work for me now." [Laughter]

For the past decade, Al has been a close adviser, an honorable public servant, and a dear friend. Now he assumes a new title. Today it is my honor to call this son of Humble, Texas, the 80th Attorney General of the United States.

I appreciate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor for administering the oath and admitting publicly that she was born in Texas. [Laughter] I want to thank the current and former members of my Cabinet who are here. I appreciate Senator Pat Leahy, Senator Judd Gregg and Kathy, Senator John Cornyn and Sandy, Senator Mel Martinez for joining us today. I thank Congresswoman Grace Napolitano for joining us. I thank the other distinguished guests who are here, and I thank the Texans who have come up.

As Attorney General Gonzales begins his service, he will build on the outstanding work of Attorney General John Ashcroft. Over the past 4 years, Attorney General Ashcroft has started the Department of Justice on the right course in the war on terror. He's helped reduce violent crime to a 30-year low. He's taken vital new steps to protect children from exploitation. John Ashcroft has worked tirelessly to make our Nation safer and more just, and America is thankful for your lifetime of service.

Attorney General Gonzales now joins every employee at the Department of Justice in an urgent mission to protect the United States from another terrorist attack. Few periods in our history have demanded so much of this Department. With Al's

principled leadership, the Department of Justice will continue this important mission and will defend the security of all Americans and the liberty of all Americans.

The men and women of this Department are meeting your duty every day, from your headquarters in Washington to U.S. attorneys offices across the country, to dangerous posts overseas. You've reorganized your resources to confront the threats of this new war. You've devised effective methods to investigate and prosecute terrorists. Some of you have volunteered for demanding new duties in complex areas such as intelligence and counterterrorism.

Our Nation is grateful for your dedication and sacrifice, and in return, we must provide you all the tools you need to do your job. And one of those tools is the PATRIOT Act, which has been vital to our success in tracking terrorists and disrupting their plans. Many key elements of the PATRIOT Act are now set to expire at the end of this year. We must not allow the passage of time or the illusion of safety to weaken our resolve in this new war. To protect the American people, Congress must promptly renew all provisions of the PATRIOT Act this year.

Your mission to ensure equal justice for every American extends far beyond the war on terror. By aggressively prosecuting gun criminals and drug dealers, you make neighborhoods safer for all families. By holding corporate wrongdoers to account, you build confidence in our economy. By protecting victims of child abuse and domestic violence, you help guarantee a compassionate society. And by defending the civil rights of every American, you affirm the dignity of every life and you set an example of liberty for the entire world.

As we strive to provide equal justice, we must ensure that Americans of all races

and backgrounds trust the legal system. By spreading the use of DNA analysis, we can solve more crimes, lock up more criminals, and prevent wrongful conviction. So I've asked Congress for more than a billion dollars over 5 years to expand this vital technology. And to help ensure that the death penalty is applied justly, I've also requested new funding to train prosecutors, judges, and defense counsels in capital cases.

To maintain confidence in the legal system, we must ensure that judges faithfully interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. I've a constitutional responsibility to nominate well-qualified men and women for the Federal courts. I have done so. And I've benefited greatly from the sound judgment of Attorney General Gonzales on picking qualified people to serve on our benches. I will continue to rely on his advice. And the United States Senate must also live up to its constitutional responsibility. Every judicial nominee deserves a prompt hearing and an up-or-down vote on the floor of the United States Senate.

As he embarks on all these duties, Attorney General Gonzales has my complete

confidence. From his early days of selling soda at Rice University football games to his time in the Air Force to his distinguished legal career and service on the White House staff, Al has been a model of courage and character to his fellow citizens. I've witnessed his integrity, his decency, his deep dedication to the cause of justice. Now he will advance that cause as the Attorney General and ensure that more Americans have the opportunity to achieve their dreams.

Attorney General—or General—congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. in the Great Hall at the U.S. Department of Justice. In his remarks, he referred to Kathleen MacLellan Gregg, wife of Senator Judd Gregg; and Sandy Cornyn, wife of Senator John Cornyn. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Attorney General Gonzales. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Request for Fiscal Year 2005 Supplemental Appropriations for Ongoing Military and Intelligence Operations and Selected Other International Activities *February 14, 2005*

With the help of the United States and coalition partners, the Iraqi and Afghan people have set their countries on the path of democracy and freedom. As both nations work to cement this great progress, our troops and assistance will continue to play a critical role.

The majority of this request will ensure that our troops continue to get what they need to protect themselves and complete their mission. It also provides for the continued pursuit of Al Qaida and other terrorist elements in Afghanistan and else-

where. And it reflects our core mission in Iraq and Afghanistan by providing funding to accelerate efforts to train and equip Iraqi and Afghan forces, so they can assume greater responsibility for their own security, and our troops can return home with the honor they have earned.

Other important funding in this emergency request includes resources to seize the opportunity to build peace and democracy in the Middle East, to continue helping nations affected by the tsunamis, and to address other unforeseen needs.