

questions, that will be very helpful in addressing the problems which are confronted by people in the street in our countries. Besides, I recently visited the Middle East. Therefore, I'd like in this conversation with you today to compare the notes regarding the current state of the Middle East.

President Bush. Vladimir, thank you for having me. It's such an honor to be here. This locale where we are is a place where the President welcomed me and Laura 2 years ago, and it's great to be back here. I am looking forward to the celebration tomorrow. It is a moment where the world will recognize the great bravery and sacrifice the Russian people made in the defeat of nazism. The people of Russia suffered incredible hardship, and yet the Russian spirit never died out.

I'm equally grateful that you would take—invite me and Laura for dinner to-

night. And having had one of your meals before, I'm looking forward to this one a lot.

President Putin. Recently I took a look at the coverage of your meeting with the press corps. Well, I could see how Laura attacked you sometimes, so at today's dinner we will have a chance to protect you. [Laughter]

President Bush. She was quite the comedienne. But I'm looking forward to—Russia is a great nation, and I'm looking forward to working on—together on big problems. And I want to thank you for your work on Iran and the Middle East, and there's a lot we can do together. And so thank you for having us.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 7:45 p.m. at Novo Ogarevo, the Putins's residence in Moscow.

Statement Calling for Prompt Senate Consideration of Judicial Nominees May 9, 2005

Four years ago today, I nominated Justice Priscilla Owen and Judge Terry Boyle to serve on the Federal courts of appeals. Four years later, neither has received an up-or-down vote in the Senate. Both have been rated well-qualified by the American Bar Association, the highest ABA rating a judicial nominee can receive. Both have been waiting to fill vacancies that have been designated judicial emergencies by the Judicial Conference of the United States. Much more than enough time has passed for the Senate to consider these nominations. The Senate should give these extraordinarily qualified nominees the up-or-down votes they deserve without further delay.

It is only fair that the Senate promptly consider judicial nominees on the floor, discuss and debate their qualifications, and then vote to confirm or not to confirm

them. Nominees who have the support of a majority of the Senate should be confirmed. Unfortunately, a minority of Senators is blocking the will of the Senate.

Over the course of the past 4 years, the blocking of judicial nominees in the Senate has escalated to an unprecedented level. Last Congress, 10 of my appeals court nominees were filibustered. Each of these highly qualified nominees enjoyed the bipartisan support of a majority of Senators. Each would have been confirmed if given a simple up-or-down vote. Each deserved a simple up-or-down vote by the entire Senate.

I urge the Senate to put aside the partisan practices of the past and work together to ensure that all nominees are treated fairly and that all Americans receive timely justice in our Federal courts.

The President's News Conference With President Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia in Tbilisi, Georgia
May 10, 2005

President Saakashvili. I'll say a few words in English. I want to welcome you, Mr. President, for this historic occasion. You know, right now we have in the streets of Tbilisi, as they are telling me, more than 150,000 people assembled, and I can tell you, no event in the history of this country has ever assembled anything close to these numbers. It shows the importance of this visit.

I can tell you, and you were seeing yesterday, crowds—unfortunately, I didn't see them on the networks—I mean, there were CNN and the others—but they were there and we could see them, the crowds along the airport. And of course, it was very genuine. This is not North Korea here. You cannot tell people to go out unless—if they don't feel like it. [*Laughter*] And it was a very—I mean, for me, it was something very emotional. The posters they made were very emotional.

You know, outside this building, 18 months ago, also 100,000 Georgians came in defense of democracy with a dream of living free. And in the weeks and months after the Rose Revolution, no country stood closer to Georgia than the United States, whether it was diplomatic support, economic aid, security assistance, or—[*inaudible*]*—*the United States was there. For this support, the Georgian people will be eternally grateful.

So I once again want to welcome Mr. President to Georgia. The partnership between the U.S. and Georgia is about more, and we should make it very clear, the strategic interests—more than oil pipelines, more than any kind of economic or military cooperation. It's about shared values and our shared belief in freedom and in democracy.

And President Bush is a man of vision who believes in the triumph of liberty over

forces of tyranny. I know he was also inspired by our journey toward democracy. President Bush is in Georgia because we agree that free people cannot rest while tyranny exists. We know that our liberty must be defended from those who seek to extinguish it. And of course, when we are together, that's much more hopeful and much more efficient.

That's why over 800 troops are in Iraq, Georgian troops side by side with the Americans and Iraqis and many others, to defeat those who live only to kill, to enslave, to frighten people. That is why Georgians are in Afghanistan and NATO-led missions, and that is why we appreciate the U.S. support for our NATO aspirations, just like the U.S. supported Ukraine on its NATO aspirations.

The United States supports the territorial integrity of Georgia, sovereignty of Georgia, within its internationally recognized borders. We appreciate this support and recognize our responsibilities. We will peacefully resolve our disputes with our long-suffering South Ossetian and Abkhaz citizens and the territories. We will widen and deepen our democratic reforms to better the lives of Georgians. And we seek friendly relations with all our neighbors. And we know we can count on the support of the United States in all these vital tasks.

Mr. President, you are a decisive and visionary leader. Georgia is humbled and honored that you have come to visit our small country, but great land. We Georgians have a belief that guests are a gift from God, and you are a most treasured guest. Mr. President, welcome.

President Bush. Thank you, Mr. President. I'm—first, I'm so grateful for your hospitality. Laura and I really enjoyed our time last night. I learned firsthand what it means to be fed by a Georgian. I'm really