

These are hopeful signs for our economy, and we must work hard to sustain that prosperity. When Members of Congress return next week, they need to take action on four key priorities for the American people.

First, Congress needs to complete an energy bill. America is growing more dependent on foreign oil, and that is driving up the price of gasoline across the country. For the past 4 years, I've called on Congress to pass legislation that encourages energy conservation, promotes domestic production in environmentally friendly ways, funds research into new technologies to help us diversify away from foreign oil, and modernizes the electricity grid. I applaud the House for passing an energy bill. Now the American people expect the Senate to act, so I can sign a good energy bill into law by August.

Second, Americans expect Congress to be wise with their money. I proposed a disciplined Federal budget that makes tax relief permanent, holds the growth in discretionary spending below the rate of inflation, and reduces discretionary spending for nonsecurity programs. The House and the Senate have worked together to pass a responsible budget resolution that keeps us on track to cut the deficit in half by 2009. Now Congress must keep its promise to exercise restraint on spending bills and to rein in mandatory spending. The principle is clear: Every taxpayer dollar must be spent wisely or not at all.

Third, Congress needs to ratify the Central American and Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement, known as CAFTA. On Monday, I will travel to Florida to discuss CAFTA with leaders throughout the hemisphere. I look forward to telling them that CAFTA is a good deal for workers, farmers, and small businesses in the United States and throughout the hemisphere. About 80 percent of products from Central America and the Dominican Republic now

enter the United States duty free. Yet American exports to those countries face hefty tariffs. CAFTA will level the playing field by making about 80 percent of American exports to Central America and the Dominican Republic duty free. CAFTA will lower barriers in key sectors like textiles, which will make American manufacturers more competitive in the global market. And CAFTA will make our neighborhood more secure by strengthening young democracies. CAFTA is a practical, pro-jobs piece of legislation, and Congress needs to pass it soon.

Finally, Congress needs to move forward with Social Security reform. This past week, I traveled to Kentucky to talk about Social Security. Next Wednesday, I will discuss Social Security with builders and contractors in Washington, DC. At each stop, I remind seniors they will continue to receive their Social Security checks every month. I also remind everyone that Social Security is in serious trouble for our children and grandchildren. Americans of all ages have made it clear they expect their leaders in Washington to strengthen Social Security for future generations.

By taking action on all these priorities, Congress will strengthen the long-term economic security of the American people. Americans expect members of both parties to set aside partisan differences and get things done. I look forward to working with Congress to achieve results in the days ahead.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 12:30 p.m. on June 2 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on June 4. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 3 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks to the Opening Session of the Organization of American States
General Assembly in Fort Lauderdale, Florida

June 6, 2005

Thank you all very much. Welcome to the United States. Thanks for having me. Madam Secretary, thank you for your service; thank you for your friendship; thank you for your short introduction. [*Laughter*]

Ambassador Maisto, Members of the United States Congress—four members, by the way, of the Florida delegation have joined us today, and I'm grateful that they have come. Secretary General Insulza, thank you; congratulations. Thank you for coming by the Oval Office the other day to give me a briefing. Assistant Secretary General, thank you, sir. It's good to see you again. Distinguished visitors and guests. I'm honored to be here at this meeting of the Organization of American States.

The ties that bind the Americas are particularly vivid here in Florida. I mean, if you spend any time in this State, you'll find people from all over our hemisphere who live here. This State has benefited because immigrants from throughout the hemisphere have made their homes here. I know firsthand—I'm pretty familiar with the State's Governor. [*Laughter*] He keeps me abreast of what's taking place in this State.

You know, our ties are represented in different ways. Perhaps you know this, but my brother was lucky enough to marry a fantastic woman from Mexico; the first lady of Florida is Mexican-born. A United States Senator from Florida, Mel Martinez, was born in Cuba. No, the ties in our hemisphere between America and our hemisphere are particularly strong in Florida. It's a perfect place to have the meeting. Thank you for choosing Florida.

As I look out at the distinguished foreign ministers, I find we have much in common. We're the children of the New World, founded in empire and fulfilled in independence. Our people are united by history

and geography. And the United States shares a commitment with you to build an Americas that live in liberty, trades in freedom, and grows in prosperity.

We come together at a great moment in history, when freedom is on the march around our world. In the last year-and-a-half—think about this—we've witnessed a Rose Revolution in Georgia, an Orange Revolution in Ukraine, a Purple Revolution in Iraq, a Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, a Cedar Revolution in Lebanon, and these are just the beginnings. Across central Asia, hope is stirring at the prospect of change, and change will come. Across the broader Middle East, we are seeing the rise of a new generation whose hearts burn for freedom, and they will have it.

This love of liberty has long roots in our own hemisphere. Not long after the United States won its independence from Britain, patriots throughout the Americas were inspired to take their own stand. One of them was an Argentine general named Jose de San Martin. During the struggle for independence from Spain, the general declared, "In the last corner of the Earth that I might find myself, I will be ready to sacrifice my existence for liberty."

San Martin's dream of liberty has found a home in the Organization of American States. This organization's founding documents calls the Americas to its "historic mission to offer to man a land of liberty and a favorable environment for the realization of his just aspirations." That mission was given its clear direction in the Inter-American Democratic Charter declaring that "the peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy, and their governments have an obligation to promote it and defend it." And today, what was once a distant

dream is now within our reach, an Americas wholly free and democratic and at peace with ourselves and our neighbors.

In the new Americas of the 21st century, democracy is now the rule, rather than the exception. Think of the dramatic changes we've seen in our lifetime. In 1974, the last time the OAS General Assembly met in the United States, fewer than half its members had democratically elected governments. Today, all 34 countries participating in this General Assembly have democratic, constitutional governments.

Only one country in this hemisphere sits outside this society of democratic nations, and one day, the tide of freedom will reach Cuba's shores as well. The great Cuban patriot Jose Marti said it best, "*La libertad no es negociable.*"

The dramatic gains for democracy we have witnessed in our hemisphere must not be taken for granted. Democratic change and free elections are exhilarating events. Yet we know from experience they can be followed by moments of uncertainty. When people risk everything to vote, it can raise expectations that their lives will improve immediately, but history teaches us that the path to a free and prosperous society is long and not always smooth. Each nation must follow its own course, according to its own history. Yet the old and new democracies of the Americas share a common interest in showing every citizen of our hemisphere that freedom brings not just peace; it brings a better life for themselves and their families.

In the new Americas of the 21st century, bringing a better life to our people requires choosing between two competing visions. One offers a vision of hope. It is founded on representative government, integration into the world markets, and a faith in the transformative power of freedom in individual lives. The other seeks to roll back the democratic progress of the past two decades by playing to fear, pitting neighbor against neighbor, and blaming others for their own failures to provide for their peo-

ple. The choices we make will determine which vision will define the Americas our children inherit. We must make wise decisions today to ensure a better tomorrow.

To give our children a better tomorrow, our citizens must see that democracy delivers more than promises. They need to see in their daily lives that their hard work and enterprises are rewarded. They need to see that in a democratic society, people can walk in the streets safely, corruption is punished, and all citizens are equal before the law. And when the people of the Americas see that opportunity and social mobility are real, they will know that in a free and democratic society, the only limit to how far they can go is the size of their dreams.

The United States believes it has an obligation to help build this better tomorrow for all the citizens. Working with our partners in the region, my Government has helped the leaders of this hemisphere meet our goal of delivering treatment to 600,000 HIV sufferers across the region. In 2002, the United States launched the Millennium Challenge Account to help poor nations and to revolutionize the concept of development aid. My administration's approach is based on this commonsense idea that development aid works best in countries that are proving their commitment to govern justly, to invest in their citizens, and to open up their economies. Under this program, aid will go to those who deliver results for their people.

Next week, Honduras will become the second country to sign a Millennium Challenge compact—for a \$215 million program that will help Honduran farmers grow better crops, as well as money to build highways that will open markets for them around the region and the world.

To advance economic development in the Americas, the U.S. Government already makes about \$5 billion in loans and grants to the region throughout [through]^{*} the

^{*} White House correction.