

Laura and I thank the Ford's Theatre Society and to the producing director, Paul Tetreault.

Since we moved to Washington, Laura and I have been guests of Ford's Theatre a number of times, and we appreciate the vital work it is doing. As a working stage, Ford's Theatre provides an important venue for the arts right here in the heart of our Nation's Capital.

I'm really grateful to the members of the Armed Services who participated in tonight's celebration. Our military is defending America and advancing the cause of freedom and peace around the world. We are privileged to be citizens of a country served by our brave troops, and we thank them for their service.

We appreciate the military families who are with us tonight. It's not easy being left

behind when a loved one goes to war. By loving and supporting a man or woman in uniform, our military families also serve our Nation, and America is grateful to all of them for their support and sacrifice.

Once again, we thank all the entertainers and the supporters of the Ford's Theatre who have made this evening one to remember. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless the United States.

NOTE: The President's remarks were videotaped at approximately 8:45 p.m. at Ford's Theatre for broadcast on July 4 on the ABC Television Network. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers Jeff Foxworthy, the Pendragons, and Julie Roberts. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 13.

## Remarks on the African Growth and Opportunity Act June 13, 2005

Thank you all for coming. Welcome to the White House. I want to thank the five Presidents who are with us today: President Mogae of Botswana, President Kufuor of Ghana, President Guebuza of Mozambique, President Pohamba of Namibia, and President Tandja of Niger.

We just had a great discussion. I consider these men friends. I consider them to be strong patriots of their respective countries, and I consider them to be democrats.

I want to thank Secretary of State Condi Rice for joining us today, and she was in the discussions we had earlier. I'm honored that the members of the diplomatic corps have joined us. I thank the Ambassadors for being here.

I appreciate Members of the Congress being here: Senator Bill Frist, the majority leader is with us; Congressman Bill Thomas, Congressman Charlie Rangel of the Ways and Means Committee, two fine

Members, and I appreciate you being here as a symbol of unity and support for—*[laughter]*—for moving the trade agenda forward. I appreciate Congressman Jim Kolbe from Arizona for being here as well. Thank you all for coming, really are honored you're here, and I know the Presidents are as well.

All the Presidents gathered here represent countries that have held democratic elections in the last year. What a strong statement that these leaders have made about democracy and the importance of democracy on the continent of Africa. All of us share a fundamental commitment to advancing democracy and opportunity on the continent of Africa, and all of us believe that one of the most effective ways to advance democracy and deliver hope to the people of Africa is through mutually beneficial trade.