

NOTE: This memorandum was not received for publication in the *Federal Register*.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters July 13, 2005

The President. Thank you all for coming. We have just finished our third Cabinet meeting of the year. I want to thank my Secretaries for being here today, and thank you for the briefing. Today's briefing reminded us about the strength of our economy. We had some good news today. OMB is going to announce that the 2005 deficit is \$94 billion less than previously expected. In other words, revenues are coming in greater than anticipated. It's a sign that our economy is strong, and it's a sign that our tax relief plan, our progrowth policies, are working.

I told the Congress and told the country we'd cut the deficit in half by 2009. We're ahead of projections now. In other words, these numbers indicate that we're going to cut the deficit in half faster than the year 2009, so long as Congress holds the line on spending.

And so, my message to the United States Congress is: Let's be wise with the taxpayers' money. My Cabinet is committed to that, and we look forward to working with the appropriators to make sure that they spend your money wisely.

This good news on the deficit and on the budget is coupled with good economic news when it comes to job creation. Our unemployment rate is down to 5 percent. We've created more than 2 million jobs this year. More Americans are working today than ever before in our Nation's history.

Over the next couple of weeks, I look forward to working with Congress to continue progrowth policies. One is getting an energy bill. Secondly is to promote free

and fair trade. And the matter at hand is a free trade agreement with our neighborhood and countries in Central America and the Dominican Republic.

Finally, I hope we can continue to press for and pass legal reform. I think it's a very important message to say to our job creators, small-business owners, that we'll have a fair legal system, and Congress has got some legal reform matters pending.

And finally—finally, finally, we want to work with Congress to pass a fiscally responsible highway bill. Again, I want to thank my Cabinet for being here.

I'll be glad to answer a couple of questions. Mark Knoller [CBS Radio], are you with us?

CIA Employee Identity Disclosure Investigation

Q. You bet. Thank you, sir. Can I ask you if you have spoken with your Deputy Chief of Staff Karl Rove about the Valerie Plame matter? And do you think he acted improperly in talking about it with reporters?

The President. Mark, I have instructed every member of my staff to fully cooperate in this investigation. I also will not prejudge the investigation based on media reports. We're in the midst of an ongoing investigation, and I will be more than happy to comment further once the investigation is completed.

Elaine [Elaine Quijano, Cable News Network].

Q. Mr. President, on that front, has Mr. Rove come to you and discussed—when did he discuss the fact that he had conversations with reporters about Valerie Plame? And based on that, do you feel as though it was appropriate in 2003 for your spokesman to say definitively that Karl Rove had nothing to do with the Valerie Plame incident?

The President. Elaine, we're in the midst of an ongoing investigation, and this is a serious investigation. And it is very important for people not to prejudge the investigation based on media reports. And again, I will be more than happy to comment on this matter once the investigation is complete.

Brendan [Brendan Murray, Bloomberg News].

Q. Yes, sir.

The President. Yes, Brendan.

Upcoming Supreme Court Nomination

Q. In your search for a replacement for the Supreme Court, when do you anticipate beginning to interview potential candidates, and do—would you consider candidates that come from outside the court, people that don't have experience as judges?

The President. I—we had a very good meeting yesterday. The Vice President and I met with leaders of the Senate, four Members of the United States Senate, and we talked about a lot of subjects. One of the subjects was that very subject: Would I be willing to consider people who had never been a judge. The answer is, you bet. We're considering all kinds of people—

judges, non-judges. You know, Laura gave me some good advice yesterday, which is to consider women, which of course I'm doing. [Laughter]

And in terms of the process, we're still consulting with Members of the Senate, and I anticipate continued consultations. And I say "we're consulting," it's just not me. It's members of my staff. We're—we've got a lot of contacts in the Senate on both sides of the Hill—both sides of the aisle, and people are calling in with suggestions. And I encourage them to continue to do so. I'm looking forward to their advice.

Of course, I fully recognize it's my responsibility to come up with a nominee, and I intend to do so in a—you know, in a period of time that will give me time to fully analyze the different candidates and speak to them. I'm not exactly sure when that process will begin, in terms of the interviews. And probably if I knew, I wouldn't tell you. [Laughter] And—but the American people can rest assured that I understand the seriousness of this responsibility and that I will name somebody who will bring dignity to the Court, someone who will be able to do the job, and someone who will sit on that bench and interpret the Constitution and not use the bench from which to legislate.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:52 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the Indiana Black Expo Corporate Luncheon in Indianapolis, Indiana

July 14, 2005

Thank you all very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. Be seated. It is an honor to be here. Thanks for having me. I can't

tell you how thrilled I am to be here with the men and women of the Indiana Black