

to a certain height. He's not trying to figure out the height; he just wants an answer.

*Representative Gene Taylor.* And the same thing with the highways, for example. We can't—a highway commission can't put out contracts for bridges until the Coast Guard tells us how the vertical clearance has got to be.

*The President.* So, obviously, there's a collaborative effort. And what the Congressman's basic point was and the Governor's point is, how about getting us the answers—for one reason: They want to get going, which is exciting news. And it's—so that's the kind of relationship I'm talking about.

#### *Insurance Issues*

*Q.* Mr. President, a lot of local people asking about insurance——

*The President.* Yes——

*Q.* ——the flood versus wind. What can you——

*The President.* I can't give an answer to that right now. But I am taking back the message, again, of the Congressman and the Governor, and particularly a lady I met at the church. She said she'd lived here for a long period of time, and she said, "I want to ask you something, President." She said, "How would you like it if your insurance company said, 'Ma'am, this is a flood event, and therefore, I'm not going to cover it, cover your house?'" I said, "I wouldn't like it a bit." She said, "Well, that's just what happened to me today." She had come back from where she had evacuated to, to hear that message. And

she asked my opinion, and I said, "I'll find out the process that determines whether or not it's a wind or water event."

#### *President's Focus on Domestic and Foreign Policy*

*Q.* One more question. With all your focus on foreign policy over the next couple of days, what structures have you put in place to keep your attention also focused on the hurricane?

*The President.* I can do more than one thing at one time. That's what—I hope you—by the time I'm finished President, I hope you'll realize that the Government can do more than one thing at one time, and individuals in the Government can. And so I'll be in constant touch with—I have a hurricane recovery briefing every morning, for example. And I'll be in touch with Mike Chertoff. Andy Card, on my staff, will be in touch with the appropriate people. And so whether—if I'm focusing on the hurricane, I've got the capacity to focus on foreign policy, and vice versa. But I thank you for asking that question.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:06 p.m. at Twenty-Eighth Street Elementary School. In his remarks, he referred to Glen East, superintendent, Gulfport School District. Participating in the exchange were Phyllis A. Bourn, principal, Twenty-Eighth Street Elementary School; Gov. Haley Barbour of Mississippi; Representative Gene Taylor of Mississippi; and Mayor Gregory Brent Warr of Gulfport, MS.

## Statement on the Electoral Victory of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in Japan's General Elections

*September 12, 2005*

I extend my congratulations to Prime Minister Koizumi for his decisive victory in yesterday's elections and to the Japanese

people for continuing Japan's robust democratic tradition. Prime Minister Koizumi is a bold leader and a good friend, and I

look forward to continuing the close partnership between our two countries.

## The President's News Conference With President Jalal Talabani of the Iraqi Transitional Government September 13, 2005

*President Bush.* Thank you all. It's an honor to welcome the first democratically elected President of Iraq to the White House.

*President Talabani.* Thank you.

*President Bush.* I'm proud to stand with a brave leader of the Iraqi people, a friend of the United States, and a testament to the power of human freedom.

Mr. President, thank you for your leadership. Thank you for your courage.

President Talabani has dedicated his life to the cause of liberty in Iraq. As a lawyer, a journalist, and a political leader in northern Iraq, he stood up to a brutal dictator, because he believes that every Iraqi deserves to be free. The dictator destroyed Kurdish villages, ordered poison gas attacks on a Kurdish city, and violently repressed other religious and ethnic groups. For President Talabani and his fellow citizens, the day Saddam was removed from power was a day of deliverance. And America will always be proud that we led the armies of liberation.

In the past 2 years, the Iraqi people have made their vision of their future clear. This past January, more than 8 million Iraqis defied the car bombers and the assassins and voted in free elections. It is an inspiring act of unity when 80 percent of the elected National Assembly chose the President, a member of Iraq's Kurdish minority, to lead the free nation.

In our meeting today, I congratulated the President on his election, and I thanked him for his leadership on Iraq's draft constitution. The draft constitution is an historic milestone. It protects fundamental

freedoms, including religion, assembly, conscience, and expression. It calls for a federal system of government, which is essential to preserving the unity of a diverse nation like Iraq. It declares that all Iraqis are equal before the law, without regard to gender, ethnicity, and religion.

The Iraqi people can be proud of the draft constitution, and when an election to ratify that constitution is held next month, they will have a chance to vote their conscience at the polls.

As the Iraqi people continue on the path to democracy, the enemies of freedom remain brutal and determined. The killers in Iraq are the followers of the same ideology as those who attacked America 4 years ago. Their vision is for an Iraq that looks like Afghanistan under the Taliban, a society where freedom is crushed, girls are denied schooling, and terrorists have a safe haven to plot attacks on America and other free people.

To impose their hateful vision, our enemies know they must drive America out of Iraq before the Iraqi people can secure their own freedom. They believe we will retreat in the face of violence, so they're committing acts of staggering brutality, murdering Iraqi children receiving candy or hospital workers treating the wounded. We have no doubt that our enemies will continue to kill. Yet we also know they cannot achieve their aims unless we lose our resolve.

Today, Mr. President, I pledge that we will not waver, and I appreciate your same pledge. Iraq will take its place among the