

going to be tough on terror but take away the very tools necessary to help fight these people.” And by the way, the tools exist still to fight medical fraud, in some cases, or other—or drug dealers. But with the expiration of the PATRIOT Act, it prevents us from using them to fight the terrorists. Now, that is just unbelievable. And I’m going to continue talking about this issue and reminding the American people about the importance of the PATRIOT Act and how necessary it is for us in Washington, DC, to do our job to protect you.

Let’s see, who else? Jackson—Action Jackson [David Jackson, USA Today]. Got him a new job and everything.

President’s Leadership

Q. Thank you, sir. One of the things we’ve seen this year is the reduction in your approval ratings. And I know how you feel about polls, but it appears to be taking something out of your political clout, as evidenced by the PATRIOT Act vote. What do you attribute your lower polls to, and are you worried that independents are losing confidence in your leadership?

The President. David, my job is to confront big challenges and lead. And I fully understand, everybody is not going to agree with my decisions. But the President’s job is to do what he thinks is right, and that’s what I’m going to continue to do.

Secondly, if people want to play politics with the PATRIOT Act, it’s—let me just

put—it’s not in the best interests of the country, David. And yesterday—or this morning, I spoke to the Speaker, who called me. He said, “Mr. President, we had a pretty good couple of days. Got your budget passed. Got the Katrina relief package going forward. We’re supporting our troops. We’ve got the free trade”—we talked about passing CAFTA in the past. I mean, we’ve done a lot. And it’s good for the country, by the way.

And so I’m just going to keep doing my job. Maybe you can keep focusing on all these focus groups and polls and all that business. My job is to lead, to keep telling the American people what I believe, work to bring people together to achieve a common objective, stand on principle, and that’s the way I’m going to lead. I did so in 2005, and I’m going to do so in 2006.

Thank you all for coming. Happy holidays to you. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President’s news conference began at 10:32 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; and Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this news conference.

Remarks During Visit to a “Toys for Tots” Collection Center December 19, 2005

The President. Two-hundred-eighty-nine-thousand toys so far, right—

Volunteer. So far.

The President. —are being distributed from here to children throughout DC.

It’s an interesting process. The toys are

collected, the marines sort, the DC police distributes. Is that right?

Volunteer. Yes.

The President. Thanks for doing this. It’s a great part of the compassion of our country. Now, I told our troops that, one, we’re

a great military. We're great because of the men and women who serve. We're great because they're well trained. We're also great because they're decent people who care about a neighbor in need.

So Laura and I are thrilled to be here. Thank you all for your service.

Volunteer. Thank you.

Volunteer. No problem, sir.

The President. Okay, we're getting to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:18 p.m. at the Naval District Washington Anacostia Annex.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on the Legislative Agenda December 19, 2005

I appreciate the House of Representatives for its work to meet key national priorities, including funding the war on terror, voting to renew provisions of the PATRIOT Act, assisting hurricane victims, reducing our dependence on foreign sources of oil, and preparing against the threat of an avian flu pandemic. I also applaud the House

for being wise with taxpayer dollars and approving a significant reduction in spending on entitlements. I thank the Speaker and the House leaders, Chairman Nussle, and the chairmen of the authorizing committees for their leadership. I urge the Senate to send these bills to my desk promptly so that I can sign them into law.

Statement on the Inauguration of the Afghan National Assembly December 19, 2005

I congratulate the Afghan people on the inauguration of the new Afghan national assembly. Today is another milestone in Afghanistan's historic transition to a stable and democratic state governed by the rule of law. A freely and fairly elected legislature plays a vital role in the life of a rep-

resentative democracy. I applaud the members of the national assembly on their service to their country and support their efforts, with President Karzai and his Government, to improve the lives of the Afghan people.

Message on the Observance of Christmas 2005 December 19, 2005

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel"—which means, God with us.

MATTHEW 1:23

More than 2,000 years ago, a virgin gave birth to a Son, and the God of heaven came to Earth. Mankind had received its Savior, and to those who had dwelled in darkness, the light of hope had come. Each Christmas, we celebrate that first coming