

PATRIOT Act. This obstruction is inexcusable. The Senators obstructing the PATRIOT Act need to understand that the expiration of this vital law will endanger America and will leave us in a weaker position in the fight against brutal killers. It's important that the Senate act quickly on these two bills.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:11 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks to Caregivers at the National Naval Medical Center December 21, 2005

Thanks for such a warm welcome. Laura and I are thrilled to be back at this unbelievable facility—unbelievable because of the buildings and the technology that's used here and the equipment but, more importantly, because of the decency and compassion and skill of our healers that work for our country.

So first we want to thank you all for helping do a really important job. And that is to be able to say to our country, at any time anybody gets hurt anywhere, they're going to get the best medical care possible. And that's done right here at Bethesda, as well as Walter Reed. And so we're here to thank the nurses and the docs and the healers and the volunteers who help put the smile on the faces of those who have been hurt as well as their families.

One of the great blessings of our country is the fact that there are millions of compassionate souls who are willing to try to make somebody's life better.

I want to thank Admiral Robinson and Dr. Winkenwerder, Admiral Arthur. I want to thank General Kiley and Lieutenant General Peach Taylor, as well as Major General Farmer. And thank Tom Travis, as well—happens to be his birthday, by the way. [Laughter] His wife said, "You're birthday gift is to say hello to the President," not a really good gift. [Laughter] Anyway. [Laughter]

We're serving in an amazing time. I say, "We're serving," because we're serving together. It is a time when this Nation of ours is facing unbelievable challenges. There is an enemy that still lurks, that wants to bring harm to the American people. And we've got to do everything in our power to protect the American people; that is our solemn duty. There is a fantastic opportunity, as we defeat this enemy, to lay the foundation for peace for generations to come.

We have a great opportunity as a generation called to act, called to protect America, to seize the moment and defeat this ideology with freedom. You know, I like to tell people about how—"amazed" isn't the right word—but how stark this story I'm about to tell you is to me, what an amazing contrast it is about Japan.

You know, my dad, as an 18-year-old signed up—in the United States Navy, by the way. [Applause] There you go. And there were a lot of 18-year-old and 19-year-old and 20-year-old kids, and some older people, too—[laughter]—to fight against a sworn enemy which had attacked us.

Laura and I just got back from the Far East, and I sat down at the table with the Prime Minister of Japan, talking about how to keep the peace, talking about how to deal with North Korea, talking about how—and thanking him, by the way, for sending

troops to Iraq to help this young democracy develop. And it was that contrast between what 41 did and what 43 is doing—that would be my dad and me. [Laughter] To sit down with a dad—which we’re going to do here over Christmas—who fought the Japanese, and his son is helping to keep the peace with the Japanese, something had to have happened.

And one of my predecessors, Harry Truman, recognized the power of freedom to transform an enemy into an ally; that’s what happened. And so Japan adopted a Japanese-style democracy. And in that democracies don’t fight each other, in that democracy is the best way to encourage a peaceful world, it’s working.

And what we’re seeing today is brave troops and committed citizens who are not only determined to chase down the killers and bring them to justice before they hurt us again, but understand that by spreading freedom and democracy, we’re battling an ideology of darkness with an ideology of hope. And we’re laying that foundation for peace for generations to come. The task at hand is one that requires determination and discipline and great faith in the ideals of human freedom and human liberty.

And so coming here today is a chance to not only thank you for being a part of

this incredible team of healers but also, being a part of this historic moment. Someday, an American President will be sitting down with a duly elected leader of Iraq, working hard to keep the peace, and future generations of Americans will be saying, “Thank God this generation of America stood strong for what we believe.”

And so on behalf of a grateful nation, thanks for doing your duty. Thanks for serving. Thanks for being an important part of this march for freedom, and thanks, most of all, for bringing comfort and aid and solace to those who have been hurt on the battlefield and their families.

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a blessed 2006. May God bless your work, and may God continue to bless the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:34 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Adm. Adam M. Robinson, USN, commander, National Naval Medical Center; Maj. Gen. Kenneth L. Farmer, Jr., USA, commanding general, North Atlantic Regional Medical Command and Walter Reed Army Medical Center; Brig. Gen. Thomas W. Travis, USAF, commander, 89th Medical Group, and his wife, Sally; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks on Signing the Gulf Opportunity Zone Act of 2005 *December 21, 2005*

Thanks for coming. In a few moments, I will sign the Gulf Opportunity Zone Act of 2005. This important bill will help the citizens of the gulf coast continue to put their lives back together and rebuild their communities in the wake of the devastating hurricanes that hit the region earlier this year.

I want to thank the Members of Congress who have joined us here, and those who haven’t joined us here, for passing this

important piece of legislation. I want to thank Trent Lott from Mississippi for being here. Trent Lott invited me one time to his home, right there on the gulf coast of Mississippi. It no longer exists. He knows firsthand what it means to live through one of these devastating storms, and I appreciate you, Senator, for being here.

I want to thank Congressmen Jim McCrery of Louisiana and Bill Jefferson of Louisiana. Both these Members have