

## Statement on the New Freedom Initiative February 1, 2006

Five years ago, I announced the New Freedom Initiative to build on the progress of the Americans with Disabilities Act and more fully integrate people with disabilities into all aspects of life. Since the announcement of this important initiative, we have expanded educational opportunities for children with disabilities and provided essential funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. We have launched [disabilityinfo.gov](http://disabilityinfo.gov) to serve as an online resource for people with disabilities and their families, employers, service providers, and

other community members. To provide expanded employment opportunities, we are assisting persons with disabilities by implementing the Ticket to Work program and strengthening training and employment services at One-Stop Career Centers.

As a result of these efforts, Americans with disabilities have greater access to the opportunities of America. My administration will continue to work to remove barriers that still confront Americans with disabilities and their families.

## Remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast February 2, 2006

*The President.* Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. Laura and I are delighted to be here. This lovely personality said this morning, “Keep your remarks short.” [Laughter]

I appreciate this prayer breakfast a lot, and I appreciate the spirit in which it was formed. Ike said he was living in the loneliest house in America—for what he got to say is, the rent is pretty good. [Laughter]

It’s great to be here with distinguished guests from all around the world. Your Majesty and Prime Ministers and former Prime Ministers, friends with whom I have the honor to work, you’re welcome here. I appreciate the fact that people from different walks of life, different faiths have joined us. Yet I believe we share one thing in common: We’re united in our dedication to peace and tolerance and humility before the Almighty.

I want to thank Senators Pryor and Coleman for putting on this breakfast. I appreciate Senator Frist, Representative

Blunt, Representative Pelosi, other Members of the United States Congress who’ve joined us on the dais and who are here for this breakfast. I thank the members of my Cabinet who are here. Get back to work. [Laughter]

I find it interesting that the music is from Arkansas. [Laughter] I’m glad it is, because they know how to sing down there. [Laughter]

You know, I was trying to figure out what to say about Bono. [Laughter]

*Bono.* Careful. [Laughter]

*The President.* And a story jumped to mind about one of these really good Texas preachers. And he got going in a sermon, and a fellow jumped up in the back and said, “Use me, Lord, use me.” And the preacher ignored him and finished his sermon. Next Sunday, he gets up and cranking on another sermon, and the guy jumps up and says, “Use me, Lord, use me.” And after the service, he walked up to him and said, “If you’re serious, I’d like for you to paint the pews.” Next Sunday, he’s

preaching; the guy stands up and says, "Use me, Lord, use me, but only in an advisory capacity." [Laughter]

So I've gotten to know Bono. [Laughter] He's a doer. The thing about this good citizen of the world is, he's used his position to get things done. You're an amazing guy, Bono. God bless you. God bless you.

It is fitting we have a National Prayer Breakfast, because our Nation is a nation of prayer. In America, we do not prescribe any prayer; we welcome all prayer. We're a nation founded by men and women who came to these shores seeking to worship the Almighty freely. From these prayerful beginnings, God has greatly blessed the American people, and through our prayers, we give thanks to the true source of our blessings.

Americans remain a prayerful people today. I know this firsthand. I can't tell you the number of times out there traveling our country, people walk up, total strangers, and say, "Mr. President, I'm praying for you and your family." It is one of the great blessings of the Presidency and one of the most wonderful gifts a person can give any of us who have the responsibility to govern justly. So I thank my fellow citizens for their gracious prayers and wonderful gifts.

Every day, millions of Americans pray for the safety of our troops, for the protection of innocent life, and for the peace we all hope for. Americans continue to pray for the recovery of the wounded and to pray for the Almighty's comfort on those who have lost a loved one. We give thanks daily for the brave and decent men and women who wear our Nation's uniform, and we thank their families as well.

In this country, we recognize prayer is a gift from God to every human being. It is a gift that allows us to come before our Maker with heartfelt requests and our deepest hopes. Prayer reminds us of our place in God's creation. It reminds us that when we bow our heads or fall to our knees, we are all equal and precious in the eyes of the Almighty.

In prayer, we're reminded we're never alone in our personal trials or individual suffering. In prayer, we offer our thanksgiving and praise, recognizing our lives, our talents, and all that we own ultimately flow from the Creator. And in these moments of our deepest gratitude, the Almighty reminds us that for those to whom much has been given, much is required.

In prayer, we open ourselves to God's priority, especially His charge to feed the hungry, to reach out to the poor, to bring aid to the widow or the orphan. By surrendering our will to God's will, we learn to serve His eternal purposes. Through prayer, our faith is strengthened, our hearts are humbled, and our lives are transformed. Prayer encourages us to go out into the world and serve.

In our country, we recognize our fellow citizens are free to profess any faith they choose, or no faith at all. You are equally American if you're a Hebrew—a Jew or a Christian or a Muslim. You're equally American if you choose not to have faith. It is important America never forget the great freedom to worship as you so choose.

Yes, what I've found in our country, that whatever our faith, millions of Americans answer the universal call to love your neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. Over the past 5 years, we've been inspired by the ways that millions of Americans have answered that call. In the face of terrorist attacks and devastating natural disasters here and around the world, the American people have shown their faith in action again and again. After Katrina, volunteers from churches and mosques and synagogues and other faith-based and community groups opened up their hearts and their homes to the displaced. We saw an outpouring of compassion after the earthquake in Pakistan and the tsunami that devastated entire communities. We live up to God's calling when we provide help for HIV/AIDS victims on the continent of Africa and around the world.

In millions of acts of kindness, we have seen the good heart of America. Bono, the true strength of this country is not in our military might or in the size of our wallet; it is in the hearts and souls of the American people.

I was struck by the comment of a fellow who was rescued from the gulf coast and given shelter. He said, "I don't—I didn't think there was so much love in the world." This morning we come together to recognize the source of that great love. We come together before the Almighty in prayer, to

reflect on God's will, to seek His aid, and to respond to His grace.

I want to thank you for the fine tradition you continue here today. I pray that our Nation will always have the humility to commend our cares to Providence and trust in the goodness of His plans.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:09 a.m. at the Hilton Washington Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to musician and activist Bono.

## Remarks in Maplewood, Minnesota *February 2, 2006*

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for coming. Appreciate the warm welcome. Got to take my Post-it note off my speech here. [*Laughter*] My fault. My fault. [*Laughter*] I should have cleaned off the podium. [*Laughter*] I saw that I could get—I see the Governor out there—he says, "You want to have some lunch?" I said, "Sure, what are you serving?" He said, "Lutefisk." [*Laughter*] I said, "No, I think I'll eat on Air Force One." [*Laughter*]

It's great to see you, Governor. Thanks for being here. Laura and I are delighted to be here at 3M. We're glad to be with the Governor and the first lady, Lieutenant Governor.

I was greeted by your chairman and CEO, George W. [*Laughter*] I'll just call you "W." [*Laughter*] Thanks for having me. I appreciate it. I want to thank Jay Ihlenfeld, the senior vice president, for the tour we just went on. I want to thank all the employees here for giving me a chance to come by and visit with you.

I really want to send a message to the United States of America that in order for us to keep the standard of living that we're accustomed to, that in order for us to be the leader in the world that we want to

be, that we must remain a flexible, technologically based economy.

You know, it's amazing when you come to 3M to talk to George W. about the number of products you make and—products that people just take for granted, but products, many of which started in a laboratory as the result of a really smart, capable person making the technological advances necessary to get these products to market.

Innovation is a vital part of the future of the United States of America, and the fundamental question is, how do we keep our society innovative? That's what I'm here to talk about.

You know, one way for our fellow citizens to understand the importance of innovation and technology is just think about what has taken place over 25 years. Now, for a 59-year-old guy, that doesn't seem like much these days. If you're 26, it seems like a lot. Twenty-five years ago, most Americans used the typewriter. Isn't that interesting? Twenty-five years ago, they had such a thing as pay phones. [*Laughter*] Now we're using cell phones. Carbon paper was used. For those youngsters here, carbon paper was kind of a messy way to duplicate things. Now we're using laser