

As Governor, Dirk has been a responsible steward of Idaho's 30 State parks and recreational trailways that serve millions of visitors each year. He has launched the statewide Experience Idaho Initiative, which will fund needed improvements within Idaho's State parks to preserve public spaces and expand recreational opportunities for visitors. Last August, I had a chance to enjoy those recreational opportunities firsthand when Dirk and I biked some of Idaho's trails together.

As Secretary of the Interior, Dirk will continue my administration's efforts to conserve our land, water, and air resources; reduce the maintenance backlog of our national parks; support historic and cultural sites through our Preserve America Initiative; and develop the energy potential of Federal lands and waters in environmentally sensitive ways.

Dirk brings wide experience to these important tasks. He has served at every level of government: as mayor of Boise, as Governor of Idaho, and as a United States Senator. While in the Senate, he chaired the Subcommittee on Drinking Water, Fisheries, and Wildlife, and he chaired the Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee.

He built bipartisan support to enact comprehensive reforms to the Safe Drinking

Water Act. Dirk understands that those who live closest to the land know how to manage it best, and he will work closely with State and local leaders to ensure wise stewardship of our resources.

Dirk has had a long and abiding love for nature. When he and his wife, Patricia, were married, they chose to hold the ceremony atop Idaho's Moscow Mountain at sunrise. Dirk said, "I don't think there's a more beautiful cathedral than the outdoors."

I appreciate his willingness to take on this important post, and I ask the Senate to confirm him promptly as the 49th Secretary of the Interior.

Thanks for agreeing to serve.

[Secretary-designate Kempthorne made brief remarks.]

The President. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:29 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John Hughes, husband of Secretary of the Interior Gale A. Norton. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-designate Kempthorne.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Supplemental Funding Legislation

March 16, 2006

I applaud the House for its quick passage of legislation to provide vital resources for two of our Nation's top priorities. This bill will give our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan tools they need to prevail in the war on terror. The legislation also provides for ad-

ditional resources for the people of the gulf coast as they continue the work of rebuilding their lives and communities. I urge the Senate to act promptly to pass legislation providing for these critical funds.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Activities in Belarus

March 16, 2006

Dear _____ :

Consistent with the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (Public Law 108–347), I hereby transmit a report prepared by my Administration on the Belarusian sale or delivery of weapons and weapons-related technologies and on the personal assets and wealth of the senior Belarusian leadership.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Henry J. Hyde, chairman, and Tom Lantos, ranking member, House Committee on International Relations; and Richard G. Lugar, chairman, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on the National Security Strategy of the United States

March 16, 2006

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 108 of the National Security Act of 1947, as amended (50 U.S.C. 404a), I am transmitting a report prepared by my Administration on the Na-

tional Security Strategy of the United States.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
March 16, 2006.

Remarks at a National Republican Congressional Committee Dinner

March 16, 2006

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thank you all for coming. Thank you for the warm welcome. Mr. Speaker, I can't tell you what a joy it is to work with you. America is very fortunate to have Denny Hastert as the Speaker of the House of Representatives. And I want to thank you all for coming tonight to make sure that he remains the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

We're here to not only thank you but to remind you and our fellow citizens, we've got a lot of work to do to lay the foundations for peace, and we've got a lot

of work to do to make sure this country remains a prosperous country so that every single citizen can realize the great promise of America.

I bring greetings from the First Lady—that would be Laura. She sends her best regards to the Speaker and the leadership of the House of Representatives. She sends her best regards to you. I'm a lucky guy that she said yes when I asked her to marry me. She is a fabulous woman, a great mom, and she's doing a wonderful job as our Nation's First Lady.