

Remarks Following a Meeting on Immigration Reform *March 23, 2006*

I've just had a very constructive and important dialog with members of the agricultural community, the faith community, the concerned citizen community about immigration. Ours is a nation of law, and ours is a nation of immigrants, and we believe that we can have rational, important immigration policy that's based upon law and reflects our deep desire to be a compassionate and decent nation.

Our Government must enforce our borders; we've got plans in place to do so. But part of enforcing our borders is to have a guest-worker program that encourages people to register their presence so that we know who they are, and says to them, "If you're doing a job an American won't do, you're welcome here, for a period of time, to do that job."

The immigration debate is a vital debate for our country. It's important that we have a serious debate, one that discusses the issues. But I urge Members of Congress and I urge people who like to comment on this issue to make sure the rhetoric is in accord with our traditions. I look around the table and I recognize that we've got people from different backgrounds, different heritages. We all may have different

family histories, but we all sit around this table as Americans.

And therefore, when we conduct this debate, it must be done in a civil way. It must be done in a way that brings dignity to the process. It must be done in a way that doesn't pit one group of people against another. It must be done in a way that recognizes our history. I think now is the time for the United States Congress to act to get an immigration plan that is comprehensive and rational and achieves important objectives.

So I want to welcome you all for being here. I want to thank you very much for your involvement in this vital issue. I've assured folks here at the table that I will continue to speak out on the issue. I feel passionately about the need for our country to conduct themselves with dignity and, at the same time, enforce our border and treat people here with respect.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:37 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on Signing a Bill To Authorize the Extension of Nondiscriminatory Treatment to the Products of Ukraine *March 23, 2006*

Thank you. Pleased be seated. Ambassador, good to see you. Please be seated. Welcome. Appreciate you all coming. In a few minutes, I'm going to sign a bill that authorizes permanent normal trade relations between the United States and Ukraine. It's a good bill, and it's going to strengthen our ties with our friend Ukraine.

It's going to create new opportunities, economic opportunities, for both our countries.

I really want to thank the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, a man who knows what he's talking about when it comes to the world, and that's Chairman Lugar from Indiana. Thank you for coming, sir. I thank the bill sponsor,

Congressman Jim Gerlach; and his wife, Karen, is here today. Thank you for coming, Mr. Congressman. Congressman Tom Lantos is with us. He's the ranking member of the House International Relations Committee. Congressman Curt Weldon, a cosponsor of the bill, is with us. Congresswoman Candice Miller from Michigan, a cosponsor, is with us, as well as a cosponsor, Congressman Mike Fitzpatrick. Thank you all for being here.

I welcome you all here. I especially welcome the Ambassador from Ukraine, Ambassador Shamshur. Welcome, Mr. Ambassador. Appreciate you coming. This is the third time we've been together in the last 30 days. [Laughter] I'm better for it. [Laughter]

The bill I sign today marks the beginning of a new era in our history with Ukraine. During the cold war, Congress passed the Jackson-Vanik Amendment as a response to widespread Communist deprivation of human rights. The law made American trade with Communist nations contingent on those countries' respect for the rights of their own people. At the time, the law served an important purpose; it helped to encourage freedom and the protection of fundamental rights and penalized nations that denied liberty to their citizens. Times have changed. The cold war is over, and a free Ukraine is a friend to America and an inspiration to those who love liberty.

The Orange Revolution was a powerful example of democracy for people around the world. The brave citizens who gathered in Kiev's Independence Square demanded the chance to determine their nation's future, and when they got that chance, they chose freedom. In the past 2 years, Ukraine has held free elections, and the people of Ukraine and its President, Viktor Yushchenko, are deeply committed to democratic reform. On Sunday, the Ukrainian people will again have the chance to cast a ballot in parliamentary elections, and they have a chance to continue to shape their own future.

Ukraine is also working to expand its market economy and produce measurable improvements in the lives of the Ukrainian people. America supports these efforts, and this bill is an important step. By eliminating barriers to trade between the United States and Ukraine, the bill will help Ukraine grow in prosperity. As we've seen over the past 50 years, trade has the power to create new wealth for whole nations and new opportunities for people around the world. By expanding trade with Ukraine, this bill will open new markets for American products and help Ukrainians continue to build a free economy that will raise the standard of living for families across their land.

As Ukraine embraces democracy and more open trade, our nations' friendship will grow. President Yushchenko has made reforms to increase transparency and provide intellectual property protection and strengthen the enforcement of the rule of law.

These reforms have taken great conviction. And earlier this month, our two nations signed a bilateral agreement that will establish the terms of trade between our nations when Ukraine join the World Trade Organization. We support Ukraine's goal of joining the WTO, and we will help resolve the remaining steps required for entry as quickly as possible. As the Ukrainian Government continues to build on a record of progress at home, we will help Ukraine join the institutions that unite free nations and become a part of Europe that is whole, free, and at peace.

The growth of economic freedom and ownership in countries like the Ukraine reinforces the habits of liberty and democracy and gives citizens a stake in the success of their nation. Ukrainian people have shown the world they are committed to the ideals of economic freedom and democratic progress and open trade, and that gives them a promising future.

The United States is proud to call Ukraine a friend, and I'm honored to sign this important piece of legislation into law.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:01 a.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he

referred to Ukraine's Ambassador to the U.S. Oleh Shamshur. H.R. 1053, approved March 23, was assigned Public Law No. 109-205.

Memorandum on the National Flood Insurance Program *March 23, 2006*

*Memorandum for the Secretary of the
Homeland Security*

Subject: National Flood Insurance Program

Pursuant to the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, including 42 U.S.C. 4016, I have

reviewed and hereby approve your request to issue notes to the Secretary of the Treasury in excess of \$18.5 billion, but not to exceed \$20.775 billion, for the National Flood Insurance Program.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Remarks at a Celebration of Greek Independence Day *March 24, 2006*

Thank you. Welcome. Your Eminence, thank you for your kind words. You're a philosopher; you're a wise person; you're an incredibly compassionate soul; and I'm proud to call you friend. Thank you for being here.

Thank you for inviting me to help celebrate the 185th anniversary of Greek Independence. America is a better country because of Greek Americans. It's something about the passion, the verve for life, the willingness to serve. I am blessed by having Greek Americans in my administration, two of the most important of whom have joined us, Your Eminence: John Negroponte, the Director of the National Intelligence, and the Homeland Security Adviser, Frances Fragos Townsend.

Madame Foreign Minister, we are thrilled to have you here. Thank you for coming. Let me just say this, that it is a wise government who relies upon the judgment and advice of a woman as a Foreign Minister or Secretary of State. *[Laughter]* And I look forward to sharing our visit with my mother and dad, who are close to the

Minister. And I know they're going to be thrilled to know that you're strong and optimistic in serving your great country with class and dignity.

Mr. Ambassador, thank you as well. Appreciate—good to see you, sir. I appreciate Christos Folias, who is the Deputy Minister of Economy for Greece. Welcome, sir. It's good to see you.

I am really pleased that Senator Paul Sarbanes is with us today. He has served with great distinction in the United States Senate. He has decided to move on to other ventures, and the State of Maryland will miss his leadership. Proud you're here, sir.

I want to thank those who wear the Nation's uniform. Your Eminence, as you know, ours is a remarkable country, where people are willing to volunteer to serve our country in times of war. And our Nation is blessed to have men and women who, in the face of danger, say, "I want to help." So thanks for coming. More importantly, thanks for serving. I know you share the