

I want to thank you all for coming to support Michael Sodrel. Thanks for your interest. Thanks for your concern about our future. May God bless Indiana. May God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the Murat Centre. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., of Indiana, and his wife, Cheri; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Message on Freedom Efforts in Belarus *March 24, 2006*

I send greetings to those working to return freedom to Belarus and observing the 88th anniversary of the first effort to establish an independent Belarus.

Freedom is the birthright of every human soul and the permanent hope of all mankind. The desire for justice, freedom, human rights, and accountable, representative government is universal. Nations grow by allowing the talents and liberties of their people to flourish, not by suppressing freedom. By upholding the rule of law, limiting the power of the state, holding free and fair elections, and respecting the rights of all people, governments can foster more hopeful societies and empower their citizens.

I appreciate those who labor in the shadows to return freedom to Belarus, and our

Nation's thoughts are with those who have been harassed, detained, imprisoned, or beaten for their efforts. The United States condemns the actions by Belarusian security services on the morning of March 24, and we urge all members of the international community to join us in condemning any and all abuses and demanding that Belarusian authorities respect the rights of their own citizens to express themselves peacefully. The United States will continue to stand with the people of Belarus and all those who are working to help Belarus take its rightful place in the community of democracies.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

The President's Radio Address *March 25, 2006*

Good morning. On Monday, I will attend a naturalization ceremony here in Washington. It's always inspiring to watch a group of immigrants raise their hands and swear an oath to become citizens of the United States of America. These men and women follow in the footsteps of millions who've come to our shores seeking liberty and opportunity, and America is better off for their hard work and love of freedom.

America is a nation of immigrants, and we're also a nation of laws. And our immigration laws are in need of reform. So at Monday's ceremony, I will discuss my vision for comprehensive immigration reform that will secure our borders, improve enforcement of our immigration laws, and uphold our values.

Comprehensive immigration reform begins with securing our borders. Since I took office, we've increased funding for border

security by 66 percent, and the Department of Homeland Security has caught and sent home nearly 6 million illegal immigrants. To improve security at the border, we're hiring thousands more Border Patrol agents. We're deploying new technology like infrared cameras and unmanned aerial vehicles to help our agents do their job. And we're installing physical barriers to entry, like fences in urban areas.

We're also working to end the unwise practice of catch-and-release. For decades, many illegal immigrants were released back into society soon after they were caught because we did not have enough detention space. So we're adding more beds so we can hold the people we catch, and we're reducing the time it takes to send them back home. When illegal immigrants know they will be caught and sent home, they will be less likely to break the rules, and our immigration system will be more orderly and secure. We're making good progress, but we have much more work ahead, and we will not be satisfied until we have control of our border.

Comprehensive immigration reform also includes strengthening the enforcement of our laws in America's interior. Since I took office, we've increased funding for immigration enforcement by 42 percent. We're increasing the number of immigration enforcement agents and criminal investigators, enhancing worksite enforcement, and going after smugglers and gang members and human traffickers.

Finally, comprehensive immigration reform requires a temporary-worker program that will relieve pressure on our borders. This program would create a legal way to match willing foreign workers with willing American employers to fill jobs that Americans will not do. By reducing the number of people trying to sneak across the border, we would free up our law enforcement offi-

cers to focus on criminals and drug dealers and terrorists and others who mean us harm.

One thing the temporary-worker program would not do is provide amnesty to those who are in our country illegally. I believe that granting amnesty would be unfair, because it would allow those who break the law to jump ahead of people who play by the rules and wait in the citizenship line. Amnesty would also be unwise, because it would encourage waves of illegal immigration, increase pressure on the border, and make it more difficult for law enforcement to focus on those who mean us harm. For the sake of justice and for the sake of border security, I firmly oppose amnesty.

In the coming days, the United States Senate plans to consider proposals on immigration reform. This is an emotional debate. America does not have to choose between being a welcoming society and being a lawful society. We can be both at the same time. As we debate the immigration issue, we must remember, there are hard-working individuals, doing jobs that Americans will not do, who are contributing to the economic vitality of our country.

To keep the promise of America, we must enforce the laws of America. We must also ensure that immigrants assimilate into our society and learn our customs and values—including the English language. By working together, we can meet our duty to fix our immigration system and deliver a bill that protects our country, upholds our laws, and makes our Nation proud.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:59 a.m. on March 24 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 25. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 24 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Naturalization Ceremony March 27, 2006

Thank you all. Thank you very much. It's good to be with you. I am grateful for the chance to witness this joyous and uplifting ceremony. It is inspiring to see people of many different ages, many different countries raise their hands and swear an oath to become citizens of the United States of America.

For some of you, this day comes after a long and difficult journey. For all of you, this is a defining moment in your lives. America is now more than your home; America is your country. I welcome you to this free nation. I congratulate you and your families, and it's an honor to call you fellow Americans.

I appreciate the Attorney General. Dr. Gonzales, thank you, sir. And, Alfonso, it's good to be up here with you. I want to thank the president general of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Ms. Presley Wagoner, for letting us use this fantastic facility for this important ceremony. Thank you for singing the national anthem so beautifully.

It is fitting that we hold this ceremony at the home of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The Daughters of the American Revolution were the daughters of immigrants, because the leaders of our Revolution all had ancestors who came from abroad. As new citizens of the United States, you now walk in the footsteps of millions. And with the oath you've sworn, you're every bit as American as those who came before you.

Our immigrant heritage has enriched America's history. It continues to shape our society. Each generation of immigrants brings a renewal to our national character and adds vitality to our culture. Newcomers have a special way of appreciating the opportunities of America, and when they seize those opportunities, our whole nation benefits.

In the 1970s, an immigrant from Ireland—or the 1790s, an immigrant from Ireland designed the White House, right where Laura and I live. And he helped build the Capitol. In the 1990s, an immigrant from Russia helped create the Internet search engine Google. In between, new citizens have made contributions in virtually every professional field, and millions of newcomers have strengthened their communities through quiet lives of hard work and family and faith.

America's welcoming society is more than a cultural tradition; it is a fundamental promise of our democracy. Our Constitution does not limit citizenship by background or birth. Instead, our Nation is bound together by a shared love of liberty and a conviction that all people are created with dignity and value. Through the generations, Americans have upheld that vision by welcoming new citizens from across the globe, and that has made us stand apart.

One of my predecessors, President Ronald Reagan, used to say this: "You can go to live in France, but you cannot become a Frenchman. You can go to live in Japan, but you cannot become Japanese. But anyone, from any corner of the world, can come to live in America and be an American."

The new Americans we welcome today include men and women from 20 countries on 5 continents. Their ages range from 18 to 59, and they work as teachers and small-business managers and nurses and software engineers and other professions.

One new citizen is Veronica Pacheco. Veronica first came to the United States from Bolivia 15 years ago. In 2000, she moved here permanently and found a job at a catering company in Virginia. Every Friday and Saturday, she spent 5 hours studying English at the local community college. Over the years, she saved enough