

Remarks Following Discussions With President John Agyekum Kufuor of Ghana

April 12, 2006

President Bush. Mr. President, welcome. It's good to have you back. We just had a wonderful discussion about our bilateral relations and a great discussion about the world. I really enjoy talking to a man of vision and strength and character. President Kufuor has done a fantastic job for Ghana. He's told the people of his country he'd bring honesty to government, and he has. He told the people of his country that he would work on a—create a stable economic platform for—and he has done that as well. And he's a man of peace. He cares deeply about peace in the region.

As a result of his leadership and our confidence in his Government, we're very happy to work with his country to promote what we've called the Millennium Challenge Account. It's a statement of our respect, and it's a statement for our appreciation for somebody who is willing to invest in his people, is willing to fight corruption, who is willing to help a market economy grow.

Mr. President, congratulations on your record of leadership. Thank you for being a man of peace. Thank you for coming to Washington.

President Kufuor. I want to thank the President for understanding Africa. His works, for the past 5 years or so, have done so much in terms of contributing to the fight against HIV/AIDS on two fronts—the fund you set up, \$15 billion fund, some of which has helped to, in a way, save

and also make life easier for over 400,000 afflicted people.

Then on the education front, I was honored with a visit from Mrs. Bush just about 2 months ago, during which she launched a program towards linking the messages of the United States and Africa, to work out curriculum for primary and basic education, and also for supplying textbooks and education materials for children, and also helping with education for girls.

And then there's AGOA, which Ghana is benefiting from, even though there we need more help. [*Laughter*] And then there's the TIFA, Trade and Investment Framework law. I believe this is a President that is helping Africa help itself. And we count on your support.

On the MCA front, everything going to plan, Ghana and the United States will sign a compact by July. And that would enable Ghana pursue modernized agriculture. We are largely an agricultural country, and these projects that would free hundreds of millions of dollars to help modernize our agriculture would affect as many as 3 million people, help reduce poverty, and also push growth for the economy.

So we see the President as a friend of Ghana's and, I can say, of much of Africa. Thank you.

President Bush. Thank you, Mr. President. Let's go have lunch.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:57 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks in a Discussion on Medicare Prescription Drug Benefits in
Annandale, Virginia
April 12, 2006

The President. Thanks for coming. I first want to thank Bob Templin, who is the president of Northern Virginia Community College, for hosting us again. This is a place of educational excellence, and what you're about to watch is a seminar on the new Medicare benefit. And the reason why we've got to conduct seminars on education about what's available is because there is a lot of people who haven't signed up yet for the Medicare benefit, and we want people to pay attention to what's available.

And one of the interesting things about this meeting is, I'm trying to show that our Government is reaching out to people from all walks of life and all neighborhoods. And so this is my job. I'm the Commander in Chief, but I'm sometimes the educator in chief, and that's what I am here to do today. So thank you for coming.

As you can see, we've got a different way of doing this—it's not going to be just a speech, but it's going to be—I'm going to rely upon our fellow citizens to help share what's available and why you ought to take a look, if you're eligible for the Medicare program. We want everybody around our country who's eligible for Medicare to take a look and see if it will make your life better. What I'm saying is, it will.

So, Bob, thanks for having us. I want to thank Vellie Dietrich-Hall, the Commissioner of the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islands. Thank you, Vellie. Clayton Fong, who is with us—he is the National Asian Pacific Center on Aging executive director. I want to thank all the community leaders here.

I particularly want to thank the veterans who are here with us today. We have been joined by a special group of people, the veterans from the 442d Regimental Combat Team. By the way, Senator Inouye of Ha-

waii was a member of that very important regimental combat team. And I want to thank you all for being here today, and thanks for serving our country. Welcome.

I also want to thank the Secretary of Labor, Elaine Chao, who is going to have some remarks here.

So we're talking about Medicare. Our Government made a commitment to our seniors to provide health care. My attitude is, if Government makes a commitment, then we better make sure we make a good commitment. And I was worried that the commitment we made to our seniors was not as good as it could be. And so I went to the United States Congress and said, "Let's work together to make sure the medicine we provide for our seniors is modern and is up to date."

One of the things that we didn't do through the Medicare system prior to this reform was, we didn't provide prescription drugs. But prescription drugs was an important part of medicine. I'll give you an example. If you would have ulcer surgery under Medicare, the Government would pay about \$28,000, but the Government wouldn't pay one dime for the medicine that would help you prevent the ulcer surgery in the first place. Now that didn't make any sense. It didn't make any sense to not pay \$500 to save 28,000.

And so I said, well, we can do better than this. Let's make sure the medicine we deliver to our seniors is modern. Let's make sure the program works as well as it possibly can. And we passed a bill.

And so one of the things that this bill does is it says to seniors, here's a new plan for you to look at. As a matter of fact, in the State of Virginia, there's over 40 plans to look at—40 different options for a senior to choose from. I thought that was very important to have available for