

Remarks at a State Dinner Honoring Prime Minister John Howard of Australia

May 16, 2006

Mr. Prime Minister, Mrs. Howard, distinguished guests: Welcome to the White House. This is going to be a joyous occasion because we're honoring two really good friends. We wish you a warm welcome. We thank the Howards for making a long journey, and thanks for spending so much time with us here in the States.

Our partnership is broad, and it's deep. Australia and America are working together to expand trade and to counter threats of nuclear proliferation, to make the latest energy technologies available to all nations. In the global war on terror, we have no better ally than Australia and John Howard. And in the spread of freedom to create lasting peace, we have no better friend than Australia and John Howard.

Mr. Prime Minister, we value your courage and your faithfulness and your strength, and I value your friendship. Laura and I have cherished every visit with you and Janette. We really appreciated the chance to plant those trees yesterday at the Australian Embassy. *[Laughter]* We wanted to bring a Texas tree up, but they don't grow too well here in Washington. *[Laughter]* But

I know those trees are going to grow strong and sturdy, just like our friendship has grown strong and sturdy.

I was thinking about how to really describe John Howard and his leadership in Australia, and I thought I would remind everybody what Ronald Reagan used to say: it was "morning in America." And Mr. Prime Minister, that's still true for our country. We're really an optimistic people, and we firmly believe the best days are ahead for our country. I know you feel the same way about Australia. It's also comforting to know that on the other side of the world, it's already morning in Australia. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Prime Minister, Laura and I offer a toast to you and Janette, to our allies, and to the great people of Australia.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:07 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Janette Howard, wife of Prime Minister Howard. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Howard.

Remarks Honoring the United States Winter Olympic and Paralympic Teams

May 17, 2006

Thank you all very much. Please be seated. Laura and I are so honored to welcome the 2006 winter Olympic and Paralympic teams to the White House. It is such a joy to have you all here, and congratulations for being champs.

I appreciate the Members of the Congress who are here: Senator Thomas and Congressmen Shays, Buyer, Hastings, and

Ryun. Thank you all for coming. Thanks for honoring these great Olympians—Congressman Ted Poe from Texas as well.

I want to thank all the athletes who've taken time to come. We really appreciate your giving us a chance to pay respects to your athleticism and your character. I want to thank the coaches and the team

leaders and the U.S. Olympic staff. I particularly want to thank the members of the Texas A&M Singing Cadets for joining us today. Thanks for coming to provide the—[*applause*].

I wish I could have been at the games there in Turin, but fortunately we do have TVs here in the White House. [*Laughter*] It was such a thrill to watch you all compete. Laura represented our country and really enjoyed getting to know you all. She came back and talked about the kindness and the integrity of our athletes. I appreciate the fact that you treated her with such respect. More importantly, I appreciate the fact that you represented our country with such nobility and dignity.

I thank you for the example you set. I don't know if you know this or not, but there's all kinds of people watching our Olympic and Paralympic athletes, wondering whether or not it's possible for them to be able to achieve the same level of accomplishments that you all achieved. The fact that you compete hard and train hard and set high goals and succeed is a really important part of encouraging others to follow in your footsteps. Being a champ means that you've got enormous responsibilities, and I thank you for upholding those responsibilities with the class that you've showed as athletes in Turin.

Thanks for creating so many lasting memories for the American people. We love our athletes. We follow your successes. We love it when the "Star Spangled Banner" is played. We also understand that not everybody is going to win the gold, but we appreciate so much the fact that you competed so hard and in such a way that brought honor to our country.

The memories are such that we remember the—America's first medal in ice dancing in 30 years with Tanith and Ben. Congratulations to you both. We appreciate the courage of Lindsey Kildow, who overcame a terrible crash in the training run and then decided to continue to compete. That kind

of courage stirs our hearts. It's such a great example for people.

We appreciate Joey Cheek, who won the gold and then turned around and donated \$40,000 to help the refugee children of Sudan. What a wonderful example for all of us here in America to know that with our personal victories comes the responsibility of helping those who suffer and those who need help.

We're honored that "the Flying Tomato" represented our country. And we want to thank all the dudes and dudesses of the snowboarders who are here. [*Laughter*]

America's Paralympians overcame incredible odds to earn 12 medals for our Nation. Laurie Stephens was born with spina bifida; she won two golds and the silver medal in Alpine skiing. What a strong example for people to look at Laurie and realize that "I can achieve dreams too."

Steve Cook, he lost part of his right leg in a tractor accident, but that didn't stop him. He's gone on to earn seven medals in cross-country skiing, including two golds and a bronze in this year's Paralympics. Steve, I appreciate your courage, and I appreciate the example you have shown for others.

Lonnie Hannah is with us; she had breast [he had skin]* cancer last year and came back to help the U.S. sled hockey team win the bronze in a really thrilling game against Germany.

All of our successes in the Olympics and Paralympics required unbelievable skill and determination, and they also required the support of a lot of people in your lives. The honors you've won are a tribute to, of course, your coaches and trainers but also to your parents and to your brothers and sisters and your friends and supporters who continue to cheer you. I know all of you join me in thanking those who supported you.

At the games, you showed the best values of our country. You were humble in

* White House correction.

victory and gracious in defeat. You made us proud. And so here on the White House South Lawn, I want to thank you for being such great ambassadors to our country. Welcome, and may God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:16 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Tanith Belbin and Benjamin Agosto, ice dancers, Lindsey Kildow, Alpine skier, Joey Cheek, speed skater, and Shaun “the Flying Tomato” White, snowboarder, U.S. Olympic Team.

Remarks on Signing the Tax Increase Prevention and Reconciliation Act of 2005

May 17, 2006

Thank you all. Please be seated. Good afternoon, and welcome to the White House. It's nice to see so many Members of Congress at this end of Pennsylvania Avenue. *[Laughter]* And you've come for a really good reason. This is a good day for American workers and families and businesses. You have passed a bill that will keep our taxes low and keep our economy growing. And I'm really pleased to be able to sign this vital piece of legislation. Thank you for your leadership.

I'm glad you're here, and so is the Vice President. I'm proud to be up here with Vice President Cheney. I couldn't have picked a better person to be the Vice President of the United States. I appreciate Secretary John Snow for his leadership on this issue. Mr. Secretary, you have made a difference. I'm proud of your leadership. Thank you.

I want to thank the Speaker of the House, Denny Hastert. Mr. Speaker, welcome back to the White House. Thank you for your leadership. And I want to thank Senator Bill Frist, the Senate majority leader. Both these men have shown fine leadership capabilities on an important issue for the American people.

I want to thank Mitch McConnell, Jon Kyl, Kay Bailey Hutchison from the United States Senate. I want to thank John Boehner, Deborah Pryce, Eric Cantor. I particularly want to pay my respects to the

chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee; Chuck Grassley and Bill Thomas are incredibly able legislators. They've done a fantastic job on behalf of the American people, and our Nation owes them a debt of gratitude. I appreciate all the Members being here today.

This economy of ours is hitting full stride. In the first quarter of this year, our economy grew at an annual rate of 4.8 percent. This follows a vigorous 2005, when the American economy grew at 3.5 percent. The past 2½ years, we've added more than 5.2 million new jobs. Productivity over the last 5 years has grown at the fastest rate in decades. Higher productivity leads to higher wages for the American workers. Hourly compensation grew at an annual rate of 5.7 percent in the first quarter of this year. American workers are taking home bigger paychecks, and their standard of living is on the rise. The American economy is powerful, productive, and prosperous, and we're going to keep it that way.

Economic growth begins with the hard work of the American people and good policies in Washington, DC. Over the past few years, our economy has faced a lot of challenges. We've been through a recession, a stock market decline, corporate scandals, an attack on our country, high energy prices, and major natural disasters.