

and I pray that this holiday season will be a time of happiness in every home and a time of peace throughout the world.

Happy Hanukkah.

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

## The President's Radio Address *December 16, 2006*

Good morning. Christmas is fast approaching, and I know many of you are busy trying to finish up your holiday shopping. This week, we received good news about the economy that should brighten the season and keep us optimistic about the year ahead.

First, the Commerce Department released figures showing that sales for America's retailers were up in November and that the increase is much larger than expected. These figures are important because for many American businesses November and December are their highest sales months for the year. So the healthy increase in retail sales is a good sign for American employers and workers.

America's working families also received another bit of holiday cheer this week: We learned that real hourly wages rose by 2.3 percent over the past year. That may not sound like a lot, but for the typical family of four with both parents working, it means an extra \$1,350 for this year. At the same time, our growing economy continues to create jobs and that has brought unemployment down to just 4.5 percent. These numbers give all Americans a reason to celebrate. More people are working than ever before, and paychecks are going further than they used to.

When you decide how to spend your paycheck, you have to set priorities and live within your means. Congress needs to do the same thing with the money you send to Washington. That was one of the clear messages American voters sent in the midterm elections. And one of the best

ways we can impose more discipline on Federal spending is by addressing the problem of earmarks.

Earmarks are spending provisions that are often slipped into bills at the last minute, so they never get debated or discussed. It is not surprising that this often leads to unnecessary Federal spending, such as a swimming pool or a teapot museum tucked into a big spending bill. And over the last decade, the Congressional Research Service reports that the number of earmarks has exploded, increasing from about 3,000 in 1996 to 13,000 in 2006. I respect Congress's authority over the public purse, but the time has come to reform the earmark process and dramatically reduce the number of earmarks.

Reforming earmarks is the responsibility of both political parties. Over the past year, the Republican Congress succeeded in eliminating virtually all earmarks for three major Cabinet Departments. And I'm pleased that Democratic leaders in Congress recently committed themselves to support reforms that would restore transparency and accountability to earmarks. For this year's budget, they pledged to maintain current levels of spending and not include any earmarks, and they agreed to a temporary moratorium on earmarks. This is a good start, but Congress needs to do much more. My administration will soon lay out a series of reforms that will help make earmarks more transparent, that will hold the Members who propose earmarks more accountable, and that will help reduce the

number of earmarks inserted into large spending bills.

Republicans and Democrats alike have an opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to spending restraint and good government by making earmark reform a top priority for the next Congress. When it comes to spending your money, you expect us to rise above party labels. By working together to cut down on earmarks, we can show the American people that we can be fiscally responsible with their money and

that we can come together in Washington to get results.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:40 a.m. on December 15 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 16. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 15 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

## Message on the Observance of Kwanzaa 2006 *December 8, 2006*

I send greetings to those observing Kwanzaa.

During the seven days of Kwanzaa leading up to the New Year, friends and family come together in a spirit of love and joy to honor their rich African heritage, reflect on the Seven Principles, and give thanks for the blessings of freedom and opportunity. Forty years after the first Kwanzaa, this hopeful occasion remains an opportunity to build the bonds of family, community, and culture and move ever closer to the founding promise of liberty and justice for all.

Our Nation is a better place because of the contributions African Americans have

made to our strength and character over the generations. As you gather to celebrate your ancestry this Kwanzaa, I encourage you to take pride in your many achievements and look to the future with confidence in your abilities and faith in a brighter tomorrow.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a joyous Kwanzaa and a blessed New Year.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 18. An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

## Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Deployments of United States Combat-Equipped Armed Forces Around the World *December 15, 2006*

*Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)*

I am providing this supplemental consolidated report, prepared by my Administration and consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93-148), as part of my efforts to keep the Congress informed

about deployments of U.S. combat-equipped armed forces around the world. This supplemental report covers operations in support of the war on terror, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.