

mind that the school system that you're going to rebuild is going to be a great school system, because you've given it such a great start. Charter schools work. It makes a lot of sense.

And so I've come to Green to say, thanks to the citizens of New Orleans who pay attention to the quality of education; thanks to the parents of this school who set an example by being involved; and thanks to the leadership. Doc, you're running a good show here. I'm proud of your job.

Thanks for letting me come by. I'm honored to be back down here. I'm reminded of the New Orleans Saints football team that—[applause]—here's a team that a lot of people didn't give much hope for—did they?—when the season started. And it rose; it became a national story. It was a

factor in the championship. The same thing is going to happen to the city. You got work to do. You got work to do. I'm going to keep coming down so long as I'm the President. And then after I'm the President, I'm going to slide in incognito. [Laughter]

God bless you all. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:44 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Anthony Recasner, principal, Samuel J. Green Charter School; Gaylen David Picard, wife of former Louisiana State Superintendent of Education Cecil J. Picard; Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA; Lt. Gov. Mitchell J. Landrieu of Louisiana; and Andrea Green-Jefferson, wife of Rep. William J. Jefferson.

Statement on the Death of Mario Chanes de Armas *March 1, 2007*

Cuban patriot Mario Chanes de Armas was a political prisoner of the Castro regime for 30 years, one of the longest sentences of any political prisoner in the world. Like so many Cubans, he sought a democratic Cuban society only to see his quest betrayed by a Castro dictatorship. Mario Chanes was one of the original *plantados*, Cuban political prisoners who

were unyielding in their fervent desire for a free Cuba. His patriotism and strong sense of purpose are examples to all freedom-loving people. Laura joins me in sending our thoughts and prayers to his family and friends.

NOTE: The statement referred to President Fidel Castro Ruz of Cuba.

Remarks on Departure for New Albany, Indiana *March 2, 2007*

March 1 Tornadoes in Alabama and Georgia

Yesterday afternoon I spoke to Governor Riley of Alabama. This morning I spoke to Governor Perdue of Georgia, expressing my personal condolences as well as the condolences of the Nation for those who

lost their lives in the recent tragedies in those two States.

Tomorrow I'm going down to Georgia and Alabama. I go down with a heavy heart. I go down knowing full well that I'll be seeing people whose lives were turned upside down by the tornadoes. I'll do my very best to comfort them. I ask

our Nation, for those who are prayerful, to give a prayer for the victims of the storms, and ask for the blessings that can come upon people and the comfort nec-

essary to deal with the recent tragedy. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:01 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks at Silver Street Elementary School in New Albany, Indiana March 2, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated. A little bossy today, aren't I? Yes. *[Laughter]* Thrilled to be here in New Albany. Thanks for coming out to say hello. I want to talk about schools and the Federal role in schools relative to local governments—is what we're here to talk about.

I'm glad to be here in the home of the Stars, the Silver Street Stars. I brought a lot of cameras and limousines—*[laughter]*—kind of fits in with the theme, doesn't it—Silver Street Stars. I understand the school is 90 years old. You've seen a lot of decent people come here to teach, I'll bet you—a lot of people who said, "I want to put my community first," and became teachers and principals and caring citizens of the State. And so I'm real proud to be with you.

I'm here because I think it's important for a President to herald success and to talk about what's possible, particularly when it comes to schools. My only regret is that my wife hasn't joined me today. She's by far the best deal in our family, just like in Mitch's family, I want you to know. I know the Danielses well, and I can certify that the person from New Albany is, by far, the best part of his family too. *[Laughter]*

I'm real proud of Mitch. I know him; he worked in my administration. I hauled him out of the private sector when I first got sworn in. I said, "Would you come and work for the country?" And he did. He was the watchdog for the people's money; it's what's called the OMB. And

he did a fine job there, really, and I miss him a lot. I love his sense of humor. I knew he'd make a fine Governor. He asked me about Governor. I said, "Listen, it's the greatest job in America—next to President." But it's a great—*[laughter]*. And he's an innovative, smart, capable, honest guy, and I'm proud to be with him.

I know he cares a lot about schools too. And so when I talk about education, I can talk confidently about the schools here in Indiana, because you've got a Governor who will prioritize education. I used to say to people, "Public education is to a State what national defense is to the Federal Government." It ought to be the number-one priority, and I know Mitch is making it that way.

I want to thank Tony Duffy. Duffy has done a fine job of dealing with an impossibly large entourage. *[Laughter]* I really appreciate your spirit. It turns out that if you were to correlate education in a school with educational entrepreneurship at the principal level, the two go hand in hand. In other words, you have to have a good principal in order to be able to challenge failure when you find it, mediocrity when you see it, and praise excellence when it's evident. And you've got a good principal here, and I can't thank you enough, Tony.

I want to thank all the teachers, as well, who teach here. Teaching is a hard job. It's a really hard job, and it's never really appreciated enough in some circles. And I just want the teachers to understand full well that I know the community here