

And I assured the members of this committee that I will support their work and will address the problems that they find. We owe it to those who wear the uniform and their families to make sure that our troops have the best, and that's what this Commission is meant to do. And I thank you for your willingness to serve. You're doing the country a great service, because the Commission report will ensure that service goes beyond my time in office. In other words, it'll really set the stage for this Presidency and other Presidencies,

set a standard that we expect Government to follow.

So thanks for being here; appreciate your time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:10 a.m. in Room 180 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to former Sen. Robert J. Dole and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala, Cochairs, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors.

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Shamrock Presentation Ceremony With Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland *March 16, 2007*

Thank you. *Taoiseach*, good morning, or, should I say, "Top o' the morning." [Laughter] I'm really pleased that you came back to the White House. I'm looking forward to our discussions. And I cannot thank you enough for your strong leadership in resolving the issues of Northern Ireland, and I stand ready to help.

I gratefully accept the bowl of shamrocks. I am delighted that you have joined us, once again, to celebrate Saint Patrick's Day. Saint Patrick's Day is an occasion that unites two distinct groups of Americans: those who are of Irish descent and those who wish they were. [Laughter] Whether they're Irish today or every day, Americans are grateful for our country's Irish heritage and the enduring friendship that exists between Ireland and the United States is strong.

The ties that bind our two nations stretch all the way back to our country's founding. Ireland gave us at least nine signers of the Declaration of Independence and many more who risked their lives to defend it. Irish Americans fought valiantly to preserve the Union in our Civil War. They helped turn back the totalitarian ideologies of the

20th century. And they're fighting bravely in today's war on terror, risking their lives to secure a future of freedom and peace for generations to come.

Many of Ireland's sons and daughters came to our shores to escape poverty and famine. Once here, they helped us build and strengthen this great Nation with their gifts of industry and talent and faith. Irish workers built our railroads, our cathedrals, and our cities. Irish writers and musicians have enriched our literature and our culture. Irish priests and nuns established parochial schools that have helped generations of children build lives of prosperity and purpose. And with their many contributions, Irish Americans remind us of our heritage as a nation of immigrants and our duty to remain a welcoming society.

In 1783, President George Washington—I refer to him as the first George W.—[laughter]—wrote to recent Irish immigrants in New York that "America is open to receive the oppressed and persecuted of all nations," and he expressed his wish that the blessings of equal liberty and unrestrained commerce would one day prevail in Ireland.

Well, today, Ireland is a free, independent, and very prosperous nation. Ireland now has one of the fastest growing economies in Europe. And over the past decade, our two nations have enjoyed a strong and growing trade relationship. And as Ireland prospers, a land whose people came to America seeking a better life is now attracting to its own shores immigrants with those very same dreams.

It has been said that the Irish, like the presence of God, are to be found everywhere. On this Saint Patrick's Day, we're grateful for the presence of the Irish in our country. And we are blessed by your

presence here at the White House, *Taoiseach*. I thank you for coming to help us celebrate Saint Patrick's Day and honor the friendship between our two nations. In the words of the Irish proverb: "May the Lord keep you in His hand and never close His fist too tight." [Laughter]

Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:55 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Ahern.

The President's Radio Address *March 17, 2007*

Good morning. In times of war, Congress has no greater obligation than funding our war fighters. And next week, the House will begin debate on an emergency war spending bill.

The purpose of this legislation should be to give our troops on the frontlines the resources, funds, and equipment they need to fight our enemies. Unfortunately, some in Congress are using this bill as an opportunity to micromanage our military commanders, force a precipitous withdrawal from Iraq, and spend billions on domestic projects that have nothing to do with the war on terror.

Our troops urgently need Congress to approve emergency war funds. Over the past several weeks, our Nation has begun pursuing a new strategy in Iraq. Under the leadership of General David Petraeus, our troops have launched a difficult and dangerous mission to help Iraqis secure their capital. This plan is still in its early stages, yet we're already seeing signs of progress. Iraqi and American troops have rounded up more than 700 people affiliated with Shi'a extremists. They've also launched ag-

gressive operations against Sunni extremists, and they've uncovered large caches of weapons that could have been used to kill our troops.

These are hopeful signs. As these operations unfold, they will help the Iraqi Government stabilize the country, rebuild the economy, and advance the work of political reconciliation. Yet the bill Congress is considering would undermine General Petraeus and the troops under his command just as these critical security operations are getting underway.

First, the bill would impose arbitrary and restrictive conditions on the use of war funds and require the withdrawal of forces by the end of this year if these conditions are not met. These restrictions would handcuff our generals in the field by denying them the flexibility they need to adjust their operations to the changing situation on the ground. And these restrictions would substitute the mandates of Congress for the considered judgment of our military commanders.

Even if every condition required by this bill was met, all American forces, except