

across all income categories. And the largest percentage income gains occurred for people in the bottom 20 percent of incomes.

The data also shows that poverty levels improved significantly, with nearly half a million fewer people living below the poverty line in 2006 than in 2005. Moreover, the poverty rate in 2006 was lower than all but one year in the 1980s and 1990s.

The Census data also shows that challenges remain in reducing the number of uninsured Americans. Containing costs and making health insurance more affordable is the best way to reverse this long-term trend. I have put forth a reform proposal that would fairly distribute the tax advantages to purchasing health insurance, en-

couraging more workers to purchase their own health insurance.

What American workers do not need right now are tax increases to fuel excess spending by the Congress. I encourage Democratic leaders in Congress to resist their urge to increase taxes on Americans and to live within the budget limits I've proposed. It's vital that we do not undermine an economy that has created more than 8.2 million new jobs over the past 4 years and is improving standards of living for so many American families.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

Remarks Following a Dinner With Elected Officials and Community Leaders in New Orleans, Louisiana August 28, 2007

The President. Ms. Chase, thank you for having us here. Laura and I are thrilled to be here with the Governor and the mayor and the Senator, the Congressman, members of my Cabinet, distinguished leaders in this community, and quiet heroes who have helped bring optimism and hope to New Orleans.

We've got social entrepreneurs in our midst, artists in our midst, all of whom have dedicated their lives to the renewal of New Orleans. And we're so honored to be in this restaurant. I know you would want me to say that the food here is about as good as any place here in New Orleans. [Laughter] And I will say it. [Laughter]

Reverend Fred Luter, Jr. It is that good.

The President. It is good. And we're so honored that you gave us a chance to come to the renovated restaurant. I know you're opening in a couple of weeks.

Leah Chase. In a couple of weeks, yes.

The President. Well, we're thrilled that you would allow us to come and taste your beautiful food in this spectacular room. We love your art, but more importantly, we love your spirit.

Mrs. Chase. Thank you.

The President. You're one of the leaders here in this community.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:55 p.m. at Dooky Chase's Restaurant. In his remarks, he referred to Leah Chase, owner, Dooky Chase's Restaurant; Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, Sen. Mary L. Landrieu, and Rep. William J. Jefferson of Louisiana; Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA; and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Alphonso R. Jackson. Also participating in the dinner were Donald E. Powell, Federal Coordinator, Office of Gulf Coast Rebuilding; Raymond S. "Coach" Blanco, husband of Gov. Blanco; Tommy Andrade, owner, Blanca, LLC; John Besh, executive

chef, Restaurant August and Besh Steakhouse at Harrah's Casino; Dr. Dale Betterton, comanager, Operation Blessing Medical Clinic; Julia Bland, executive director, Louisiana Children's Museum; Drew Brees, quarterback, New Orleans Saints; Joseph C. Canizaro, chairman and chief executive officer, Columbus Properties; Daryn Dodson, IDEAcorns fellow, Idea Village; Norman C. Francis, chairman, and Kim M. Boyle, member, Louisiana Recovery Authority; Lt. Gen. Russel L. Honore, USA, com-

manding general, First United States Army; Jared Kahan, volunteer, AmeriCorps; Jay Lapeyre, chairman, Business Council of New Orleans; Agustin "Augie" Lopez, owner, Smilie's Restaurant; Rev. Fred Luter, Jr., pastor, Franklin Street Baptist Church, New Orleans, LA; musician Irvin Mayfield; Father Nguyen The Vien, pastor, Mary Queen of Vietnam Church, New Orleans, LA; and Becky Zaheri, president and founder, Katrina Krewe.

Remarks on Hurricane Katrina Recovery Efforts in New Orleans August 29, 2007

The President. Madam Principal, thank you for having us.

Principal Doris Hicks. You're quite welcome. It's our pleasure.

The President. Laura and I are honored to be here. During the moment of reflection, it is a time to ask for the Almighty's blessings on those who suffered, those who lost a loved one, and remember that there's always a more blessed day in the future. And that's what we're here to celebrate, a more blessed day. And there's no better place to do so than in a place of hope, and that's a school. And so we're honored that you would welcome us.

Mrs. Hicks. Thank you.

The President. We love being with your teachers and your students. Thanks for being here.

Governor, thanks for coming. Governor Kathleen Blanco is an educational reformer. She has done what leaders are supposed to do, and when she sees a problem, address them head on and pass law and budget necessary to achieve educational excellence. And you've done so, Governor. I congratulate you for your leadership.

I'm proud to be with the Congressman. Jeff, thanks for coming. You care deeply

about the students of this district, and we're glad you're here.

I do want to thank Don Powell for joining us. Don is the recovery man who represents the White House and the administration here in Washington—from—in Louisiana from Washington. And I thank you for your service.

I appreciate the State education superintendent, Pastorek. Superintendent, thanks for coming. He's got a vision of excellence for the schools in New Orleans and for Louisiana. He shared that vision with us earlier.

I appreciate Paul Vallas, superintendent here in New Orleans, for his willingness to take on this challenge. He doesn't view it as a problem; he views it as an opportunity. I first met Paul in Chicago, where he was an advocate then like he is today of high expectations and strong accountability to make sure every child learns.

I appreciate Hilda Young; Sister Finnerty, she's the superintendent of the Catholic school system here. I thank all the teachers, students, and parents who've joined us.

Hurricane Katrina broke through the levees; it broke a lot of hearts; it destroyed buildings. But it didn't affect the spirit of