

Remarks Following Discussions With Parliament Member Sa'ad al-Din al-Hariri of Lebanon

October 4, 2007

President Bush. It is my honor to welcome the honorable Sa'ad Hariri here to the Oval Office. Sa'ad is the majority leader in the Lebanese Parliament.

I told this courageous leader that the United States strongly supports the success of democracy in Lebanon, that we respect your country, and that we understand the obstacles that you face. First, I was very impressed by the response of the Government and Prime Minister Siniora in dealing with the extremists and radicals, impressed by his willingness to have the Lebanese forces work for security in Lebanon, and so impressed that I asked Admiral Fallon to go to Lebanon to assess how we can further help the Government and the forces protect themselves from radical elements who are willing to use violence and terror to achieve objectives.

We talked about the upcoming Presidential election, and I am deeply concerned about foreign interference in your elections. It is—the message has been sent to nations, such as Syria, that they should not interfere in the election of the President. The international community has spoken, and we expect Syria to honor those—that demand.

Sa'ad Hariri suffered incredible tragedy when his good father was assassinated, killed in Lebanon. And as a result of that coldblooded murder, the international community has demanded accountability. At that tribunal, it's taking too long to get started. The international community must work more quickly to stand up this tribunal so people will be held to account. And not only that, this tribunal will send a clear message that there will be justice delivered for not only the murder of your dad but for the murder of others that have taken place on the streets of Beirut.

You know, I admire your courage. This is a tough time.

Mr. Hariri. Thank you.

President Bush. And I appreciate the fact that you care enough about the people of Lebanon that you're willing to work hard for peace and democracy and freedom. And I reiterate what I told you, is that the United States is more than just an admirer; we want to help you as best as we possibly can.

So I welcome you here to the Oval Office.

Mr. Hariri. Thank you. I thank you, Mr. President, for the political and all the support that you have given Lebanon, from the international tribunal, from helping the security forces also in fighting those terrorists in Lebanon. Also, we in Lebanon have a very important constitutional Presidential election that we don't want any foreign interference in this Presidential election.

We've had Members of our Parliament being killed. We ask—I ask Mr. President that this action is taken by terrorists that want to finish our democracy. We will stay resolved; we will stay focused on our democracy. We will not let those who want to destroy our democracy succeed. We have paid very dear blood, from my father to Mr. Antoine Ghanem lately; we're willing to pay the price to preserve our democracy. And we shall preserve our democracy with our country.

Thank you, Mr. President.

President Bush. Welcome. Glad you're here. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:01 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon; Adm. William J. "Fox" Fallon, commander, U.S. Central Command; and former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri of Lebanon, who was assassinated on February 14, 2005. Mr. Hariri referred to Parliament

Member Antoine Ghanem of Lebanon, who was assassinated on September 19.

Statement on Senator Pete V. Domenici's Decision Not To Seek Reelection

October 4, 2007

For over three decades, the citizens of New Mexico have turned to Pete Domenici for leadership on issues that matter to their families, their communities, and their country. He earned the respect and trust of his constituents, which is why they elected him to serve in the United States Senate longer than any other New Mexican in history.

A proud son of Italian immigrants, Pete has devoted much of his life to serving the State and the country that he loves. In Washington, he has won the respect of his peers as a skilled and determined legislator. He championed clean nuclear power and helped secure the passage of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the first national energy plan in more than a decade. As

chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, he was a leader in efforts to lower taxes, balance the budget, and reduce Washington spending. And he has been a tireless advocate for our men and women in uniform. Senator Domenici has helped improve the lives of millions of Americans and made our country safer.

Pete is a man of intellect and compassion. I have valued his counsel and friendship, and I look forward to working with him as he serves out the remainder of his term.

Laura and I are grateful for Pete's service to our Nation. As he nears retirement, we pray for his health and well-being, and we send Pete, his wife, Nancy, and their family our best wishes.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Legislation

October 4, 2007

In August, I proposed a comprehensive plan to help homeowners avoid foreclosures and stay in their homes. As part of this plan, I pledged to work with Congress in a bipartisan way to temporarily reform a provision of the Federal Tax Code to make it easier for homeowners to refinance their mortgages during this time of market stress.

Today a bipartisan majority of the House of Representatives passed legislation to help people stay in their homes and move this process forward. I applaud the House's efforts. I urge the Senate to swiftly consider this legislation and make it temporary.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 3648.