

for Americans worried about their mortgages and their homes. There's no perfect solution, but the homeowners deserve our help. And the steps I've outlined today are a sensible response to a serious challenge. I call on Congress to move forward quickly and join with me in delivering relief to

homeowners in need so we can keep our economy healthy and the American Dream alive.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:23 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree December 6, 2007

Mr. Secretary, thank you for that kind introduction, and thank you all for joining us. Laura and I are pleased to welcome you on this joyous occasion. As the Secretary said, in a few moments, we will light the National Christmas Tree. And as he also said, this is a tradition that dates back to President Calvin Coolidge.

There's one person with us today who remembers that first annual Christmas tree lighting, and, Santa, we are glad you're here. *[Laughter]* We know this is a busy time of year for you, and we're thrilled you're here. And we really appreciate you bringing Mrs. Claus. Both you and I married well. *[Laughter]*

I appreciate the members of my Cabinet for joining us, Members of the Congress. I want to thank Vin Cipolla, Mary Bomar. I particularly want to thank the men and women who work for the National Park Service.

Pastor, thank you for your blessing. I believe these entertainers didn't disappoint anyone. We're proud you're here, and thank you for your beautiful music.

Christmas is a time of rejoicing and reflection. Each year at this time, we rejoice in the proclamation of good news, that in Bethlehem of Judea, a Savior was born. And we rejoice in the Christmas promise of peace to men of good will. We also reflect on the mystery of Christmas, the story of the Almighty, who entered history in the most vulnerable form possible, hid-

den in the weakness of a newborn child. And we reflect on the call of our Creator, who by taking this form, reminds us of our duty to protect and care for the weak and the vulnerable among us.

During this Christmas season, millions of Americans will answer this call by reaching out a compassionate hand to help brothers and sisters in need. We are thankful for these good souls who show the good heart of our Nation. We're also thankful for the thousands of Americans who answer the call by serving our Nation in uniform. Many will spend this Christmas stationed in distant and dangerous lands, far from homes and from the families they love. They are never far from our thoughts, and they're always in our prayers. America honors their sacrifice and that of their families, who also serve our Nation. We're grateful for all they do to ensure that we live in the freedom our Creator intended for every man, woman, and child on the face of this Earth.

And now, as an expression of our hope for peace in this Christmas season, we're going to light the National Christmas Tree. And we have asked two young Americans to join us. Brianna Kinder helps others through her participation in the Montgomery County Police Activities League's Kids Care Club. And Damarcus Hawkins gives his time as part of the Discovery Creek Children's Museum service learning program.

And now if Brianna and Damarcus will join Laura, and if you will join me in a countdown: five, four, three, two, one.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. on the Ellipse at the White House. In his re-

marks, he referred to Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne, who introduced the President; Vin Cipolla, president and chief executive officer, National Park Foundation; and Rev. Roger P. Freeman, senior pastor, First Baptist Church, Clarksville, TN.

Remarks Following a Meeting With First Minister Ian Paisley and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness of Northern Ireland *December 7, 2007*

President Bush. One of the great experiences for me during my Presidency is to witness historic occasions, and I'm witnessing such an occasion with the arrival of Reverend Paisley and Mr. Martin McGuinness here to the White House. These two men are—have dedicated themselves to embettering their—Northern Ireland through their courage and conviction and desire to put aside the past and focus on a hopeful future.

And so I want to welcome you all here. I congratulate you for seizing the moment and writing a hopeful chapter. I'm looking forward to hearing about how the United States can help Northern Ireland move forward. I know one way we can help, and that is to encourage our business leaders to take a good look at the economic opportunities that Northern Ireland presents.

And so I welcome you here. I'm proud of your accomplishments. And I welcome you all to say a few comments to the TV, if you care to do so.

First Minister Paisley. Well, Mr. President, our first words on that—[*inaudible*]. We want to say from the people of Northern Ireland, "Thank you." Thank you to the American people for all they have done for us in the past. We did a lot for you in the past too.

But what I can say is we deeply appreciate that. And we also deeply appreciate the fact that we're here today, and that you have met us and have tried to encour-

age us on this. We have had our political squabbles and fights. I think we have come to the end of that. I think that peace has come; there will be a fight for peace. You don't win peace; you have to fight to keep it.

President Bush. Yes, sir.

First Minister Paisley. And we intend to that, and we're dedicated to that.

But we do need help in the economic field. And that—we're glad that the door has opened. We have had a very good reception in your country so far, and of course—[*inaudible*]. And when we look back and see this mighty army that's following hard in your tracks, we know that this is your final. And we say, thank you, and we look forward to good dealings between our little country and yours in the coming days.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.
Martin.

Deputy First Minister McGuinness. Yes. Can I too reiterate the comments of the First Minister in expressing our deepest thanks and appreciation to you and your administration for the tremendous help that we have received throughout the course of the process; follows on from the tradition of President Clinton and his administration.

So we're hugely appreciative of both of you for all of the tremendous support that we have received. Up until the 26th of March this year, Ian Paisley and I never