

the Government bringing together members of the private sector to voluntarily address a national challenge, without taxpayer subsidies or Government mandates. This group has agreed on a set of industry-wide standards to help struggling homeowners by refinancing an existing loan into a new private mortgage or by moving them into an FHA Secure loan or by freezing their current interest rates for 5 years.

Lenders are already refinancing and modifying mortgages on a case-by-case basis. By taking a systemic approach, HOPE NOW will be able to help large groups of homeowners all at once. HOPE NOW estimates that up to 1.2 million homeowners could be eligible for assistance. And HOPE NOW has set up a counseling hotline that Americans can call 24 hours a day. I urge homeowners who are worried about rising mortgage payments to call 1-888-995-H-O-P-E to get help.

Third, the Federal Government is working to reduce the likelihood of similar problems in the future. Regulators are taking action to make the mortgage industry more transparent, reliable, and fair. Our goal is to ensure that homeowners receive complete, accurate, and understandable information about their mortgages.

These measures will help many struggling homeowners, and Congress has the potential to help even more. Yet in the 3 months since I made my proposals, Congress has not sent me a single bill to help homeowners. If Members are serious about responding to the challenges in the housing

market, they can start by taking several important steps.

Congress needs to pass legislation to modernize the FHA. This bill could allow the FHA to help 250,000 families by the end of 2008. Congress needs to temporarily reform the Tax Code to help homeowners refinance during this time of housing market stress. And Congress needs to pass funding to support mortgage counseling. With this funding, we could help more homeowners choose the mortgage that is right for them.

As well, Congress needs to pass legislation to reform Government-sponsored enterprises like Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae. By strengthening the independent regulation of these institutions, we can ensure they focus on their mission to expand homeownership in a fiscally responsible way.

These commonsense measures have been before Congress for months. Congress needs to pass these measures quickly and send them to my desk so we can help homeowners in need and protect the American Dream for all our citizens.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:30 a.m. on December 7 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 8. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 7. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Jewish Community Leaders *December 10, 2007*

I've just had an extraordinary meeting with Jewish men and women, many of whom are from different parts of the world, who are fortunate to call America home. And they do so because of our great tradi-

tion of religious freedom and religious tolerance.

We discussed how America must remain engaged in helping people realize the great blessings of religious freedom and where

we find societies in which religious freedom is not allowed to practice, that we must do something about it.

I recognize today is International Human Rights Day. And a good way to celebrate this day is to invited people from our country and from around the world to share with me their stories, stories of courage, stories of people who simply want to be in a society where people are allowed to worship freely.

We discussed the world in which we live today. We all recognize that we're in an ideological struggle against people who murder the innocent in order to achieve political objectives, and that on the one

hand, America must do everything to protect ourselves and are doing so. In the long term, the best way to defeat an ideology of hate is with an ideology of hope. And an ideology of hope is one that says, we value your religion, we honor the way you worship. And in our society, you can worship any way you so choose, and that's the vision and dream for societies around the world.

So I want to thank you for sharing your stories with me. I thank you for your courage. May God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks on Lighting the Hanukkah Menorah *December 10, 2007*

Thank you. Good evening. Laura and I welcome you to the White House. Mr. Attorney General, thank you for being here; Secretary Chertoff and family. Hanukkah is a time of joy and festivity in the Jewish religion. We're honored to gather with members of the Jewish community to celebrate this holiday.

During Hanukkah, we remember an ancient struggle for freedom. More than 2,000 years ago, a cruel tyrant ruled Judea and forbade the Israelites from practicing their religion. A band of brothers came together to fight this oppression, and against incredible odds, they liberated the capital city of Jerusalem. As they set about rededicating the Holy Temple, they witnessed a great miracle: That purified oil that was supposed to last for 1 day burned for 8.

Jewish families commemorate this miracle by lighting the menorah for the 8 nights of Hanukkah. The Talmud instructs families to place the menorah in public view so the entire world can see its light. The flames remind us that light triumphs over darkness, faith conquers despair, and

the desire for freedom burns inside every man, woman, and child.

As we light the Hanukkah candles this year, we pray for those who still live under the shadow of tyranny. This afternoon I met with a group of Jewish immigrants to mark International Human Rights Day. Many of these men and women fled from religious oppression in countries like Iran and Syria and the Soviet Union. They came to America because our Nation is a beacon of freedom. And they see a day of hope on the horizon when people all across the world will worship in freedom. The forces of intolerance can suppress the menorah, but they can never extinguish its light.

The menorah we light tonight has special meaning. It once belonged to Chayim Pearl, who was the great-grandfather of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl. While reporting in Pakistan in 2002, Daniel was kidnaped and murdered by terrorists. His only crime was being a Jewish American, something Daniel Pearl would never deny. In his final moments, Daniel told his captors about a street in Israel named