

of the congressional delegation here as I sign a bill that's going to help the folks who suffered mightily on that day when a gunman killed their loved ones. It's a good piece of legislation. I appreciate members from both parties working on it.

And I asked the president how—what the spirits are like there at Virginia Tech, and he said they're strong. And I'm not surprised. Having been there for that memorial ceremony, I left with the distinct impression that of all the communities in America that could deal with a tragedy, it's the Virginia Tech community.

And so I want to say to the families who still suffer, we think about you. And

to the students and faculty and alumni and leadership of Virginia Tech, thank you for helping those who suffer reconcile and recover from the grief they feel. So it's my honor to sign this important piece of legislation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:37 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Charles W. Steger, president, Virginia Tech University; Mayor Ron Rordam of Blacksburg, VA; and Gov. Timothy M. Kaine of Virginia. H.R. 4118, approved December 19, was assigned Public Law No. 110–141.

## Remarks Following a Visit With Wounded Troops and Their Families at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland December 19, 2007

*The President.* Admiral, thank you very much for your hospitality. You know, it's a great honor to come here. It's an honor to see the troops who've been wounded, and it's an honor to hug their families, and it's an honor to see the fabulous care that these folks receive. You know, our citizens wonder whether or not troops in harm's way will get superb medical care. And the answer is, absolutely, they get fantastic medical care.

Sometimes there's bureaucratic snafus that we're straightening out. But our citizens should never question whether or not the nurses and docs and caregivers are giving it their all in a professional way. They're saving lives, and they're healing hearts at the same time. And so it's a wonder what

takes place here, admiral. And I want to thank you and the colonel for taking the lead. And you know, I'm—I know Americans join me in praising our troops and honoring their families.

Merry Christmas to you.

*Rear Adm. Richard R. Jeffries.* Thank you, sir. It's an honor to serve them and you.

*The President.* Yes, sir. Thank you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:14 p.m. Participating in the visit were Rear Adm. Richard R. Jeffries, USN, commander, and Col. Leon E. Moores, USA, deputy commander for integration, National Naval Medical Center.

## Message on the Observance of Eid al-Adha December 19, 2007

I send holiday greetings to all Muslims celebrating Eid al-Adha.

During Eid al-Adha, Muslims around the world reflect on Abraham's unwavering faith and his trust in God when asked to sacrifice his son. These four days are a time for Muslims to honor Abraham's obedience by celebrating with family and friends and showing gratitude for the many blessings bestowed by God. This holiday also helps ensure the important values of compassion and devotion are passed on to future generations.

America is a land of many beliefs, and our society is enriched by our Muslim citi-

zens. The kindness, generosity, and goodwill displayed by American Muslims during this special occasion and throughout the year have contributed to the strength and vitality of our Nation. May all those observing Eid al-Adha find love and warmth during this joyous holiday.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a memorable celebration.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

## The President's News Conference December 20, 2007

*The President.* Good morning. I hope you all enjoyed the holiday reception at the White House as much as Laura and I enjoyed it. We took an inventory of the silverware, and this year, only a few pieces were missing. So, like, if you see Gregory [David Gregory, NBC News], tell him to bring them back. [*Laughter*] I've decided to come in and visit with you because you're heading off on the holidays, and so are we, and we wish you happy holidays.

I think recent days have been a moment that the country can be proud of. In the past few days, we have stopped a tax increase on the middle class families, we improved our energy security, we delivered relief to struggling homeowners, and we funded our troops. I want to thank the members of both parties for their hard work in these areas. I'm pleased that we have been able to end this year on a high note by moving beyond our differences and

achieving important results for the American people.

This week, Congress passed legislation to protect middle class families from the burden of the Alternative Minimum Tax, without raising taxes. Unfortunately, Congress passed this legislation after a lengthy delay. It's going to—the delay is going to add time it takes to process tens of billions of dollars in refunds. And so we will work hard—now that the bill is passed, we will work hard to minimize the impact of the congressional delay so that Americans can get their refund checks as soon as possible.

Congress passed a good energy bill. The legislation I signed yesterday will reduce our country's dependence on foreign oil by increasing the supply of alternative fuel sources and increasing fuel economy standards. It demonstrates America's leadership in confronting climate change.