

more than \$10 billion. These projects are not funded through a merit-based process and provide a vehicle for wasteful Government spending.

There is still more to be done to rein in Government spending. In February I will submit my budget proposal for fiscal year 2009, which will once again restrain spending, keep taxes low, and continue us on a path towards a balanced budget. I look forward to working with the Congress in the coming year to ensure taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.

Finally, this legislation contains certain provisions similar to those found in prior appropriations bills passed by the Congress that might be construed to be inconsistent with my Constitutional responsibilities. To avoid such potential infirmities, the executive branch will interpret and construe such provisions in the same manner as I have previously stated in regard to similar provisions.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
December 26, 2007.

Remarks on the Death of Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan in Crawford, Texas *December 27, 2007*

Laura and I extend our deepest condolences to the family of Benazir Bhutto, to her friends, and to her supporters. We send our condolences to the families of the others who were killed in today's violence. And we send our condolences to all the people of Pakistan on this tragic occasion.

The United States strongly condemns this cowardly act by murderous extremists who are trying to undermine Pakistan's democracy. Those who committed this crime must be brought to justice. Mrs. Bhutto served her nation twice as Prime Minister,

and she knew that her return to Pakistan earlier this year put her life at risk. Yet she refused to allow assassins to dictate the course of her country.

We stand with the people of Pakistan in their struggle against the forces of terror and extremism. We urge them to honor Benazir Bhutto's memory by continuing with the democratic process for which she so bravely gave her life.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:55 a.m. at the Bush Ranch.

Memorandum to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008" *December 28, 2007*

I am withholding my approval of H.R. 1585, the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008," because it would imperil billions of dollars of Iraqi assets at a crucial juncture in that nation's reconstruction efforts and because it would un-

dermine the foreign policy and commercial interests of the United States.

The economic security and successful reconstruction of Iraq have been top priorities of the United States. Section 1083 of H.R. 1585 threatens those key objectives.

Immediately upon enactment, section 1083 would risk the freezing of substantial Iraqi assets in the United States—including those of the Development Fund for Iraq (DFI), the Central Bank of Iraq (CBI), and commercial entities in the United States in which Iraq has an interest. Section 1083 also would expose Iraq to new liability of at least several billion dollars by undoing judgments favorable to Iraq, by foreclosing available defenses on which Iraq is relying in pending litigation, and by creating a new Federal cause of action backed by the prospect of punitive damages to support claims that may previously have been foreclosed. This new liability, in turn, will only increase the potential for immediate entanglement of Iraqi assets in the United States. The aggregate financial impact of these provisions on Iraq would be devastating.

While my Administration objected to an earlier version of this provision in previous communications about the bill, its full impact on Iraq and on our relationship with Iraq has become apparent only in recent days. Members of my Administration are working with Members of Congress to fix this flawed provision as soon as possible after the Congress returns.

Section 1083 would establish unprecedented legal burdens on the allocation of Iraq's funds to where they are most needed. Since the fall of Saddam Hussein, I have issued Executive Orders to shield from entanglement in lawsuits the assets of the DFI and the CBI. I have taken these steps both to uphold international legal obligations of the United States and to remove obstacles to the orderly reconstruction of Iraq. Section 1083 potentially would place these crucial protections of Iraq's core assets in immediate peril, by including a provision that might be misconstrued to supersede the protections I have put in place and to permit the judicial attachment of these funds. Iraq must not have its crucial reconstruction funds on judicial hold while lawyers argue and courts decide such legal assertions.

Moreover, section 1083 would permit plaintiffs to obtain liens on certain Iraqi property simply by filing a notice of pending action. Liens under section 1083 would be automatic upon filing a notice of a pending claim in a judicial district where Iraq's property is located, and they would reach property up to the amount of the judgment plaintiffs choose to demand in their complaints. Such pre-judgment liens, entered before claims are tested and cases are heard, are extraordinary and have never previously been available in suits in U.S. courts against foreign sovereigns. If permitted to become law, even for a short time, section 1083's attachment and lien provisions would impose grave—indeed, intolerable—consequences on Iraq.

Section 1083 also includes provisions that would expose Iraq to increased liability in lawsuits. Contrary to international legal norms and for the first time in U.S. history, a foreign sovereign would be liable for punitive damages under section 1083. Section 1083 removes defenses common for defendants in the United States—including *res judicata*, collateral estoppel, and statutes of limitation—upon which the Iraqi government has relied. And section 1083 would attempt to revive a \$959 million judgment against the new democratic Government of Iraq based on the misdeeds of the Saddam Hussein regime.

Exposing Iraq to such significant financial burdens would weaken the close partnership between the United States and Iraq during this critical period in Iraq's history. If Iraq's assets are frozen, even temporarily, that could reduce confidence in the Iraqi dinar and undermine the success of Iraq's monetary policy. By potentially forcing a close U.S. ally to withdraw significant funds from the U.S. financial system, section 1083 would cast doubt on whether the United States remains a safe place to invest and to hold financial assets. Iraqi entities would be deterred from engaging in commercial partnerships with U.S. businesses for fear of entangling assets in lawsuits. Section

1083 would be viewed with alarm by the international community and would invite reciprocal action against United States assets abroad.

The adjournment of the Congress has prevented my return of H.R. 1585 within the meaning of Article I, section 7, clause 2 of the Constitution. Accordingly, my withholding of approval from the bill precludes its becoming law. *The Pocket Veto Case*, 279 U.S. 655 (1929). In addition to withholding my signature and thereby invoking my constitutional power to “pocket veto” bills during an adjournment of the Congress, I am also sending H.R. 1585 to the Clerk of the House of Representatives, along with this memorandum setting forth my objections, to avoid unnecessary litigation about the non-enactment of the bill that results from my withholding approval and to leave no doubt that the bill is being vetoed.

This legislation contains important authorities for the Department of Defense,

including authority to provide certain additional pay and bonuses to servicemembers. Although I continue to have serious objections to other provisions of this bill, including section 1079 relating to intelligence matters, I urge the Congress to address the flaw in section 1083 as quickly as possible so I may sign into law the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, as modified. I also urge the Congress to ensure that any provisions affecting servicemember pay and bonuses, as well as provisions extending expiring authorities, are retroactive to January 1, 2008.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,

December 28, 2007.

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

The President's Radio Address

December 29, 2007

Good morning. New Year's Day will soon be upon us, and with it will come New Year's resolutions. This weekend is a good time to give thanks for our blessings and to resolve to do better in the coming year.

One of our greatest blessings as Americans is that we live in a country with a growing economy, where people can pursue their dreams, turn ideas into enterprises, and provide for their families. It is a measure of our economy's resilience that even with high oil prices and softness in the housing market, we're still growing. In November, our economy added jobs for the 51st straight month, making this the longest period of uninterrupted job growth on record. Unemployment is a low 4.7 percent.

Exports are up. And the fundamentals of our economy are strong.

Economic statistics are important indicators. Yet it is more important to remember that behind all these numbers are real people. These people include the entrepreneurs who live their dreams by starting up new businesses. These people include small-business owners who create most of the new jobs in our economy. And most of all, these people include the tens of millions of working moms and dads whose jobs provide for their families.

I know that even in this growing economy, some of you have real concerns. Some of you worry about your ability to afford health care coverage for your families. Some of you are concerned about meeting