

This moment is a test. Under our Constitution, Congress holds the power of the purse. Democratic leaders are in control of Congress. They set the schedule for when bills are considered. They determine when votes are held. Democrats have a chance to prove they are for open and transparent government by working to complete each spending bill independently and on time. I urge Democrats in Congress to step forward now and pass these bills one at a time.

As they do, I will insist they restrain spending so we can keep our Government running, while sustaining our growing economy and getting our budget into balance. And to help achieve these goals, I call on the Senate to act on my nomination of Jim Nussle as Director of the Office of Management and Budget. Jim is a former chairman of the House Budget Committee, and he will be a strong advocate for protecting your tax dollars here in Washington.

By setting clear budget priorities and maintaining strong fiscal discipline, we can promote economic growth and bring our budget into balance. Our Nation has the most innovative, industrious, and talented people on the face of the Earth. And when we unleash the entrepreneurial spirit of our country, there is no limit to what the American people can achieve or the hope and opportunity we can pass on to future generations.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7 a.m. on July 6 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on July 7. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 6, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks to the White House Conference on the Americas in Arlington, Virginia July 9, 2007

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for coming today. In my recent trip down to Central and South America, I told the folks that we were going to host a conference here in Washington, a conference to promote best practices, which really says, how best can the United States help people in our neighborhood.

Laura and I had a magnificent trip to Central and South America. It reminded me of the importance of having a peaceful and prosperous neighborhood. It's in our interests, in the interests of the United States that our neighborhood be healthy and educated. And so this conference is an attempt to bring together key people of my administration and faith-based groups

and private sector groups from the United States, as well as our neighborhood, to discuss how we can work together to promote social justice, to help people realize a better life through good education and good health care.

I do thank members of my administration who have joined us. I understand after this event there's going to be a series of breakout groups, led by members of my Cabinet; Hank Paulson is here, the Secretary of the Treasury. As a matter of fact, he's heading down to, I think, Brazil tomorrow. Secretary Carlos Gutierrez, Secretary of Commerce, will be leading a group. Mike Leavitt will lead a breakout session—he's the Secretary of Health and Human Services; and then Margaret Spellings, who

is the Secretary of Education. I think you're going to find these folks to be concerned, compassionate Americans who care about the lives of our citizens in our neighborhood. And I appreciate them serving.

And then you get a speech from my wife, which is, like, really smart to have her speak. [Laughter] You're stuck with the B team right now, and then the A team will be coming for—[laughter].

I want to thank all the folks who have joined us. Thanks for coming. As you can see, we've got an interesting way of making a variety of points. What I hope to accomplish at this breakout session is to, first, explain to our fellow citizens how important it is that the United States be active in the neighborhood in which we live.

Secondly—and by the way, thanks, ambassadors, for coming. I appreciate you all being here. It's very kind of you to take time out of your busy schedules to be here. We're honored you're here. Secondly, it's important for us—for me to explain to our fellow citizens some of the work we're doing in the neighborhood. I think our citizens will be pleased to know, for example, that we're working very hard to get trade agreements through our Congress, because the best way to help defeat poverty is to encourage commerce and trade.

And we've got trade agreements we've reached with Peru and Panama and Colombia. It's really important for the United States Congress to pass these trade agreements. If you're interested in prosperity in our neighborhood, if you want to help improve the lives of others, then the United States Congress must honor the agreements we've negotiated with these important countries and pass this legislation.

I'd like to see the Peruvian deal done by the beginning of August. They've got time to get the bill done. Members of Congress have got ample days on the calendar to pass this important piece of legislation so we can send the clear signal to our neighborhood that we want you to be prosperous, that we want to help you realize

your potential through trade with the United States of America. Trade agreements are good for both sides; it's good for U.S. workers, and it's good for Peruvian, Colombian, or Panamanian workers. And it's in our interest to promote trade.

Secondly, we're doing a lot to promote health. And one symbol of our commitment is the Navy medical ship called the *Comfort* that has—is traveling the region but, more importantly, is providing basic and sophisticated health care to people in need. I mean, the United States, we're strong, no question about it, but our greatest strength is our hearts. *Tenemos corazones grandes aqui en este pais*. We care deeply about the plight of other people, and when we see their suffering, we want to help. And the *Comfort* is a way for us to send a clear message that we care about the people that live in the neighborhood that we occupy together.

You know, Laura and I had an amazing experience in Guatemala. That's Maria's country. We went to the highlands. We first saw a small-business guy, who was formerly a subsistence farmer, who put together a cooperative of fellow farmers that now have got access to the U.S. markets, and they're making a living. The most important thing was, he said, "I'm saving money so my child can get a higher education."

But we also went to an outpost where the U.S. military was providing basic health care for people. Now, we've expanded on that health care initiative by setting up a nurse's training center in Panama. That's what Leavitt will be discussing, Secretary Leavitt. The reason I bring this up is that we understand how important it is for people to have good health. We understand that a healthy society is one that will—is one in which people will be more likely to realize their full, God-given potential. And we want to help, and we want to be involved. And part of our discussions today will be how best to—how best can the United States and faith-based groups and

private groups and NGOs work collaboratively to achieve important objectives.

A third objective is education. As I mentioned, Margaret Spellings will be here. She's the Secretary of Education. But the United States is deeply involved in people-to-people projects, all aimed at improving literacy. We believe strongly in helping teachers teach, and therefore, teacher schools make a lot of sense. But the purpose of the groups today—of this meeting today is to help us better focus our resources and do a better job of helping people in our neighborhood realize their potential.

I happen to be a person who does believe in an Almighty, and I believe the Almighty implants in each soul great human potential. And it's in our interest to help people realize their full potential. And two ways to do so—and two practical ways to do so is for the United States to be involved in health issues as well as education issues, and we are. And we're spending a fair amount of taxpayers' monies to achieve those objectives. And so one of my objectives is to explain to the American people, it's in your interest to help people in our neighborhood become better educated, and it's in your interest that we help people get good health care, because a healthy and educated and prosperous neighborhood is in the long-term interests of the United States.

It is also in our interest to help a neighbor in need. It renews our soul. It lifts our collective spirit. I believe to whom much is given, much is required. We've been given a lot as a nation, and therefore, I believe we're required to help people realize their potential.

So that's why I've come. I've also come to hear some of the folks on our panel. You're probably glad I'm about to quit talking so you can hear some of the folks on the panel too. We're going to start with Shannon. He's worked for me at the NSC in the White House, now is at the State Department. He is the main guy when it

comes to South and Latin America—I don't know if that's a diplomatic term, "main guy," or not. [Laughter]

Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere Tom Shannon. It works for me, sir.

The President. That's right. Welcome.

[At this point, Assistant Secretary Shannon made brief remarks.]

The President. Yes, thank you, Thomas.

Before I call on Maria, I do want to say something about our expectations, and that is, we expect governments to be of and by and for the people. We don't—and we expect governments to be honest and transparent and open. We reject the notion that it's okay for there to be corruption in government. We really believe that open, transparent societies are those that lead to hopeful tomorrows.

And so part of our foreign policy—for example, through the Millennium Challenge Account—is to set expectations, expectations that most people want: the expectation of a government that invests in the health and education of her people; the expectation that there will be no corruption, that there will be transparency, that people will be able to express themselves in an open forum without fear of reprisal.

And so no question, we want to be involved on the people-to-people programs, but we also have the objective of enhancing good government as well, which we believe strongly will lead to more hopeful futures.

Anyway, Maria is here. Where are you from, Maria?

Maria Pacheco. I'm from Guatemala.

The President. Que bueno. Bienvenidos.

Ms. Pacheco. Muchas gracias.

The President. And so what do you do for a living?

[*Ms. Pacheco, founder and general manager, Kiej de los Bosques, S.A., made brief remarks.*]

The President. Por favor. You speak in English, and I'll speak in Spanish. [Laughter]

Ms. Pacheco. Bueno. Esta bien.

The President. Except I'll ruin the language, and you won't. [Laughter]

[*Ms. Pacheco made further remarks.*]

The President. Let me ask you a question. So you started this group initially to—what's the name of it?

Ms. Pacheco. Kiej de los Bosques.

The President. Si. [Laughter]

Ms. Pacheco. It's a Mayan word. [Laughter]

The President. You started it when, in 2001?

Ms. Pacheco. In 2004.

The President. In 2004, good. How many members?

Ms. Pacheco. We have—well, there's 22 people in the company, but we're working now with more than a thousand women in Guatemala from different regions.

The President. Yes. So lesson one, by the way, there is such thing as social entrepreneurs. It is somebody who says, "I'm going to help somebody else," and takes time, talent, energy, and as a result, you're affecting a thousand lives—a thousand primary interfaces, which affects, no telling, how many lives.

One of the messages, I hope, that comes out of this meeting is that you can make a difference. It doesn't take much. And as a matter of fact, societies change one heart at a time, and therefore, if you're one of those persons changing hearts, you're part of societal change for the better.

And so I hope that we can inspire our fellow citizens to become involved with the NGOs or the faith-based groups or the community-based groups, all helping our neighborhood, and hopefully, inspire people, like in Guatemala, to step up and do the same thing that Maria has done.

So are you pretty upbeat? Optimistic? Pessimistic? Tell me how you're looking these days.

[*Ms. Pacheco made further remarks.*]

The President. I appreciate it. Look, it's very important for my fellow citizens to understand that when we open up markets in a fair way—in other words, we treat our producers the same as producers in other countries—it benefits us. It particularly helps lift people out of poverty. And that's what we want. We want people prosperous in your neighborhood. If you're living in a neighborhood, you want there to be prosperity in your neighborhood. So I appreciate you bringing up the importance of markets and providing—giving people just a basic opportunities in life, and it will make it—it's a transforming strategy. And so thanks for coming.

Maria, it says here you're an organic farmer.

Ms. Pacheco. Yes, I was an organic farmer for 12 years.

The President. Yes. What were you farming?

Ms. Pacheco. I was farming vegetables.

The President. Vegetables, yes. I'm not big on vegetables, but thanks. [Laughter]

Ms. Pacheco. Broccoli especially. [Laughter]

The President. Don't tell my mother that. But thank you very much for coming.

Ms. Pacheco. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Yes, I appreciate your time.

Matthew, what do you do?

Matthew N. Clausen. I work for Partners of the Americas.

The President. And what is that?

Mr. Clausen. Partners of the Americas is an organization, we've been around for over 40 years now, and we connect people with other people in our hemisphere.

The President. Really. What does that mean, connect people with other people?

Mr. Clausen. It means we have volunteer groups in almost every State of the U.S. that are partnered with similar groups in almost every country in the region.

The President. That's great.

[*Mr. Clausen, vice president for partnership development, Partners of the Americas, made brief remarks.*]

The President. So are you looking for volunteers?

Mr. Clausen. We are always looking for volunteers.

The President. And how would one who might be interested in volunteering find information about ways to help? Do you have a web site, for example?

Mr. Clausen. We do. We have partners.net, is a great place to start.

The President. Partners.net. What would one find there?

[*Mr. Clausen made further remarks.*]

The President. So what happens if somebody wanted to become a teacher for the summer or wanted to take a trip, and part of the experience of the trip was to make an impact on somebody's life? How—can they find that kind of program on your web site?

[*Mr. Clausen made further remarks.*]

The President. And so is there a common web site? Do we have a web site, for example, as a result of the meeting? I might ask my friend Karen Hughes to think about this. She probably has already thought about it, knowing her—and that is to think maybe about a listing of different ways our fellow citizens can get involved in helping different programs, either financially or through time and effort. Maybe we ought to think about that. I know you already have.

Good, thanks. Anything else you want to say, Matthew, while you've got the floor here?

Mr. Clausen. Well, I can't pass up that opportunity.

The President. Here's your chance, man. [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. Clausen made further remarks.*]

The President. Thank you. A healthy society is one in which people are responsible

for their behaviors. A healthy capitalist society is one in which corporate America, in this case, is responsible for—becomes a responsible citizen. And we have got such a soul here in Vivian Alegria. She is from Mexico.

Vivian Alegria. Yes.

The President. Welcome. You work for?

Ms. Alegria. For the Coca-Cola Foundation in Mexico.

The President. Coca-Cola Foundation. And what does the Coca-Cola Foundation do?

[*Ms. Alegria, director, Coca-Cola Foundation, Mexico, made brief remarks.*]

The President. So you're building schools?

[*Ms. Alegria made further remarks.*]

The President. Yes. I think one of the things that our citizens have got to understand here, there's a lot of corporate America that are very much involved in the communities, of which they're active. And that's important. And I would encourage our companies that do business in the neighborhood to understand that it's one thing to sell a product; it's another thing to help people be able to buy the product and become involved in the communities in which they're doing business. And I'm confident a lot of our companies are. I know Microsoft, for example, is very much involved with education programs. Laura and I are working on a very important initiative to help eradicate malaria in parts of the world, and corporate America is helping there too. So for those of you who represent corporate America, thanks for coming, and thanks for being involved.

And if you're not, get involved. It will not only help your business, it will help your country, because I want to keep saying this over and over again: An objective of our country and this Government is for there to be a healthy, educated, and prosperous neighborhood. It's in our interests. America does better when people in the

neighborhood in which we live are feeling better, can read better, and are making more money. Prosperity is—and health and education are just essential to a peaceful community around us.

Anyway, so thanks for coming, Vivian. It's good to see you.

Gilberto. You are from Brazil. Great country.

Gilberto Dimenstein. Great country. Great, great country.

The President. I'm proud to report that relations with Brazil are improving a lot. I've got a very close relationship with President Lula; we've worked hard to make it that way. And one of the interesting initiatives we're working on is a alternative fuel initiative that—where the United States and Brazil can work and share technologies, not only between our two countries but in the neighborhood, so that we can all become less dependent on oil.

And anyway, so relations are good. And so what do you do for a living, Gilberto?

Mr. Dimenstein. So, I'm a journalist.

The President. A journalist? That's good. [Laughter]

Mr. Dimenstein. Very good?

The President. Yes.

Mr. Dimenstein. Or not very good?

The President. No, it's great, believe me. [Laughter] Isn't it? Yes. [Laughter]

[*Mr. Dimenstein, founder and academic director, Associacao Cidade Escola Aprendiz, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Dimenstein. And then the almost last 20 years, I've been writing about violence against kids and the lessons in Brazil—

The President. Thank you. Thank you. [*Mr. Dimenstein made further remarks.*]

The President. Fantastic. And the—when you say countrywide, first, you've got a big country. This will be promoted by the Federal Government in cooperation with the private—with your group—

[*Mr. Dimenstein made further remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Dimenstein. And we've learned that when we put people together, it's very easy to make the education improve. One instance, we create one model, the neighborhood that I live because I believe if you want to change the world, first try to change your neighborhood.

The President. That's right.

[*Mr. Dimenstein made further remarks.*]

The President. So part of the purpose of this gathering is to analyze best practices. And by that I mean, what works. Gilberto has just described a program that works, and, hopefully, somebody will be inspired by this idea and try it out in another part of our neighborhood.

And so I appreciate you coming. Thanks for bring something that—

Mr. Dimenstein. Thank you very much for the invitation.

The President. You're not only a social entrepreneur, you're an educational entrepreneur. And we appreciate your vision and your hard work to make your country a better place.

An individual can make a significant difference in the life—in somebody else's life. And when you can motivate and encourage millions of individuals to make a difference in somebody's life, then the impact becomes pretty profound. And here's an example of one fellow who is working hard to improve his country. Thanks for coming.

Dr. Marie. How are you, doc?

Marie Marcelle Deschamps. I'm doing fine, thank you. It's an honor to be here.

The President. What kind of doctor are you?

[*Dr. Deschamps, technical director, Haitian Study Group on Kaposi's Sarcoma and Opportunistic Infections, made brief remarks.*]

The President. So she's from Haiti, obviously. She's a doc. She's deeply concerned about HIV/AIDS and malaria.

You know, our Government and the people—the generosity of the Americans, American people can be—as manifested by

just money, spending money. Up to now we have talked about how American citizens spend time and effort to help improve lives. We also spend money. And this is an area where I feel very strongly that America should be involved and make a difference, and that is fighting the pandemic of HIV/AIDS and dealing with malaria.

And so to this end, I'm asking Congress for \$30 billion expenditure over the next 5 years. She mentioned PEPFAR. That's, like, initials for the AIDS initiative, and we're making a big difference.

The reason I bring this up again is that—I'm not bragging, I'm just telling the American taxpayer that through your hard work and your tax dollars, we're helping programs like Maria's that are saving lives. We can measure the lives being saved. We can measure the amount of antiretroviral drugs ending up in people's systems. We can measure how many different groups there are involved. This is an area, for example, where the faith-based community has made a significant difference, not only in our own hemisphere but in other affected countries as well.

Maria mentioned that it's amazing what happens when they start networking; when one group attracts another group, that attracts another group, and all of a sudden, there's a grassroots organization in place to deal with this terrible pandemic.

And so I want to thank you for going back to your country, for lending your skills to help solve a significant problem that can be—that at least we can arrest the race. At least we can help—and we save children through the mother-to-child transmission—programs that prevent that transmission of AIDS.

So good going.

Dr. Deschamps. Thank you. Thank you.

The President. Yes. You upbeat? You feeling all right about things?

[*Dr. Deschamps made further remarks.*]

The President. That's one thing that Secretary Paulson's going to discuss in the break-out session that he is going to be leading, and that is, our view of the importance of microloans—microcredit as a way to help people, again, help themselves and realize their potential. So thanks for coming.

Dr. Deschamps. Thank you.

The President. Glad you're here.

Dr. Deschamps. Thank you.

The President. Our last panelist is John Howe, formerly of the great State of Texas. Once a Texan, always a Texan, John. [*Laughter*] He is the president and CEO of Project HOPE. Why don't you explain what that is and tell us what you're doing.

[*John P. Howe III, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Dr. Howe. We're legally chartered here in Washington as the People-to-People Foundation, doing business as Project HOPE.

The President. Good.

[*Dr. Howe made further remarks.*]

The President. Thanks, John. You know, it's interesting, our country has got certain images that—some are true, some aren't true. And it's very important, as part of our diplomacy—diplomatic effort on behalf of the American citizens, to remind people about some of the great generous acts that our citizens are doing. And they do it out of the goodness of their hearts. There's nothing better than being a volunteer. It's probably one of the great acts of kindness that somebody can do, is to volunteer to save somebody's life or just to add a little love in somebody's heart.

And we've got millions of our citizens who do that on a daily basis here at home. And it's in our interest that citizens who so want to can do that outside, in our neighborhood. And part of the purpose of having this gathering today is to remind our citizens of that which we're doing and to call upon our citizens, if they've got

time, to help somebody in need. As you said, the doctor from Wyoming benefited just as much as the woman in Guatemala did. And that's the beauty of giving.

And so I thank you all for joining today. Our panelists did a magnificent job, like I knew they would. I thank you all very much for your interest in coming. To my fellow citizens, I appreciate you taking time. I appreciate you being involved. Thank you for caring about the plight of our fellow human beings in the neighborhood in which we live. For those of you from other countries, welcome to America. You'll find this to be a loving country, full

of decent, caring, fine people. And it is an honor to be the President of such a country.

Que Dios les bendiga. May God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City at Reagan National Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Mariano Canu, cofounder, Labradores Mayas; and President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Tour of GrafTech International Ltd. in Parma, Ohio July 10, 2007

Good, thanks. I'm proud to be with you all. It's great to be at GrafTech here in Cleveland. I've come to Cleveland to highlight a couple of important issues. First, energy independence is an important part of our Nation's future. And one way to achieve energy independence is to promote technologies that will enable us to drive our economy without the use of Middle Eastern oil, for example. And one such technology is hydrogen fuel cells. And GrafTech is on the leading edge of developing a technology that will work, that will be competitive with other forms of energy, and that will enable us, on the one hand, to be less dependent on oil and better stewards on—of the environment.

And so I'm glad to be with these entrepreneurs, these scientists, these thinkers. We've—as part of the hydrogen fuel cell initiative that I proposed to the Congress, this company got a grant. And I think it's a wise use of taxpayers' money to help the people in this company develop this new technology. This forklift right here is powered by a hydrogen fuel cell. Doesn't re-

quire any oil or products derived from oil, and the exhaust from this is water.

And so we're going to continue to promote these kinds of technologies. And so I want to thank you all for having me. I'm about to go to a—after lunch, go to a hospital to talk about the need for a health care system that is patient-driven. I will resist the idea of the Federal Government running the health care system. And I'm going to spend some time talking during a town hall meeting about the kinds of reforms that we ought to be promoting out of Washington that encourage there to be a consumer-driven health care system. I mean, we'll take care of the poor, and we'll help the elderly. But we believe health care is best run in the private sector, not by the government.

And finally, I'm going to spend some time talking about the war on terror and our need to succeed in Iraq. And I'm going to remind the people in the audience today that troop levels will be decided by our commanders on the ground, not by political figures in Washington, DC, and that we've got a plan to lead to victory. And I fully