

programs like Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. As the Mid-Session Review makes clear, rising entitlement spending is by far the greatest long-term threat to America's fiscal health. These programs are vital to the daily life of millions of Americans. They are growing faster than the economy, faster than inflation, and faster than our ability to pay for them. This isn't going to be a Republican challenge or Democrat challenge; this is really a generational challenge. And the fundamental question facing those of us in Washington today is whether or not we have the capacity and the will to confront the challenge now.

I believe we have a moral obligation to deal with this problem, and that's why I've submitted proposals that will help deal with these programs. Matter of fact, I remember going to Congress and speaking very specifically about how to address the underlying issues of Social Security so that older guys like me could look to young Americans like some of you here and say, "We've done our duty to fix this program once and for all." And I call upon the Democrats in Congress to come forth with their ideas as how to fix it, to step forward with some concrete, specific proposals. I'll be glad to

listen to them, and I expect them to listen to mine. That's why we're in Washington. We're here to confront problems today and not pass them on so somebody else has to deal with them.

The Federal budget can be complicated, and making decisions about it can be quite contentious. Yet we know what it takes for our economy to succeed. During these budget debates, it's important to keep in mind the lessons of the past. As today's Mid-Session Review makes clear, keeping taxes low and restraining spending leads to a vibrant economy, it leads to new jobs, it leads to better opportunities, and it leads to a shrinking deficit.

Progrowth policies work, and now is not the time to turn our back on them. I'm going to work with Republicans and Democrats alike to continue these policies so we can keep our economy competitive, so we can keep our economy growing, and so we can remain the world leader for generations to come.

I'm honored you guys are here. Thank you all for coming. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:03 p.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

Statement on the Death of Lady Bird Johnson *July 11, 2007*

Laura and I mourn the passing of our good friend and a warm and gracious woman, Lady Bird Johnson. Those who were blessed to know her remember Mrs. Johnson's lively and charming personality, and our Nation will always remember her with affection. Mrs. Johnson became First Lady on a fateful day in November 1963 and was a steady, gentle presence for a mourning nation in the days that followed.

In the White House, Mrs. Johnson shared her love of the environment and

nature with our entire country. The native wildflowers that bloom along roadsides today are part of her lasting legacy. She joined President Johnson in the struggle for civil rights, inspiring millions of Americans. Her commitment to early education gave many children a head start in life.

President Johnson once called her a woman of "ideals, principles, intelligence, and refinement." She remained so throughout their life together and in the many years given to her afterward. She was

much-loved in our home State of Texas, and the Bush family is fortunate to have known her.

Lady Bird Johnson leaves behind her devoted daughters, Lynda and Luci, their fine families, and a nation that joins them in honoring a good life of kindness and service.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement. The Death of Lady Bird Johnson proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's News Conference *July 12, 2007*

The President. Good morning. Thank you. Yesterday America lost an extraordinary First Lady and a fine Texan, Lady Bird Johnson. She brought grace to the White House and beauty to our country. On behalf of the American people, Laura and I send our condolences to her daughters, Lynda and Luci, and we offer our prayers to the Johnson family.

Before I answer some of your questions, today I'd like to provide the American people with an update on the situation in Iraq. Since America began military operations in Iraq, the conflict there has gone through four major phases. The first phase was the liberation of Iraq from Saddam Hussein. The second phase was the return of sovereignty to the Iraqi people and the holding of free elections. The third phase was the tragic escalation of sectarian violence sparked by the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra.

We've entered a fourth phase: deploying reinforcements and launching new operations to help Iraqis bring security to their people. I'm going to explain why the success of this new strategy is vital for protecting our people and bringing our troops home, which is a goal shared by all Americans. I'll brief you on the report we are sending to Congress. I'll discuss why a drawdown of forces that is not linked to the success of our operations would be a disaster.

As President, my most solemn responsibility is to keep the American people safe. So on my orders, good men and women are now fighting the terrorists on the frontlines in Iraq. I've given our troops in Iraq clear objectives. And as they risk their lives to achieve these objectives, they need to know they have the unwavering support from the Commander in Chief, and they do. And they need the enemy to know that America is not going to back down. So when I speak to the American people about Iraq, I often emphasize the importance of maintaining our resolve and meeting our objectives.

As a result, sometimes the debate over Iraq is cast as a disagreement between those who want to keep our troops in Iraq and those who want to bring our troops home. And this is not the real debate. I don't know anyone who doesn't want to see the day when our brave service men and women can start coming home.

In my address to the Nation in January, I put it this way: If we increase our support at this crucial moment, we can hasten the day our troops begin coming home. The real debate over Iraq is between those who think the fight is lost or not worth the cost and those who believe the fight can be won and that, as difficult as the fight is, the cost of defeat would be far higher.