

the opportunity to renew our deep desire for America to be a hope—a land of promise for everybody, a land of justice, and a land of opportunity. It's also an opportunity to serve our fellow citizens. They say Martin Luther King Day is not a day off, it should be a day on. And so today Laura and I witnessed acts of compassion as citizens were here in the library volunteering their time, and that's what's happening all across America today.

But a day on should be not just one day, it really ought to be every day. And our fellow citizens have got to understand that by loving a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself, by reaching out to someone who hurts, by just simply living a life of kindness and compassion, you can make America a better place and fulfill the dream of Martin Luther King.

Martin Luther King is a towering figure in the history of our country. And it is fitting that we honor his service and his courage and his vision. And today we're witnessing people doing just that by volunteering their time.

So we're honored to be with you. We're proud to be with you on this important national holiday. Mr. Mayor, thank you for coming. Jack, glad you're here. Appreciate you all taking time out of your day to visit with us.

And thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:42 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Adrian M. Fenty of Washington, DC; and Jack Evans, council member, Council of the District of Columbia.

Remarks to March for Life Participants January 22, 2008

Nellie, good to be with you. We're fellow west Texans who care deeply about the value of human life. Other members of the board of directors for the March for Life, leaders of the pro-life community, and all those who are here with us for the march, it's good to have you here, and welcome to the White House.

As I look out at you, I'll see some folks who have been traveling all night to get here. [Laughter] You're slightly bleary eyed. [Laughter] I'll see others who are getting ready for a day out in the cold. But mostly I see faces that shine with a love for life.

I see people with a deep conviction that even the most vulnerable member of the human family is a child of God. You're here because you know that all life deserves to be protected. And as you begin your march, I'm proud to be standing with you.

Thirty-five years ago today, the United States Supreme Court declared and de-

clared that under the law, an unborn child is not considered a person. But we know many things about the unborn. Biology confirms that from the start, each unborn child is a separate individual with his or her own genetic code. Babies can now survive outside the mother's womb at younger and younger ages. And the fingers and toes and beating hearts that we can see on an unborn child's ultrasound come with something that we cannot see, a soul.

Today we're heartened by the news that the number of abortions is declining. But the most recent data reports that more than one in five pregnancies end in an abortion. America is better than this, so we will continue to work for a culture of life where a woman with an unplanned pregnancy knows there are caring people who will support her, where a pregnant teen can carry her child and complete her education,

where the dignity of both the mother and child is honored and cherished.

We aspire to build a society where each one of us is welcomed in life and protected in law. We haven't arrived, but we are making progress. Here in Washington, we passed good laws that promote adoption and extend legal protection to children who are born despite abortion attempts. We came together to ban the cruel practice of partial-birth abortion. And in the past year, we have prevented that landmark law from being rolled back.

We've seen the dramatic breakthroughs in stem cell research, that it is possible to advance medical science while respecting the sanctity of life. Building a culture of life requires more than law; it requires changing hearts. And as we reach out to others and find common ground, we can see the glimmerings of a new America on a far shore. This America is rooted in our belief that in a civilized society, the strong protect the weak. This America is nurtured by people like you, who speak up for the weak and the innocent. This America is the destiny of a people whose founding

document speaks of the right to life that is a gift of our Creator, not a grant of the state.

My friends, the time is short, and your march is soon. [*Laughter*] As you give voice to the voiceless I ask you to take comfort from this: The hearts of the American people are good. Their minds are open to persuasion. And our history shows that a cause rooted in human dignity and appealing to the best instincts of the American people cannot fail. So take heart.

Take heart, be strong, and go forth. May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:01 a.m. in the East Room at the White House for later broadcast to march participants on the National Mall in Washington, DC. In his remarks, he referred to Nellie J. Gray, president, March for Life Education and Defense Fund. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks. The related National Sanctity of Human Life Day proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders *January 22, 2008*

I want to thank the leaders for coming. I initially intended to brief the leaders of the House and the Senate on my trip to the Middle East, and I intend to do so. But we're going to spend some time talking about this economy and the need for us to find common ground for an effective progrowth economic package. We had a good call last Thursday, and I want to thank the Speaker and the leader and other Members. And Secretary Paulson had a good meeting today.

I believe we can find common ground to get something done that's big enough and effective enough so that an economy

that is inherently strong gets a boost to make sure that this uncertainty doesn't translate into more economic woes for our workers and small-business people.

And so I really want to thank you all for coming, and I'm looking forward to our discussions. And look, there's a—everybody wants to get something done quickly, but we want to make sure it gets done right and make sure that we're—everybody is realistic about a—the timetable. Legislative bodies don't move as—necessarily in an orderly, quick way. And therefore, these leaders are committed, and they want to get something done. But we want to make sure