

set of incentives that will boost our economy and encourage job creation. This package has the right set of policies and is the right size. The incentives in this package will lead to higher consumer spending and increased business investment this year. Importantly, this package recognizes that lowering taxes is a powerful and efficient way to help consumers and businesses. I have always believed that allowing people to keep more of their own money and to use it as they see fit is the best way to help our economy grow.

I'm also pleased that this agreement does not include any tax increases as well as unnecessary spending projects that would have little immediate impact on our economy.

I know Americans are concerned about our economic future. Our economy is structurally sound, but it is dealing with short-term disruptions in the housing market and the impact of higher energy prices. These challenges are slowing growth. Yet Americans can also be confident about our long-

term outlook. Our economy is strong, it is dynamic, and it is resilient. It has led the world for many decades, and with the right policies in place, including the extension of the tax cuts passed in 2001 and 2003 that have helped our economy, I firmly believe we're going to continue to lead the world.

Because the country needs this boost to the economy now, I urge the House and the Senate to enact this economic growth agreement into law as soon as possible. We have an opportunity to come together and take the swift, decisive action our economy urgently needs.

Secretary Paulson is here to answer any of your questions. At my request, he has taken the lead in negotiations, like I mentioned, and I—you did a superb job, Mr. Secretary. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:31 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Elsa Morejon January 24, 2008

The President. A while ago I had the honor of presenting the National Medal of Freedom to a patriot of Cuba and a lover of liberty, Oscar Biscet. He was not able to receive the award because he's in a Cuban prison for speaking out on behalf of human rights and human dignity. Today his wife Elsa Morejon is here. She has taken some time from Cuba to come to the United States to visit her son. She came up to the Oval Office to see me, and I'm most honored and most grateful.

We have a comfortable life here in America by and large, and it's hard for us to imagine what it would be like for—to live in a society as repressive as the society of Fidel and Raul Castro. This good

woman has had to suffer through days and weeks of deprivation and worry because the love of her life is in a Cuban prison simply because of his beliefs. It's my honor to welcome you here.

My call is for the world to help women such as Elsa. My call is for those who believe that the Cuba of today is a hopeful place to recognize the realities. This is a country that has got political prisoners who are languishing in the jails, who are mistreated in the jails. Our message is, is that political prisoners ought to be free and so should the Cuban people, free to express themselves and free to realize their God-given talents. So I want to welcome you. *Que Dios le bendiga.*

Ms. Morejon. My name is Elsa Morejon. I'm a Cuban woman. I've come here to the United States to visit my son. My husband has spent most of his youth and is now sentenced to 25 more years in jail for defending human rights and for defending civil liberties. He has devoted his life to the cause of defending human rights in Cuba and throughout the world. We do not live in a free country, and I must now return to Cuba.

I want to thank President Bush for inviting me to this meeting today. And I would like to speak to the international community and exhort them to work for the re-

lease of all political prisoners, along with my husband, to obtain their immediate and unconditional release from Cuban prisons.

The President. Thank you.

Ms. Morejon. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Yan Valdes Morejon, son of Elsa Morejon; and President Fidel Castro Ruz and Vice President Raul Castro Ruz of Cuba. Ms. Morejon spoke in Spanish, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on Congressional Action on Intelligence Reform Legislation January 24, 2008

Last August, Congress passed the Protect America Act, which updated our foreign intelligence surveillance law to adapt to today's technology and to meet today's threats. This bipartisan legislation has aided our efforts to monitor the communications of terrorists and other foreign intelligence targets.

Unfortunately, Congress set this legislation to expire on February 1st. That is just 8 days from today, yet the threat from Al Qaida will not expire in 8 days.

If Congress does not act quickly, our national security professionals will not be able to count on critical tools they need to protect our Nation, and our ability to respond quickly to new threats and circumstances will be weakened. That means it will become harder to figure out what our enemies are doing to recruit terrorists and infiltrate them into our country.

Last fall, the Senate Intelligence Committee completed its work on a bipartisan bill to modernize our foreign intelligence surveillance law. I commend Senators Rockefeller and Bond, the committee's

chairman and vice chairman, for leading the effort to complete work on this bill.

The Senate Intelligence Committee's bill contains many provisions that our intelligence officials say they need to protect our country. The bill would maintain the vital flow of intelligence on terrorist threats. It would protect the freedoms of Americans while making sure we do not extend those same protections to terrorists overseas. And it would provide liability protection to companies now facing billion-dollar lawsuits only because they are believed to have assisted in efforts to defend our Nation following the 9/11 attacks.

This bill still needs some changes, but I am optimistic that with good will on both sides, we can make those changes quickly. So I ask congressional leaders to follow the course set by their colleagues on the Senate Intelligence Committee, bring this legislation to a prompt vote in both houses, and send me a bill that I can sign before the Protect America Act expires on February 1st.