

And so we've got a plan that calls for diversification, but it's—our energy policy hasn't been very wise up to now.

Anyway, I'm going to dodge the rest of your question. [Laughter] Thank you for your time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 a.m. at the Hilton New York. In his remarks, he referred to King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Message on the Observance of Saint Patrick's Day, 2008

March 14, 2008

I send greetings to those celebrating St. Patrick's Day.

On this day, we commemorate the great faith of St. Patrick and celebrate the rich heritage of the Irish people. The Apostle of Ireland was committed to preaching a gospel of peace even in the face of great hardship, and people of all faiths can be inspired by his remarkable example. During St. Patrick's Day, we join together with the many children of Erin who have come to our shores full of hope and purpose, and found success.

Americans are grateful for our country's Irish traditions and the deep friendship that

exists between Ireland and the United States. Irish Americans have valiantly defended our Nation, enriched our culture, and contributed to our prosperity. We are reminded, in celebrating, of our history as a Nation of immigrants and of our responsibility to remain a welcoming society.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a blessed and joyous St. Patrick's Day.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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

The President's Radio Address

March 15, 2008

Good morning. On Friday, I traveled to New York City to talk about the state of our economy. This is a topic that has been a source of concern for families across America. In the long run, we can be confident that our economy will continue to grow. But in the short run, it is clear that growth has slowed.

Fortunately, we recognized this slowdown early and took action to give our economy a shot in the arm. My administration worked with Congress to pass a bipartisan economic growth package that includes tax relief for families and incentives for business investment. I signed this pack-

age into law last month, and its provisions are just starting to kick in. My economic team, along with many outside experts, expects this stimulus package to have a positive effect on our economy in the second quarter. And they expect it to have even a stronger effect in the third quarter, when the full effects of the \$152 billion in tax cuts are felt.

A root cause of the economic slowdown has been the downturn in the housing market. I believe the Government can take sensible, focused action to help responsible homeowners weather this rough patch. But we must do so with clear purpose and great

care, because Government actions often have far-reaching and unintended consequences. If we were to pursue some of the sweeping Government solutions that we hear about in Washington, we would make a complicated problem even worse and end up hurting far more homeowners than we help.

For example, one proposal would give bankruptcy courts the authority to reduce mortgage debts by judicial decree. This would make it harder to afford a home in the future because banks would charge higher interest rates to cover this risk.

Some in Washington say the Government should take action to artificially prop up home prices. It's important to understand that this would hurt millions of Americans. For example, many young couples trying to buy their first home have been priced out of the market because of inflated prices. The market now is in the process of correcting itself, and delaying that correction would only prolong the problem.

My administration opposes these proposals. Instead, we are focused on helping a targeted group of homeowners, those who have made responsible buying decisions and could avoid foreclosure with a little help. We've taken three key steps to help these homeowners.

First, we launched a new program that gives the Federal Housing Administration greater flexibility to offer refinancing for struggling homeowners with otherwise good credit histories. Second, we helped bring together the HOPE NOW Alliance, which is streamlining the process for refinancing and modifying many mortgages. Third, the Federal Government is taking regulatory

steps to make the housing market more transparent and fair in the long run.

And now Congress must build on these efforts. Members need to pass legislation to reform Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, modernize the Federal Housing Administration, and allow State housing agencies to issue tax-free bonds to help homeowners refinance their mortgages.

Congress also needs to take other steps to help our economy through this period of uncertainty. Members need to make the tax relief we passed permanent, reduce wasteful spending, and open new markets for American goods, services, and investment.

By taking these steps and avoiding bad policy decisions, we will see our economy strengthen as the year progresses. As we take decisive action, we will keep this in mind: When you are steering a car in a rough patch, one of the worst things you can do is overcorrect. That often results in losing control and can end up with the car in a ditch. Steering through a rough patch requires a steady hand on the wheel and your eyes up on the horizon. And that's exactly what we're going to do.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:20 a.m. on March 14 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 15. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 14, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Economic Advisers on the National Economy

March 17, 2008

Mr. Secretary, thank you very much for coming by today to talk about the economic situation. We'll be meeting later on this afternoon with the President's task force on financial markets.

First of all, you know, the Secretary has given me an update. One thing is for certain: We're under—we're in challenging times. But another thing is for certain, that we've taken strong and decisive action. The Federal Reserve has moved quickly to bring order to the financial markets. Secretary Paulson has been—is supportive of that action, as am I. And I want to thank you, Mr. Secretary, for working over the weekend. You've shown the country and the world that the United States is on top of the situation.

Secondly, you've reaffirmed the fact that our financial institutions are strong and that our capital markets are functioning efficiently and effectively. We obviously will continue to monitor the situation and, when need be, will act decisively, in a way that continues to bring order to the financial markets.

In the long run, our economy is going to be fine. Right now we're dealing with a difficult situation. And, Mr. Secretary, I want to thank you very much for your steady and strong and consistent leadership.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:40 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland

March 17, 2008

President Bush. *Taoiseach*, welcome, and happy Saint Patrick's Day. It's always a joy to welcome the *Taoiseach* here to the Oval Office. And it's a reminder of the unbelievably powerful influence the Irish have had on the development and prosperity of the United States of America. We're a richer country because of Irish Americans. And, Mr. Prime Minister, Ireland is a great friend and ally, and I want to thank you for your friendship over these years.

We discussed a variety of issues. In particular, we talked about Northern Ireland. And the *Taoiseach* gets a lot of credit for showing a steady hand during a difficult period. And yet as a result of perseverance and hard work, Northern Ireland is a different place than it was last year. And we

congratulate the leaders there. And I just want the folks to know, what I told the *Taoiseach* is true, that the United States will continue to stay engaged and will be very supportive of helping the process move forward.

And there's more work to be done, we fully understand, in Northern Ireland. But also, there's a really interesting chance for people from our country to see the investment opportunities available in Northern Ireland. And this May, there's a Northern Ireland investment conference, which the United States will strongly support. And, *Taoiseach*, like I told you, we'll send a strong delegation to look at the opportunities available there.