

NOTE: The statement referred to President-elect Ma Ying-jeou of Taiwan.

Remarks at the White House Easter Egg Roll *March 24, 2008*

Laura and I welcome you to the White House for the Easter egg roll. How about the Jonas Brothers? Thanks for coming. We are sure glad you're here. We welcome you to the Easter egg roll.

Pretty soon, after a few remarks, I have the honor of blowing the whistle to start the Easter egg roll. But we've got a lot of other people who are going to make sure today is a special day. We want to thank all our volunteers who have made this event possible. We thank our—[*applause*]*—yes, there you are. [Laughter]* We thank our readers. For you Dallas Cowboy fans, it is a great honor to welcome Troy Aikman here to be one of the readers.

We want to remind you that we're dedicating today's Easter egg roll to our clean oceans. And there's a booth here where

you can find out how you can contribute to make sure that we're environmentally sound stewards of our oceans. Ocean conservation is an important aspect of good public service, and it's certainly something that Laura has on her mind, as she comes up to address you. And so now it's my honor to welcome the First Lady of the United States, my dear wife, Laura Bush.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:23 a.m. from the Blue Room balcony at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers the Jonas Brothers; and Troy Aikman, former quarterback, National Football League's Dallas Cowboys. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks Following a Briefing at the Department of State *March 24, 2008*

Madam Secretary, thank you very much for your hospitality. I just had a very interesting dialogue on how to strengthen the State Department's capacity to bring freedom and peace around the world, how to make sure the State Department works collaboratively with the Defense Department as we deal with some of the more difficult areas and really take advantage of some of the great opportunities that we're faced with.

And so I really want to thank you, Madam Secretary, and I thank the folks who work in this building. Our citizens have really no idea of how competent, cou-

rageous, and successful the people here who work at the State Department are. I do. After my—now my eighth year as President, I've gotten to know the people in the State Department well. And I'm impressed, and so should our citizens.

Obviously, we want to expand the reach of the State Department by increasing the size and its efficiencies and to make sure that there's interoperability. And along these lines, of course, I'm fully aware that folks who have worked in the State Department lost their lives and—in Iraq, along with our military folks. And on this day of reflection, I offer our deepest sympathies

to their families. I hope their families know that citizens pray for their comfort and their strength. Whether they were the first one who lost their life in Iraq or recently lost their lives in Iraq, that every life is precious in our sight.

And I guess my one thought I wanted to leave with those who still hurt is that one day people will look back at this moment in history and say, "Thank God there were courageous people willing to serve, because they laid the foundations for peace for generations to come." That I have vowed in the past, and I will vow so long as I'm President, to make sure that those

lives were not lost in vain; that, in fact, there is a outcome that will merit the sacrifice that civilian and military alike have made; that our strategies going forward will be aimed at making sure that we achieve victory, and therefore, America becomes more secure, these young democracies survive, and peace more likely as we head into the 21st century.

So, Madam Secretary, I'm honored to be here. And I thank you very much for your hard work and your dedication.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:03 p.m.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the 2008 Bassmaster Classic Champion and 2007 Women's Bassmaster Tour Champion March 25, 2008

The President. I've got the fishing champs from this year. And, Judy, thanks for coming.

Judy Wong. Oh, thank you.

The President. She is from Many, Louisiana. She won the Women's Bassmaster. And Alton Jones from Waco, Texas, won the Bassmaster Classic.

And I thought it was important to welcome these champs here to the White House so that—you know, to encourage people to fish. There's nothing better than fishing. I had a fantastic experience with Alton and our friend Charlie Pack. He was a famous local fisherman, and he said, "Do you want to go fishing with a fellow named Jones?" I said: "I've never heard of him. There's a lot people named Jones." [Laughter] It turns out, the man I was fishing with is the—wins the Bassmaster Classic.

This is a good, clean sport. It's a sport that requires good conservation in order to make sure our fisheries are good. And I love welcoming the champs here. And so we're glad you're here.

Ms. Wong. Thank you.

The President. The people in Louisiana and Texas are proud of you.

Alton Jones. Well, it's an honor to be here. You know, fishing with you, I've got to say that President Bush is actually a very good fisherman and a great conservationist. And I'm really not sure who's working who here. I'm hoping to get an invite to fish on his lake in Crawford.

The President. That's right.

Mr. Jones. And he's looking for a free fishing guide. [Laughter]

Ms. Wong. I would be glad to take you any day on Toledo Bend.

The President. That's good.

Ms. Wong. Okay.

The President. Well, thank you, Judy.

Ms. Wong. And bring Laura as well.

The President. Well, yes, she's—I'm a good fisherman; sometimes I'm a good catcher-man. [Laughter]

Mr. Jones. There's a big difference.

The President. Yes, there is. Anyway, thank you all for coming.