

enough, out of that simple idea and hard work—because I understand as well as anybody how hard it is to build a small business. I mean, it's not—it takes a lot of time and a lot of effort and a lot of focus and patient spouses and sometimes spouses actually watching the money to make sure the other spouse doesn't blow it. [Laughter]

So how about this guy. He is a guy who paid his way through college, and he—by diving into water hazards and selling the golf balls that he found. And evidently, he had this dream, and so he graduated and decided to take his idea and make it into an Internet golf shop. And it's a prosperous business, and he's creating jobs.

Now, he didn't need a government program to figure out how to do that, it's his ingenuity. It was his desires to not only pay his own college education but then to convert that into something that would be good for consumers—obviously, if it wasn't good for consumers, he wouldn't have much of a business history—good for the people he's employed. And all he needed

was the ability to dream and willingness to work hard. And this is what defines our country. It's the spirit that makes America so unique and so great. And that spirit is found in the room.

And our—the role of government is to never stifle that spirit, is to encourage the spirit, reward the spirit, and always pay—and always remind our citizens that we are a vibrant and prosperous and hopeful nation, because we are a land blessed with vibrant and hopeful people.

God bless you, and thanks for letting me come by.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:12 a.m. at the Renaissance Washington, DC Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Pope Benedict XVI; Thomas J. Donohue, president and chief executive officer, U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Darlene M. Miller, president and chief executive officer, Permac Industries; and Thomas E. Sawner, president and chief executive officer, Educational Options, Inc.

Remarks on the Nomination of Steven C. Preston To Be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

April 18, 2008

Thank you all. Please be seated. Welcome.

A few weeks ago, my dear friend Alphonso Jackson informed me of his decision to step down as the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Secretary Jackson is one of the longest serving members of my administration. I know him well. He's a decent man, he's a dedicated man, and he's a compassionate man. He's worked tirelessly at HUD to help America's homeowners. He has transformed a lot of lives, and America is a better place because of your service. I wish you and Marcia all the very best as you head back to Texas. I'll be right behind you. [Laughter]

The Department requires strong leadership at a time when our housing market is experiencing a period of challenge and uncertainty. In seeking to fill this important Cabinet post, I looked for a leader with an impressive background in finance, someone who understands the important role the housing market plays in the broader economy. I sought a reformer who would act aggressively to help Americans obtain affordable mortgages, and I sought a—and be able to keep their homes. I sought a consensus builder who's earned the respect of Republicans and Democrats, who can get things done.

I found these qualities and much more in Steve Preston. Steve is a strong executive with a quarter century of management experience. He's had senior leadership roles at two multibillion-dollar corporations and in the financial services industry. He understands the free enterprise system from every angle.

As the head of the Small Business Administration, Steve has advanced a reform agenda that made the agency more accountable, more effective, and more responsive. Under his leadership, America's entrepreneurs have received improved access to Federal assistance as well as educational resources. Under his leadership, the SBA has increased its focus on supporting business development in areas with high unemployment and poverty rates. And under his leadership, agency efficiency's improved, and America's small-business community has found a trusted friend and partner.

During his tenure at SBA, Steve has managed loan guarantee programs that are similar in structure to those run by the Federal Housing Administration, and he's made these programs run very effectively. When Steve took the reins at the SBA, he streamlined the agency's efforts to disburse loans to small businesses and homeowners devastated by Hurricane Katrina. He matched every loan applicant with a case manager to provide the compassion and expertise that applicants needed to navigate the loan process.

Within months of Steve's reforms, the backlog of loans fell 80 percent and response times improved by 90 percent. Today, more than \$6 billion in SBA loans are helping more than 160,000 Gulf Coast families rebuild their homes, their businesses, and their lives.

Steve Preston is an experienced manager who knows what to do. He knows how to tackle a problem, devise a solution, and get results. That's exactly the kind of leadership I was looking for. And that's why I'm going to send his name up to the United States Senate to be the Department's Secretary.

He will play a central role in helping address our Nation's housing challenges. He'll work with Members of Congress to advance responsible legislation that will help millions of American homeowners. He will be entrusted with one of the most rewarding jobs in the Federal Government: helping our fellow Americans have a place to call a home.

These are important responsibilities, and I'm confident I picked the right person for the job. He's a hard-working, dedicated professional. In fact, he was confirmed to his current post by the United States Senate without a single vote in opposition. Let's hope the streak continues. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Deputy Secretary Roy Bernardi. I appreciate very much your willingness to step forward to serve the country as well as to serve as Acting Secretary of HUD. And I thank you for keeping that position until Steve is confirmed.

I also want to thank Steve's family: Molly, as well as Anna, Madeleine, Gibson, Eleanor, and Steve, Jr. Thank you all for coming to the White House to witness this very important moment.

I ask the Senate to quickly consider Steve Preston and to ratify him on a timely basis. Congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:57 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-designate Preston.

Statement on the Appointment of Douglas V. O'Dell, Jr., as Federal
Coordinator of the Office of Gulf Coast Rebuilding
April 18, 2008

Today I am pleased to select Major General Doug O'Dell to serve as Coordinator of Federal support for the recovery and rebuilding of the Gulf Coast.

General O'Dell is an innovative problem-solver with a wealth of experience in helping the people of the Gulf Coast region. As the commanding general of the 4th Marine Division in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, he employed over 2,700 marines and sailors to evacuate thousands of civilians, deliver essential cargo, and restore basic functions in more than 30 buildings. His strategic judgment during Hurricane Rita enabled troops to deliver relief almost immediately after the storm. He has earned the trust of many in the region, including State and local officials, and is the right person for this important job.

General O'Dell understands the progress made in the Gulf Coast region, the important work ahead, and the great spirit of the people who call that region home. He will build on the efforts of Don Powell to help the people of the region continue to rebuild their lives and their communities. I also want to thank Paul Conway for doing a fine job as Interim Coordinator.

I am pleased to announce as well that I have signed an Executive order to extend the Federal Coordinator position until February 28, 2009. This extension will ensure a seamless transition into the next administration so that the Federal Government can continue to deliver effective, integrated, and responsible support to the people of the Gulf Coast region.

Message on the Observance of Passover, 5768
April 18, 2008

Then Moses said to the people, "Commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the Lord brought you out of it with a mighty hand."

EXODUS 13:3

I send greetings to those observing Passover.

More than 3,000 years ago, God liberated the Children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt and led them on a journey towards the Promised Land. During the holy days of Passover, Jews around the world celebrate this deliverance from oppression

and give thanks to a loving God for His many blessings. Passover is an opportunity for Jewish families and friends to gather to read the Haggadah, share the Seder meal, and remember God's mercy through song and prayer. This eight-day observance brings a message of hope and freedom to the Jewish people.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a joyous Passover.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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