

*The President.* I don't think there's enough cameras here. [Laughter] NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m.

## Remarks on Malaria Awareness Day in Hartford April 25, 2008

Thank you all. Thank you very much. Thank you for the kind introduction, Roxanne. She wrote it—read it just like I wrote it. [Laughter] It's good to be with you. I appreciate the—being here at the Boys & Girls Club here in Hartford. I really enjoyed being with the boys and girls of the Boys & Girls Club. Thank you for greeting us.

I—we do have something in common—at least I do—with the Boys & Girls Club. As Roxanne noted, the Boys & Girls Club were born in Connecticut. Well, so was I, just a little different date, you know. [Laughter] The Boys & Girls Clubs are 102. My daughters think I act like I'm 102 at times. [Laughter] But I really thank you all for greeting me.

I want to thank the members of this club for your compassionate work in the fight against malaria. And that's what I want to spend some time talking about today. I appreciate being joined by Melinda Doolittle of "American Idol." I've gotten to know Melinda because Melinda is not only a great talent, Melinda has got a huge heart. And it's interesting, isn't it, that she has garnered all this publicity and acclaim, all to channel it into helping other people. And I love your example, and I thank you for your leadership.

And I'm also honored to be up here with Tamika Raymond, as well as Charlie Villanueva. They know something about the State of Connecticut because they were stars on their respective University of Connecticut Husky basketball teams. They are professional athletes, one with the Milwaukee Bucks and the other with the Connecticut Sun. But more importantly, they're

using their presence on the court to be able to advance important issues. And in my judgment, a great issue to advance is saving people's lives. And that's what we're here to celebrate today.

Sorry my wife isn't with me. She is a huge supporter of the malaria initiative. She cares a lot, like the people on this stage care a lot, about the human condition here in America and elsewhere. She's getting ready to be the mother of the bride—[laughter]—which I guess that means I'm getting ready to be the father of the bride.

I want to thank Admiral Tim Ziemer. He is the Coordinator for the U.S. Malaria Initiative. You notice I said "admiral." He's—when it comes to picking people to get a job done, you want somebody who can go from point A to point Z and plow ahead through the obstacles. You know, I'm really not interested in policies that are long on rhetoric and short on results. I think the taxpayers, as well as the people we're trying to help, need to know our strategy is well defined, with clear goals, and we hold people accountable. And the great thing about Admiral Ziemer is, he's willing to hold people to account and willing to be held to account himself. And you're about to hear some of the progress we've made, and a lot of it has to do with his leadership. And I'm proud you're here. Thanks for coming.

I also thank Sam Gray—[applause]—not just your family members who are cheering; that's good. [Laughter]

So I've come to herald the Boys & Girls Clubs all across America, and they do fine work. And Roxanne is right: They're saving lives. And I want to thank you for the—

for those of you who support the Boys & Girls Clubs here in Hartford and around the country.

But today also marks the second annual Malaria Awareness Day in the United States. And here to help celebrate that day with us is the Congressman from Connecticut, Christopher Shays. Thank you for coming.

On this day, we remember those who've died from malaria. In other words, an awareness day is one in which you recognize the consequences, in this case, of this disease. And so we mourn the loss of life, especially and including the children who have needlessly died on the continent of Africa and elsewhere. They died because of a mosquito bite. Also, this is a day of hope, however, as well. And the reason it is, because nations once trapped in fear because of malaria are now tackling malaria head on. And they're doing so with our help.

It is a day of hope because more Americans are recognizing the timeless truth: To whom much is given, much is required. It should be the corner—and is—the cornerstone of American foreign policy. Some people say, "Well, what about our own people?" And my answer is, we're plenty rich to help our own and to help others. We've been a blessed nation, and it's in our interest to share our blessings with other. It's a day of hope because compassionate souls are acting on the truth and helping to wipe out malaria in Africa and beyond.

A few moments ago, I presented three Dragonfly Awards. So, like, you say, "Why call some—an award a Dragonfly Award?" Well, the award is named for the natural predator of the mosquito. And each one of this year's winners has shown great determination in working hard and in creative ways to eradicate the disease.

The first Dragonfly Award winner went to Roxanne, who accepted on behalf of the Boys & Girls Club of America. A year and a half ago, Roxanne attended a White House summit on malaria hosted by Laura

and me, and she was touched by the suffering that malaria inflicts on African children. And so she pledged to rally American children to help. And she acted on the pledge. Sometimes in life, you get the pledgers and not doers; in this case, it was the pledger and the doer.

More than 150 Boys & Girls Clubs have joined the campaign to raise funds and spread awareness. Local clubs have held events ranging from car washes to bake sales to walkathons. All together, Boys & Girls Clubs have raised some \$25,000, more than enough to buy 2,500 bed nets for families in Africa.

I know the boys and girls will probably never meet any of the lives who are being saved. I had the honor of traveling to Africa, and I can assure all who've been helping, the people of Africa are most grateful to the American citizens for their help.

The second Dragonfly Award winner is Zachary Ellenthal, who happens to be from Connecticut. When Zach celebrated his bar mitzvah last October, he asked family and friends not to give him money. Instead, he wrote a letter with facts about malaria in sub-Saharan Africa and asked his guests to consider donating to Malaria No More. He even set up a web page so they could make donations online. As a result of this man's compassion and decency, he raised more than \$11,000 to purchase bed nets. And Zachary—[*applause*].

The final Dragonfly Award winner is Allyson Brown from Florida. Allyson came up with an innovative way to combine two of her passions: one, fighting malaria in Africa, and school dances. She put together a fundraising dance with the theme Stayin' Alive and came away with more than \$1,600 in donations. Then she built upon her success by working with Malaria No More to start a nationwide Stayin' Alive campaign. So far, more than 100 schools in 30 States have joined. Together, they've raised more than \$30,000 to purchase bed nets. Allyson will be graduating from high

school this year, and she's on her way to Florida State University.

The interesting thing is, there are countless stories like this across America. From major corporations, to the NBA and WNBA, to small-town faith-based groups, the American people are rallying to stop a preventable and treatable disease. I try to explain to people that the great compassion of America is defined by the thousands of acts of kindness that take place on a daily basis.

The Federal Government is doing our part; we have a role to play. In 2005, I launched what we've called the President's Malaria Initiative, which is a 5-year, \$1.2 billion initiative to cut the number of malaria-related deaths in 15 African nations by half. In other words, we're focusing our attempt with a clear goal. It's an ambitious goal, but the program is off to a very strong start. In just 2 years, the initiative has helped provide bed nets and antimalaria medicine, insecticide sprays, and prenatal drugs to an estimated 25 million people in sub-Saharan Africa.

Behind these numbers are whole communities looking to the future with renewed hope. Laura and I saw this. As I've mentioned, we went to Africa in February. It was such a touching moment to hold babies in our arms who might have died without the support of our fellow citizens. We visited children your age who can go to school because they're free of malaria. And the good news is, we listened to determined African leaders described how life is being transformed for their people and how they want to help, how they thank the American people for their great compassion, but understand it's their responsibility to put strategies in place and to see that they're followed through.

I want to tell you an amazing statistic, and this is what's going to happen all across Africa where we're focusing our efforts. In Tanzania, the percentage of infants in Zanzibar infected with malaria has dropped from about 20 percent to less than 1 per-

cent in 2 years. There are thousands more children who can grow up healthy, who will be able to contribute to their society and reach their potential. Here's—one man said, when he summed up America's efforts to fight malaria, he called it "a godsend."

America is proud to lead the way, and we are urging other nations to join us. Last summer, we had a meeting, what's called the G-8, and I called upon them to join the United States and match our commitment to cut malaria deaths in half in an additional 15 countries. So we're willing to take the lead on 15 countries where we're needed—where help is needed the most, but we expect you as well, as nations to whom much is given, to be joining us. And they made their pledges; they made their promises. And we're going to have a meeting in July, another G-8 meeting in July, and they need to make sure that they meet their pledges. There are babies dying needlessly on the continent of Africa, and if they have made a pledge to support the efforts to fight malaria, they need to write the checks. And I, of course, will be reminding them of that in a very gentle way—[laughter]—diplomatic fashion.

Our efforts to fight malaria means that we're answering a moral imperative. It's in our Nation's moral interests to do this. We're a better nation, collectively a better nation, that when we help people, when we save lives—but it's also a strategy that advances our security interests as well. From experience, we understand that the terrorists and extremists can only find fertile recruiting grounds where they find hopelessness. Their ideology is so backwards, so distorted, so hateful, nobody really wants to follow it unless you're so hopeless that it becomes appealing. And so the best way to defeat this ideology of hate is with acts of compassion and love. The best way to defeat an ideology of darkness is to spread the light of hope.

And that's exactly what we're doing. So to my fellow citizens, I not only say it's in our moral interests to help, it's in our

strategic interest to help defeat these ideologues who murder the innocent to achieve their political objectives.

America is fully committed to this mission of mercy. The United States of America is doing the right thing, and your Government and the people of this country are showing their kindness and compassion and decency. Any American who wants to become involved in this mission can go to [fightingmalaria.gov](http://fightingmalaria.gov). It's pretty easy. All you got to do is type in [fightingmalaria.gov](http://fightingmalaria.gov), and you can find out how you can help a worthy and noble and necessary cause.

I thank you for coming and giving me a chance to explain our initiative. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:44 a.m. at the Northwest Boys & Girls Club. In his remarks, he referred to Roxanne Spillett, president and chief executive officer, Boys & Girls Clubs of America; entertainer Melinda Doolittle; and Samuel S. Gray, Jr., president and chief executive officer, Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford, Inc. The Malaria Awareness Day proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## The President's Radio Address *April 26, 2008*

Good morning. As we approach graduation season, many American students are looking forward to beginning college in the fall. This new chapter of life is a time of great expectation but can also be a time of anxiety. And that anxiety is being heightened by the recent credit crunch, which has raised concerns about the potential availability of student loans.

Recently, some lenders have dropped out of the Federal program that provides college loans to students who have often little or no credit. Without an adequate response, this means that many students may approach the upcoming school year uncertain of when they will be able to get their loans or where they will come from.

A slowdown in the economy shouldn't mean a downturn in educational opportunities. So we're taking decisive action now to ensure that college is accessible and affordable for students around the country.

One way we're helping is through the Department of Education's lender of last resort program, which works to provide loans for students who are unable to secure one from a lender. The Department is taking steps to ensure that the agencies in-

involved in this program are ready and able to meet their responsibilities. If necessary, the Government will help fund these loans. With these actions, we will help ensure that a college education is not unnecessarily denied to those who have earned it.

These are important first steps, but more needs to be done. Congress needs to pass legislation that would give my administration greater authority to buy Federal student loans. By doing so, we can ensure that lenders will continue to participate in the guaranteed loan program and ensure that students continue to have access to tuition assistance.

A bill that would do this has already passed the House of Representatives. It is called the "Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act." This bill provides the necessary tools for safeguarding student loans without permanently expanding the Government's role in their financing. The authority the bill grants is temporary and would be used only if it became apparent there was a shortage of loans available to students.