

Remarks on National Volunteer Week April 29, 2008

Be seated. Welcome. What a great day for the White House. I am pleased to welcome volunteers from the—around the United States who have given of their time to help those who need help. And we're sure glad you're here. Those of you today who perform acts of kindness do so out of love, and you do so out of the desire not to be recognized. But anyway, you're going to be recognized. We have the opportunity today to thank you and the opportunity today to celebrate the difference that volunteers have made all across America.

I want to thank Jean Case, who's the Chairman of the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation. And I want to thank the members of the Council who are here.

And I thank David Eisner, the CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service; Jack Hawkins, the Director of Volunteers for Prosperity, USAID; Ron Tschetter, Director of the Peace Corps; and other Peace Corps volunteers who are here—about which I'm going to say something a little later. *[Laughter]* This tends to be an enthusiastic bunch, and so I would ask you to—*[laughter]*—keep your enthusiasm in check for just a minute. *[Laughter]*

The spirit of charity that is celebrated here has been a part of our character, our Nation's character, ever since before we were an independent nation. In 1736, for example, Benjamin Franklin organized the citizens of Philadelphia to form a volunteer fire company. Isn't that interesting? A lot of our—a lot has changed since then, but the principle that inspired Benjamin Franklin is still true today all throughout the communities in America.

Those of you who are here today understand the lesson, how you can gain by giving. You can understand how volunteering can transform the souls, both who give and those they help. When you teach a child

to read, for example, you not only improve their chances for success in the world, but you become invested in the progress of a young life. When you visit the elderly, you remind them that they are loved, and you remind yourself of how deeply we all feel the need for compassion. When you help the homeless find shelter, you remove the pain of need and rediscover the resiliency of the human spirit.

While there are many ways that Government can help society's least advantaged—and we try to do our best here in Washington—it can never replicate the private acts of goodness and the ties of affection they create between Americans. And that is why our administration has focused on empowering citizens with open hearts, not just Government programs by opening up checkbooks.

I strongly support the faith-based and community-based initiative. I believe it is in Government's interest to empower those neighborhood healers and helpers, social entrepreneurs to be able to complete their acts of love and compassion. Government is love in—Government is justice and law; it's not love. Love is found in the hearts of our fellow citizens. And the true strength of America truly is found in the hearts and souls of Americans who hear the universal call to love a neighbor.

One of the ways that we have tried to encourage volunteerism is through the creation of the USA Freedom Corps. The Freedom Corps is an attempt—and a successful attempt, I might add—to create a culture of service and citizenship and responsibility. And so one way to be useful in the Government level is to provide a way for citizens to become connected to service opportunities in their communities. And it's working, it really is. Last year alone, more than 60 million—60 million volunteers from all across America provided

social services and aid to those in need, both here at home and abroad.

The volunteers oftentimes work for large charitable organizations, or they find individual opportunities in their own community. But it always requires someone willing to say, "I want to help somebody else." And so Americans, if they want to find out how they can help, if you're motivated by Volunteer Week, or if you're motivated by hearing this message—you're motivated by a neighbor saying, "Gosh, it's really made my life better to help somebody in need," why don't you go to the web site of USA Freedom Corps. And you can look it up at volunteer.gov. It's not all that hard. You just get on there and type volunteer.gov. [Laughter] And you can find opportunities to be able to serve your country by helping somebody who needs some help.

Another step we've taken is the creation of the Presidential Council on Service and Civic Participation. And one of the Council's initiatives is awarding the President's Volunteer Service Award, which is a distinction that honors hard work and dedication. It's a way to say thanks. We can't give everybody an award; I wish we could. So we try to herald people who can set a good example for others.

And this year, we focused on recognizing volunteer programs that are started in corporate America. I believe corporate America has got an enormous responsibility to give back to their communities—and so too those who are being honored today. Paul Otellini and Barry Salzberg are with us. I'm going to talk about each one of them individually.

First, Barry Salzberg. He's the CEO of Deloitte, and he is—he understands the need to be a good corporate citizen. He understands corporate giving is an essential part of being a good citizen in the United States of America. He himself has been a board member of several charitable organizations, including the College Summit, the YMCA of Greater New York, and the

Committee for Encouraging Corporate Philanthropy.

Under his leadership, Deloitte has committed to providing pro bono services worth up to \$50 million for the nonprofit sector over the next 3 years. And Barry, thank you very much for being here.

And then there's Paul Otellini. Glad you're here, Paul. He happens to be the CEO of a little mom and pop operation called Intel. [Laughter] Intel will be celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. The company could have chosen to mark this occasion by simply looking back on its four decades of impressive accomplishments, but instead, as a result of Paul's leadership, the company has chosen to celebrate with a great act of compassion: Intel has committed to 1 million hours of volunteer service by its employees. This is a huge effort, and I can't tell you how appreciative we are of your generosity, but more importantly, those who you will help are more appreciative of your generosity. Please thank your employees for their—[applause].

There is a lot of volunteer work here in America. Every day, there are just countless acts of compassion. And interestingly enough, it doesn't require one Government law. As a matter of fact, oftentimes people are inspired by a higher law.

And there are also countless acts of compassion overseas. One of the great joys for Laura and me is to—as we travel, is to be able to see ordinary citizens from the United States helping save babies' lives as a result of the malaria initiative or working with orphans who have been left alone because of HIV/AIDS. And also, it's a chance for us to really run into one of the great organizations that Government has sponsored. It's called the Peace Corps.

Forty-seven years ago, President John F. Kennedy, in the Rose Garden, sent the first team of Peace Corps volunteers to Africa. And in the intervening years, more than 190,000 Peace Corps volunteers have carried our country's great spirit of generosity and compassion throughout the world.

Laura and I met with Peace Corps volunteers in Ghana recently, and they are some kind of fired up. [Laughter] And a matter of fact, it is exciting to be with those good souls who are motivated to put—to go help, and in so doing, it really is the best foreign policy America could possibly have.

And today I just had my picture taken with a group of spirited volunteers—[laughter]—who are headed to Guatemala. And I thank you all for your service. And I'm glad you're here, and thanks for coming.

I believe strongly in the admonition to whom much is given, much is required. Those of you here today are living up to that noble calling, and you carry on the best traditions of American citizenship. In my first Inaugural Address, I said, it's im-

portant to be a citizen, not a spectator. And there's no better way to be a citizen [than]* to be a soldier in the armies of compassion, a foot soldier.

And so today we commemorate your work and the work of volunteers all across the country, here at the White House. I appreciate the lasting legacy that you've helped create in the hearts of our fellow citizens. I thank you for what you do. And I ask for God's blessings on your work. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:58 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. The National Volunteer Week proclamation of April 22 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Honoring the 2008 National and State Teachers of the Year April 30, 2008

The President. Good morning. Good morning. Welcome to the White House. Welcome to the Rose Garden. We're walking out of the Oval Office, Mike turns to me and says, "I like what you've done with the place." [Laughter] All I did was mow the lawn. [Laughter] Glad you're here.

I'm really glad to be taking a part of an event that honors America's teachers. It's a tradition that started with Harry Truman. It's a tradition that Laura and I have really enjoyed carrying on. She's not here, unfortunately. She sends her best. You know, I like to tell people that, you know, one of the interesting questions you get in my line of work is, "Can you name a teacher who had influenced you?" I said, "Yes, my wife." [Laughter]

But she and Jenna are out promoting a new book that they wrote called "Read All About It." I'm not suggesting that people buy it, of course. That would be un-

seemly here in the Rose Garden. [Laughter] But it is a book they're attempting to promote literacy. She sends her love. She understands what it means to be a teacher. We were so honored that our little girl chose to be a teacher as well. It made her dad feel really well. I'm sure—I just hope you know the influence you have on children. I suspect you do; that's why you're such a good teacher.

Good teachers hear a call. Good teachers are empathetic souls. And really, the best teachers have a special intuition and, I suspect, a little potential, and so the ability to see potential and the ability to have the patience necessary to watch it grow. I want to thank you for nurturing young minds. I thank you for providing such wonderful examples. And I thank you for inspiring the imaginations and unleashing the talents of our Nation's young.

* White House correction.