

administration will be going down. We're looking forward to hearing from, you know, the local folks. I'm confident there will be people that are very frustrated because their lives have been severely affected by this storm. And my message will be that we hear you, and we'll work as hard and fast as we can to help you get your lives back up to normal.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:05 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at a State Dinner Honoring President John Agyekum Kufuor of Ghana *September 15, 2008*

Mr. President and Mrs. Kufuor and family members; members of the Cabinet; Mr. Vice President; Members of Congress; distinguished guests: Thank you all for coming. Laura and I are really happy to host you tonight. And we're particularly happy to host President Kufuor and Mrs. Kufuor. After all, we were in their country last February, and it was a unbelievable visit in spite of my lousy dancing. [*Laughter*] Mrs. Kufuor was my partner, and she can testify to my lousy dancing. [*Laughter*]

The memories of the trip will always stay with us, Mr. President. It was a great experience. You're the President of a country of such great potential, and you're President of a country of such wonderful people.

We really do want to—I hope you relax tonight for this special evening. After dinner we'll go out to the Rose Garden for a—interesting entertainment.

John and I will be joining the ex-Presidents club in a couple of months. [*Laughter*] But I am confident we have left behind an enduring relationship between our two countries. We are—we've worked hard to help the people of Ghana. Because of his integrity and because of his leadership, I was confident in proposing the Millennium Challenge Account for the country of Ghana.

We're working hard to fight disease together. In this room are compassionate people who care deeply about the citizens of your country, John. And we want to thank you for your compassion and thank you for coming. We care deeply about the education of people all across the globe. John, you've helped your people build a thriving democracy, where the rule of law is respected. And as well, you've taken a leadership role on the continent of Africa.

I thank you for your wise counsel and your judgment on how the United States can work to promote peace. I really have greatly enjoyed serving with you in an historic era. I have confidence that the next Presidents of both our countries will be able to work together.

In the meantime, I offer you a toast. I wish you all the best in your retirement. I have loved being in your presence. And so a toast to the President, and his gracious wife Theresa, and the people of Ghana.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:02 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Kufuor.

Remarks Following a Briefing on Hurricane Ike Recovery Efforts in
Houston, Texas
September 16, 2008

The President. So listen, I have come home to the great State under very difficult circumstances for the people who live down here. My first observation is that the State government and local folks are working very closely and working hard and have put a good response together. The evacuation plan was excellent in its planning and in execution. The rescue plan was very bold. And we owe a debt of gratitude to those who were on the frontline pulling people out of harm's way, like the Coast Guard people behind us here.

I'm now asking questions about how the Federal Government can help the response and help the recovery effort begin. One thing is, is that we have decided to match 100 percent—or pay 100 percent with no State match for debris removal, as well as the emergency preparedness that the State and local governments have put in place and executed.

Secondly, obviously, people are concerned about electricity and, you know, the—what I look for—or is there enough help to get these energy companies to do what they instinctively want to do, which is get the grid up and running. And I'm told by the folks who are monitoring this that there is a lot of people that are coming into this State to help restring wires, and that there's a lot of focus on getting the grid up. And so the sooner this electricity gets going, obviously, the easier it is going to be to help recover.

People have been moved out of their homes, and I know a lot of people are anxious to get back in. I urge you to listen to State and local authorities before you come back. It is their considered judgment which is important for you. And I know some are concerned about whether or not the government will reimburse you for your stay, and the answer is yes. We've got a

plan for the next 30 days, and of course, we'll continue to monitor this situation as to reimbursing you for your time away from home.

One thing that's a concern is to whether or not we're getting water and fuel distributed. We just had a good discussion about how to make sure that we continue the—making sure these points of distribution are fully supplied. Step one is, do we have points of distribution in place? And then, how do we make sure they are supplied in a way that meets the people's needs? And the State and the Federal Government are sharing that responsibility—the Federal Government inside Harris County, primarily the State outside Harris County. Thus far—I know there are some shortages, but thus far, the demand has been met. And we'll continue to monitor the situation to make sure that people are taken care of.

We're fixing to go down to Galveston and obviously going to see a devastated part of this fantastic State. And it'll give the Governor and me and the Congressmen, Senator, and others a chance to express our heartfelt sympathies for those whose lives have been, you know, disrupted. You know, it's a tough situation on the coast. I have been President long enough to have seen tough situations and have seen the resilience of the people be able to deal with a tough situation. It may be hard for people to now envision a better Galveston or a better Orange or some of these other communities that have been affected. But I know, with proper help from the Federal Government and State government, there will be a better tomorrow.

And so it is with—you know, it is good to be home. I'm just sorry it's under these circumstances.