

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:33 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to memoranda on the Energy Inde-

pendence and Security Act of 2007 and the State of California request for waiver under 42 U.S.C. 7543(b), the Clean Air Act.

## Remarks Prior to a Meeting With United States Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton *January 26, 2009*

So I'm pleased to have a chance to confer with Senator Mitchell, as well as Secretary Clinton, on this initiative around the Arab-Israeli peace process. And we're fortunate to have such a talented and dedicated public servant who is willing to take on what I think everybody understands is going to be a very tough job.

The cause of peace in the Middle East is important to the United States and our national interests; it's important to me personally; it is important to Arabs and Jews; it is important to Christians and Muslims and Jews all around the world. And the charge that Senator Mitchell has is to engage vigorously and consistently in order for us to achieve genuine progress.

And when I say "progress"—not just photo ops, but progress that is concretely felt by people on the ground, so that people feel more secure in their lives, so that they feel that the hopes and dreams and aspirations of their children can be met. That is going to be our task. It is not something that we're going to be able to do overnight, but I'm absolutely confident that if the United States is engaged in a consistent way and an early—in early fashion, that we can make genuine progress.

Now, understand that Senator Mitchell is going to be fully empowered by me and fully em-

powered by Secretary Clinton. So when he speaks, he will be speaking for us. And I'm hopeful that during this initial trip—one of the earliest initiatives that we have taken diplomatically—that not only is he able to communicate effectively how urgent we consider the issue, but that we're also going to be able to listen and to learn and to find out what various players in the region are thinking.

And more immediately, we hope that Senator Mitchell will be able to give us some ideas in terms of how we can solidify the cease-fire, ensure Israel's security, also ensure that Palestinians in Gaza are able to get the basic necessities they need and that they can see a pathway towards long-term development that will be so critical in order for us to achieve a lasting peace.

So I'm very grateful for Senator Mitchell for doing this. I'm grateful to Secretary Clinton for her leadership in making sure this happened early. And what we're now going to do is to discuss some of the details of the trip. So unfortunately, I'm going to be kicking you out. [*Laughter*]

All right, thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:33 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

## Statement on India's Republic Day *January 26, 2009*

As the people of India and people of Indian origin in America and around the world celebrate Republic Day on January 26, I send the warmest greetings of the American people to the people of India. Together, we celebrate our shared belief in democracy, liberty, pluralism, and religious tolerance.

Our nations have built broad and vibrant partnerships in every field of human endeavor. Our rapidly growing and deepening friendship with India offers benefits to all the world's citizens as our scientists solve environmental challenges together, our doctors discover new medicines, our engineers advance our societies, our

entrepreneurs generate prosperity, our educators lay the foundation for our future generations, and our Governments work together to advance peace, prosperity, and stability around the globe.

It is our shared values that form the bedrock of a robust relationship across peoples and governments. Those values and ideals provide the strength that enables us to meet any challenge, particularly from those who use vio-

lence to try to undermine our free and open societies. As the Indian people celebrate Republic Day all across India, they should know that they have no better friend and partner than the people of the United States. It is in that spirit that I also wish Prime Minister Singh a quick recovery.

NOTE: The statement referred to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India.

## Message on the Observance of the Lunar New Year *January 26, 2009*

I send my warmest wishes to people across Asia, in America, and indeed around the world who are celebrating the Lunar New Year and welcoming the Year of the Ox. As they gather with their families and celebrate over meals, they welcome new beginnings and honor the enduring wisdom of their ancestors.

From the lion dances in San Francisco to festivals in Atlanta and parades in New York City and Washington, DC, Americans of Asian descent carry on the vibrant traditions of their forefathers and enrich America's cultural diversity. I wish all those celebrating the New Year to be blessed with peace, prosperity, and good health.

## Remarks at a Swearing-In Ceremony for Timothy F. Geithner as Secretary of the Treasury *January 26, 2009*

Thank you, please have a seat. A short time ago, the United States Senate voted to confirm Timothy Geithner as our next Secretary of the Treasury. That deserves some applause. [*Applause*] I want to thank Democratic and Republican Senators for their show of confidence in Tim, and I want to thank Tim and Carole for their willingness to serve their country at a time when that service is desperately needed.

Now, I came here tonight because, at this moment of challenge and crisis, Tim's work and the work of the entire Treasury Department must begin at once. We cannot lose a day, because every day the economic picture is darkening, here and across the globe. Just today we learned that seven major corporations will be laying off thousands more workers. This comes on top of the 2.5 million jobs we lost last year. And it will take a Secretary of the Treasury who understands this challenge and all its complexities to help lead us forward.

When Alexander Hamilton was sworn in as our first Treasury Secretary, his task was to weave together the disparate debts and economies of various States into one American system of credit and capital markets. More than two centuries later, that system is now in serious jeopardy. It has been badly weakened by an era of irresponsibility, a series of imprudent and dangerous decisions on Wall Street, and an unrelenting quest for profit with too little regard for risk, too little regulatory scrutiny, and too little accountability. The result's been a devastating loss of trust and confidence in our economy, our financial markets, and our Government. And that era must end right now, and I believe it can.

The very fact that this crisis is largely of our own making means that it is not beyond our ability to solve. Our problems are rooted in past mistakes, not our capacity for future greatness. It will take time, perhaps many years, but we can rebuild that lost trust and