

proposed a budget that cuts our deficit in half by the end of my first term. That's why we are scouring every corner of the budget and have proposed \$2 trillion in deficit reductions over the next decade. In total, our budget would bring discretionary spending for domestic programs as a share of the economy to its lowest level in nearly half a century. And we will continue making these tough choices in the months and years ahead so that as our economy recovers, we do what we must to bring down this deficit.

I'll be discussing each of these principles next week, as Congress takes up the important work of debating this budget. I realize there are those who say these plans are too ambitious to enact. To that I say that the challenges we face are too

large to ignore. I didn't come here to pass on our problems to the next President or the next generation; I came here to solve them.

The American people sent us here to get things done, and at this moment of great challenge, they are watching and waiting for us to lead. Let's show them that we are equal to the task before us, and let's pass a budget that puts this Nation on the road to lasting prosperity.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:30 p.m. on March 20 in the Library at the White House for broadcast on March 21. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 20 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 21.

Statement on France's Decision to Participate in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Military Command *March 21, 2009*

I enthusiastically welcome the decision made by French President Nicolas Sarkozy to fully re-integrate France into the NATO alliance. President Sarkozy's leadership has been essential and is much appreciated. France is a founding member of NATO and has been a strong contributor to NATO missions throughout the alliance's history. France's full participation in the NATO military command structure will further contribute to a stronger alliance and a stronger Europe. The NATO alliance has been the cornerstone of transatlantic security for the past 60

years. The United States is committed to its success and knows that it is through close cooperation with allies and partners that we can overcome our most difficult challenges. In this context, I also welcome the further strengthening of European defense capabilities. During my upcoming visit to France and Germany for the 60th anniversary NATO summit, I look forward to discussing ways to ensure that our strengthened alliance, with France as a full participant in all its structures, will be as important in the 21st century as it was in the 20th century.

Memorandum on Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians *March 20, 2009*

Memorandum for the Secretary of Homeland Security

Subject: Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians

Since 1991, the United States has provided safe haven for Liberians who were forced to flee their country as a result of armed conflict and widespread civil strife, in part through granting Temporary Protected Status (TPS).

The armed conflict ended in 2003 and conditions improved such that TPS ended effective October 1, 2007. President Bush then deferred the enforced departure of the Liberians originally granted TPS. That grant of Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) expires on March 31, 2009. I have determined that there are compelling foreign policy reasons to extend DED to those Liberians presently residing in the United States under the existing grant of DED.