

America, in the face of our common dangers, in this winter of our hardship, let us remember these timeless words. With hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents and endure what storms may come. Let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested, we refused to let this journey end; that we did not turn back, nor did we falter. And with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift

of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 12 p.m. at the West Front of the U.S. Capitol. Prior to the address, Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr., administered the oath of office. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 21.

Remarks to White House Senior Staff *January 21, 2009*

Hello, everybody. Please be seated. Still getting used to that whole thing. [Laughter] Please be seated. Thank you so much. I wanted to get everyone together on the first day to welcome you to the White House.

From our vantage point yesterday, you couldn't help but be inspired by the sight of Americans as far as the eye could see. They were there because they believe this is a moment of great change in America, a time for reinvigorating our democracy and remaking our country. They've entrusted all of us with a great responsibility. And so today I'd like to talk with you about our responsibility to keep that trust.

In a few minutes, I'm going to be issuing some of the first Executive orders and directives of my Presidency. And these steps are aimed at establishing firm rules of the road for my administration and all who serve in it and to help restore that faith in Government, without which we cannot deliver the changes we were sent here to make, from rebuilding our economy and ensuring that anyone who is willing to work can find a well-paying job to protecting and defending the United States and promoting peace and security.

However long we are keepers of the public trust, we should never forget that we are here as public servants, and public service is a privilege. It's not about advantaging yourself. It's not about advancing your friends or your corporate clients. It's not about advancing an ideological agenda or the special interests of any organization. Public service is, simply and ab-

solutely, about advancing the interests of Americans.

The men and women in this room understand this, and that's why you're here. All of you are committed to building a more responsible, more accountable Government. And part of what that means is making sure that we're spending precious tax dollars wisely and cutting costs wherever possible.

During this period of economic emergency, families are tightening their belts, and so should Washington. And that's why I am instituting a pay freeze on the salaries of my senior White House staff. Some of the people in this room will be impacted by the pay freeze, and I want you to know that I appreciate your willingness to agree to it, recognizing that it's what's required of you at this moment. It's a mark of your commitment to public service.

But the American people deserve more than simply an assurance that those who are coming to Washington will serve their interests. They also deserve to know that there are rules on the books to keep it that way. They deserve a Government that is truly of, by, and for the people. As I often said during the campaign, we need to make the White House the people's house. And we need to close the revolving door that lets lobbyists come into Government freely and lets them use their time in public service as a way to promote their own interests over the interests of the American people when they leave.

So today we are taking a major step towards fulfilling this campaign promise. The

Executive order on ethics I will sign shortly represents a clean break from business as usual. As of today, lobbyists will be subject to stricter limits than under any other administration in history. If you are a lobbyist entering my administration, you will not be able to work on matters you lobbied on or in the agencies you lobbied during the previous 2 years. When you leave Government, you will not be able to lobby my administration for as long as I am President. And there will be a ban on gifts by lobbyists to anyone serving in the administration as well.

Now, the new rules on lobbying alone, no matter how tough, are not enough to fix a broken system in Washington. That's why I'm also setting new rules that govern not just lobbyists, but all those who have been selected to serve in my administration.

If you are enlisting in Government service, you will have to commit in writing to rules limiting your role for 2 years in matters involving people you used to work with and barring you from any attempt to influence your former Government colleagues for 2 years after you leave. And you will receive an ethics briefing on what is required of you to make sure that our Government is serving the people's interests and nobody else's, a briefing, I'm proud to say, I was the first member of this administration to receive last week.

But the way to make a Government responsible is not simply to enlist the services of responsible men and women or to sign laws that ensure that they never stray. The way to make Government responsible is to hold it accountable. And the way to make Government accountable is to make it transparent so that the American people can know exactly what decisions are being made, how they're being made, and whether their interests are being well served.

The directives I am giving my administration today on how to interpret the Freedom of Information Act will do just that. For a long time now, there's been too much secrecy in this city. The old rules said that if there was a defensible argument for not disclosing something to the American people, then it should not be disclosed. That era is now over. Starting today, every agency and department should know that

this administration stands on the side not of those who seek to withhold information but those who seek to make it known.

To be sure, issues like personal privacy and national security must be treated with the care they demand. But the mere fact that you have the legal power to keep something secret does not mean you should always use it. The Freedom of Information Act is perhaps the most powerful instrument we have for making our Government honest and transparent, and of holding it accountable. And I expect members of my administration not simply to live up to the letter but also the spirit of this law.

I will also hold myself as President to a new standard of openness. Going forward, anytime the American people want to know something that I or a former President wants to withhold, we will have to consult with the Attorney General and the White House Counsel, whose business it is to ensure compliance with the rule of law. Information will not be withheld just because I say so. It will be withheld because a separate authority believes my request is well grounded in the Constitution.

Let me say it as simply as I can: Transparency and the rule of law will be the touchstones of this Presidency.

Our commitment to openness means more than simply informing the American people about how decisions are made. It means recognizing that Government does not have all the answers, and that public officials need to draw on what citizens know. And that's why, as of today, I'm directing members of my administration to find new ways of tapping the knowledge and experience of ordinary Americans—scientists and civic leaders, educators and entrepreneurs—because the way to solve the problem of our time is—the way to solve the problems of our time, as one nation, is by involving the American people in shaping the policies that affect their lives.

The Executive orders and directives I'm issuing today will not by themselves make Government as honest and transparent as it needs to be. And they do not go as far as we need to go towards restoring accountability and fiscal restraint in Washington. But these historic measures do mark the beginning of a new era of

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openness in our country. And I will, I hope, do something to make Government trustworthy in the eyes of the American people in the days and weeks, months, and years to come. That's a pretty good place to start.

Thank you very much. All right.

[At this point, the President signed Executive Order 13489, Presidential Records; Executive Order 13490, Ethics Commitments by Executive Branch Personnel; and memoranda on the Freedom of Information Act, a pay freeze for senior White House staff, and transparency and open Government.]

Thank you. Lisa, our schedule now? The swearing-in is going to be taking place, and the Vice President is going to be carrying that out? Okay.

Before the Vice President does that, let me just say how proud I am of all of you. This is an extraordinary collection of talent, and you inspire great confidence in me. I think the more the American people get to know you, the more you will inspire great confidence in the

American people. All of you have made extraordinary sacrifices to be here. Many of you have brought your families here; they're making extraordinary sacrifices.

But what a moment we're in. What an opportunity we have to change this country. And for those of us who have been in public life before, these kinds of moments come around just every so often. The American people are really counting on us now. Let's make sure we take advantage of it. I know you will. So thank you for your commitment.

Joe, do you want to administer the oath?

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:18 p.m. in the Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Attorney General-designate Eric H. Holder, Jr.; White House Counsel Gregory B. Craig; and White House Staff Secretary Lisa Brown. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden. The related Executive orders and memorandum are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on a Meeting on the Situation in Iraq

January 21, 2009

This afternoon I met with our Ambassador to Iraq, the commander in Iraq, and the overall theater commander in the region in order to get a full update on the situation in Iraq. Key members of my Cabinet and senior national security officials also participated in this meeting.

The meeting was productive, and I very much appreciated receiving assessments from these experienced and dedicated individuals. During the discussion, I asked the military leadership to engage in additional planning

necessary to execute a responsible military drawdown from Iraq.

In the coming days and weeks, I will also visit the Department of Defense to consult with the Joint Chiefs on these issues, and we will undertake a full review of the situation in Afghanistan in order to develop a comprehensive policy for the entire region.

NOTE: The statement referred to Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Forces—Iraq; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Retired Military Officers

January 22, 2009

The President. This first Executive order that we are signing: "By the authority vested in

me as President of the—President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of