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Proclamation 7421—National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day, 2001

April 2, 2001

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

From our earliest beginnings as a Nation, America has been blessed with citizens who have been willing to fight and die to preserve our shared ideals. We owe our freedom to men and women who have responded heroically to the call of patriotic duty. In times of peace and war, in times of great conflict, and even in peacetime, they stood tall. Facing the horrors of combat, young Americans placed themselves squarely in harm's way.

Among all these ranks of brave Americans, our living former prisoners of war form a living testament to the courage Americans have shown in defending liberty. During World War II and the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, prisoners endured, in addition to separation from their loved ones, isolation, disease, and torture. More recently, American troops in the Persian Gulf stood bravely in the face of enemy capture and returned home with honor.

The men and women who suffered through the atrocious conditions of internment deserve our utmost gratitude and respect. Their fortitude serves as an example of placing the ideals of freedom and self-government above one's own interests. We also owe a debt of gratitude to their families for weathering agonizing uncertainty while demonstrating support for their loved ones' service to country.

In World War II, patriotic Americans stepped forward without hesitation to carry America's honor into unknown battlefields. Many thousands gave their lives as the ultimate sacrifice, both on the battlefield and in the deadly prison camps of the Pacific and Europe.

We are particularly mindful this month of anniversaries reminding us of the contributions former prisoners of war have made to our freedom. April marks the anniversary of the first return of American POWs from North Korea during Operation Little Switch. These prisoners endured bitter cold and inadequate food, clothing, and medical care in their brave effort to stop the spread of communism.

This April is also the 28th anniversary of the end of Operation Homecoming, in which our Vietnam-era POWs returned to freedom. Americans held prisoner during that war, some for as long as 9 years, were subject to torture and the horrors of isolation. They survived only through their faith, character, and patriotism.

On this date, we remember the sacrifices of those imprisoned while serving America. We remain committed to ensuring that future generations know of their heroism in order to fully appreciate their courage and resolve. Although they returned home safely, their physical and emotional scars remain as a reminder of the high price of liberty.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 9, 2001, as National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day. I call upon all the people of the United States to join me in remembering former American prisoners of war who suffered the hardships of enemy captivity. I also call upon Federal, State, and local government officials and private organizations to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fifth.

George W. Bush

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 5.

Remarks at a Leadership Forum in Wilmington, Delaware

April 3, 2001

The President. Thank you, Mr. Jones. I'm honored to be here. Thank you all.

Claven Jones. Before we all get started here, can I ask you a question?

The President. You can do anything you—it's your building, you can do anything you want. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Jones. What did you think about those Power Hour kids upstairs? Weren't they great?

The President. I loved seeing the Power Hour kids. I know societies can change one person at a time. And while those of us in Government are trying to do the best we can with budgets and taxes, what we can't do is make people love one another. But what we can do is encourage loving people to help. And so I saw the Power Hour as an opportunity for children to improve themselves, but I also saw it as an opportunity for people to give something back in our society.

And so I want to thank you for giving me the chance to come. I want to say a couple of things. First, I'm honored to be traveling with the Delaware delegation, the two United States Senators: Senator Biden and Senator Carper. These are smart, capable people. I just hope they do it the way I think they ought to be doing it. [*Laughter*]

We will find—I will assure you this—we'll find areas where you can agree. I noticed Senator Carper dropped a strong charter school bill—and I was at Maurice's school earlier in the year. And Tom and I come from the Governors ranks; we worked a lot together; there's a lot of areas where we know we can work together to improve public education. And there's going to be some times we don't agree, but my pledge to the American people and the people of Delaware is, when we disagree, it will be done in a way that's respectful, where we can treat each other with respect, where we don't have to have this needless name-calling and finger-pointing to get ahead.

And I respect these two Senators. I may not like every vote. Of course, they may not like every proposal. But I can assure you that we're working hard to change the attitude of Washington, DC, so there is a more respectful attitude and so there can be a more civil debate about where this country ought to go.

And then, of course, I was pleased to see that I got 100 percent support on one of my proposals from the Delaware delegate, and that is Mike Castle. And one thing I love about Mike is that he is a very thoughtful Member who stays focused. And his focus is education, amongst a lot of other things, but his main drive right now is to make sure we get the education bill right.

And the education bill that we're trying to get out of the House, and eventually the Senate, mirrors much of what you've done here in Delaware under the leadership of then-Governor Carper. And I see members of the legislature here as well. It really says, every child can learn; it's important to trust local people to run the schools; and we must have accountability to determine whether or not every child is learning. And if children are learning, we'll praise the teachers and principals and superintendents. But if not, instead of just moving children through the system as if they don't matter, we address the problems early, before it's too late. Strong accountability systems lead to reforms.

Senator Carper, then-Governor Carper, recognized that. I think I got some credit for recognizing that in the State of Texas. And the whole cornerstone of the reform movement that we're trying to get out of the Senate and the House says that if you receive Federal aid, you, the State, must devise an accountability system to let the folks know whether or not children are learning.

And oh, by the way, let's also have a reading—national reading program that starts teaching children to read early. Let's have after-school programs called 21st Century Programs that not only are run by public school institutions, if that's what the local community wants, but also says, programs—community programs or faith-based programs are just as capable about running programs as anybody else is. And so all the Federal money, as far as I'm concerned, for after-school programs ought to be opened up to every program in the State of Delaware.

And so I'm here to say thanks for what you do. It's good to see—I was going to say old friends, Maurice—friends I've known for a while—not all that old. Maurice runs a great charter school here, as you all know, and he's done a fantastic job.

Mr. Jones—I told him earlier that I wrote a bestseller—actually, I didn't write it; they say—they claimed I wrote it—called "A Charge To Keep," and it's actually about me. So if you're having trouble sleeping at night, you may want to pick it up. [*Laughter*] At any rate—but all the proceeds are going to the Big Brothers and Big Sisters programs and Boys and Girls Clubs of America, because I believe so profoundly—I believe so strongly in mentoring, and I believe so strongly in helping children understand somebody loves them. And Government can't do that, but what Government can do is facilitate programs and allow faith-based programs to access Federal monies so that they can help change hearts.

I don't believe we ought to fund religion, but I do think we ought to fund a person, and that person should be able to choose whether or not to find help at a faith-based program or a secular program.

I view the Boys and Girls Clubs as faith-based programs, by the way, programs based upon the universal concept of loving a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. And for that, I'm grateful. I want to congratulate the board of directors of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Delaware for having such a profound impact. One in seven children in this State are members of the Boys and Girls Clubs, for which I know you all are most proud.

Rather than falling into the legislative tradition of filibustering, I will now end my remarks by thanking you all for your hospitality, and I look forward to hearing from you.

[*The forum began.*]

The President. How old is your charter school?

John Taylor. Our charter school is in its first year.

The President. Great. How's it going?

Mr. Taylor. It is going well. It is going very well.

The President. Did you have many applicants for your charter school?

Mr. Taylor. Yes, we did have quite a few applicants.

The President. And what grades?

Mr. Taylor. We are currently servicing children between kindergarten and fifth grade.

The President. Oh, great. Big jump. Thanks for teaching.

[*The forum continued.*]

The President. Thank you for encouraging mentoring. You know, the great strength of the country takes place when somebody walks across the street or raises their hand and says, "What can I do to help? What can I do to help somebody in need?" And it's the cumulative kindness of America that really makes our country so different from everyplace else. And it's really important for all of us to understand the power of mentoring and what it means, because really what it means is recognizing that America will be changed one soul at a time.

And I want to thank you for encouraging the Kiwanis to become mentors. And pass the word that the President and the Senators and the Congressmen really do recognize the limitation of Government and recognize the power of love and faith and hope.

[*The forum continued.*]

The President. One of the things we've all got to do in our society is to encourage and herald the education entrepreneurs all across the country. And the idea of change and recognizing each student—an accountability system recognizing the talents and needs of each student is an incredible part of reform. And that's what the legislation we're working on in the Senate and the House is going to foster.

And what triggered my thinking is, there's a lot of times where public schools don't change; their systems are inert; they just won't move. And yet, we've got three schools that are new—four—four new ideas, which shows that the State of Delaware has got a system that encourages change when change is needed. And that's the message we're trying to get to Members of the Senate and Congress who don't want change.

One thing—we're going to spend more money, and that's important, but as well, there needs to be a systemic change to not only encourage parental involvement but to recognize that the systems have got to be

geared on a child-by-child basis. And good accountability measures do that.

We were at a—I saw a computer—I'm sorry to get going here, but we saw a computer upstairs that was able to take a child, figure out its level of learning, and the program adjusts immediately to that child, and then another child gets on, the program adjusts to the learning capacities of that particular child. That's what education systems need to evolve toward, individualized learning, as opposed to lumping kids into groups and just kind of shuffling through the system.

And I appreciate what you're doing.

[*The forum continued.*]

The President. Thanks. Let me say one thing—Lucretia talked about partnerships. Senator Biden reminded me that some of the money in the program here came from Microsoft and AOL—the point being that corporate Delaware or corporate Texas or corporate America can play a major role in making sure that we match assets with needs, particularly in programs that focus on our youth.

And I want to thank corporate Delaware and your company, as well as others who have heard the call that part of making sure that capitalism runs the full gamut is not only to be able to make a good bottom line, which we all hope for, but also to put something back into the system. So if you're calling for people to put more back in the system, I'm calling right with you.

[*The forum continued.*]

The President. Yes, I want you all to hear—it's an interesting thing he just said. He said the tutorials take place in the church. That doesn't mean that—let me start over. It means that we need to focus on the child and not on the process.

How sad would it be if our system said, "You can't have tutorials in churches because of the legal process"? And it's important for our society to keep in mind, every child matters. And we ought to be heralding the Reverend Johnsons of the world, as opposed to trying to thwart the Reverend Johnsons of the world. That's what the whole Faith-Based Initiative in Congress is about.

I appreciate what you do. Keep doing it, like I know you will.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 a.m. in the Bears Den Gymnasium at the H. Fletcher Brown Boys and Girls Club. In his remarks, he referred to Claven Jones, director, H. Fletcher Brown Boys and Girls Club; Maurice Pritchett, principal, Bancroft Elementary School; Lucretia Young, director, Warner Street YMCA; and John Taylor, principal, and Rev. Clifford I. Johnson, founder, Marion T. Academy.

Remarks Calling on China To Return the United States Military Crew and Surveillance Aircraft

April 3, 2001

Good afternoon. I want to report to the American people, and especially to the families involved, that I've just talked with Brigadier General Sealock, who earlier today met with our 24 men and women in China.

The general tells me they are in good health; they suffered no injuries; and they have not been mistreated. I know this is a relief to their loved ones and to all Americans.

Our crewmembers expressed their faith in America, and we have faith in them. They send their love to their families. They said they're looking forward to coming home, and we are looking forward to bringing them home.

This is an unusual situation in which an American military aircraft had to make an emergency landing on Chinese soil. Our approach has been to keep this accident from becoming an international incident. We have allowed the Chinese Government time to do the right thing. But now it is time for our service men and women to return home, and it is time for the Chinese Government to return our plane.

This accident has the potential of undermining our hopes for a fruitful and productive relationship between our two countries. To keep that from happening, our service men and women need to come home.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:03 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks,