

came. And Lloyd, thank you—and Shirley—for your beautiful comments. It really meant a lot.

When the first Continental Congress met at Carpenters Hall in Philadelphia, one of its first official acts was prayer. In 1779, the Day of Prayer Proclamation asked that “Almighty God would grant the blessings of peace to all contending nations, freedom to those who are in bondage, and comfort to the afflicted.”

During our Nation’s darkest hour, our Nation’s greatest President called America back to prayer. President Abraham Lincoln urged his fellow citizens to “look to the redeeming and preserving grace of God.” And Americans wisely accepted President Lincoln’s counsel.

America is a country of faith. And throughout our history, in times of crisis and in times of calm, Americans have always turned to prayer. And this year’s event has special meaning. Since the attacks of September the 11th, millions—millions—of Americans of every religious faith have been led to prayer. They have prayed for comfort in a time of sorrow, for courage in a time of fear, and for understanding in a time of anger. They have prayed for wisdom in the midst of war and for strength on the journey ahead.

These prayers have been made in private homes and in houses of worship, alone and with others, in moments of doubt and in times of thanksgiving. These prayers have been heartfelt, and they have made a tremendous difference. Prayer for others is a generous act. It sweeps away bitterness and heals old wounds. Prayer leads to greater humility and a more grateful spirit. It strengthens our commitment to things that last and things that matter. It deepens our love for one another.

Prayer also deepens faith, reminding us of great truths: Evil and suffering are only for a time; love and hope endure. Even in the world’s most bitter conflicts, prayer reminds us of God’s love and grace, His mercy and faithfulness, the hope He provides, and the peace He promises.

Prayer is central to the lives of countless Americans, including Laura’s and mine. We have been blessed by the prayers of millions of Americans. We could ask for no greater gift from our countrymen.

I want to thank you all for coming here to the White House to celebrate this special day, for your devotion to prayer, and for your love of this country, and for the Lord who has blessed it for so long.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:45 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Stanley Thurston, director, Heritage Signature Chorale; Amy Burton, soloist, New York City Opera, and her son, Joshua; Lloyd J. Ogilvie, Senate Chaplain; and Rev. Daniel P. Coughlin, House Chaplain.

### **Statement on Congressional Action on the “Farm Security and Rural Development Act of 2002”**

*May 2, 2002*

I congratulate Chairman Combest and the other House and Senate conferees for a job well done in completing the “Farm Security and Rural Development Act of 2002.”

I am pleased that the compromise agreement on the farm bill resulted in better balanced commodity loan rates; spending that is no longer front-loaded; and the strongest conservation provisions of any farm bill ever passed by Congress. The final provisions of the farm bill are also consistent with America’s international trade obligations, which will strengthen our ability to open foreign markets for American farm products. While this compromise agreement did not satisfy all of my objectives, I am pleased that this farm bill provides a generous and reliable safety net for our Nation’s farmers and ranchers and is consistent with the principles I outlined.

I thank the conferees for their hard work and urge Congress to send the farm bill to my desk promptly for signature to help ensure the immediate and long-term vitality of our farm economy.

## **Proclamation 7552—National Charter Schools Week, 2002**

May 2, 2002

*By the President of the United States of America*

### **A Proclamation**

Over a decade ago in Minnesota, a handful of educators envisioned a new kind of educational institution that would provide an alternative for children trapped in under-performing public schools. Their philosophy for a “charter school” was straightforward and powerful: provide parents the option to send their children to innovative public schools that combine flexibility and autonomy with a guarantee to raise student achievement.

Today, we recognize the important successes of the charter school experiment. Nearly 2,400 charter schools now exist across our Nation. Thanks to bipartisan support at the local, State, and Federal level, more than a half-million children have attended these public schools and obtained a better education.

In reading, math, science, special education, early childhood education, and other areas, charter schools have implemented innovative programs that produce results. Charter school principals and teachers have the freedom to develop classroom techniques that meet their students’ unique needs, and parents appreciate the ability to have direct input into their children’s educational progress. Charter school administrators are accountable to students, parents, and community leaders, and they know that if their school fails to meet expectations, it must either improve or close.

The effects of charter schools extend beyond the schoolhouse walls. Wherever charter schools are clustered together, we see traditional schools reevaluate their methods and programs. At this basic level, charter schools help stimulate community debate and inspire educational excellence.

Accountability, flexibility, expanded choices, and a focus on methods that work are all important elements in the landmark, bipartisan, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which I signed into law in January. This legislation authorizes a new program, the

Charter School Facility Demonstration Project, which provides important seed funding for charter school infrastructure and construction needs. It also continues the Charter School Grants program that supports planning and development of new public charter schools. Together these programs provide valuable tools to American education. Now we must work together to implement this new legislation in all our communities so no child is left behind.

**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 28 through May 4, 2002, as National Charter Schools Week. I call on parents of charter school children to share their success stories with others so that all Americans may learn more about charter schools and their important work. I commend the States with charter schools.

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

**George W. Bush**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., May 6, 2002]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 7.

## **Remarks on Senate Inaction on Nominations for the Federal Judiciary**

May 3, 2002

Thank you all. Some of them were pretty good—and one of them was really good, right, Al? [*Laughter*]

I want to thank you all for coming, and I want to talk about an important subject, and that’s our judiciary. One of the true strengths of our democracy is a judiciary that is fair, impartial, and independent. Our courts depend on the dedicated service of men and women who are called to decide disputes. Yet today, there is a vacancy crisis on our Federal courts. Both the President