

at the paperwork from a loan application and, frankly, get a little nervous about all the fine print. Those forms can be intimidating to the first-time homebuyer. They can be intimidating to the second- or third-time homebuyer too. *[Laughter]* So this administration has proposed new rules to simplify the forms homebuyers and homeowners fill out when they apply for a loan or close on a mortgage.

We understand that buying a home is a big step, and so these three recommendations we're making, these three changes in the rules, will make that step easier, will enable people to make the step to buying a home—they'll be able to do so with more confidence. These are practical ways that we are working to expand homeownership across the country.

The dream of homeownership should be attainable for every hard-working American. That's what we want. And this act of Congress I'm going to sign, the regulations that I hope are finalized soon will help thousands of families fulfill the dream.

And so now it is my honor, right here at this important Department, the Department responsible for encouraging homeownership in America, to sign the American Dream Downpayment Act.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:57 p.m. at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. In his remarks, he referred to the late Robert Woodson, Jr., former Chief of Staff, Department of Housing and Urban Development, and his widow, Michelle; and Robert Woodson, Sr., founder and president, National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise. S. 811, approved December 16, was assigned Public Law No. 108-186. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Completion of the Kabul-Kandahar Highway

December 16, 2003

More than a year ago, Afghan President Hamid Karzai broke ground on the reconstruction of a highway that—when com-

pleted—will run through the heart of Afghanistan, helping to unify that great nation. The United States and Japan pledged to provide financing and personnel to the project, and we further pledged that the first leg—the 300 miles from the capital of Kabul to the important city of Kandahar—would be completed by the end of this year.

Today we have met that pledge, as the first phase of paving the Kabul-Kandahar leg of the highway is completed under budget and ahead of schedule. This new road reduces travel time between Kabul to Kandahar to 5 hours. It will promote political unity between Afghanistan's provinces, facilitate commerce by making it easier to bring products to market, and provide the Afghan people with greater access to health care and educational opportunities.

I am grateful for the enormous efforts of engineers and laborers from many countries who worked tirelessly and often in the face of hardship and danger to finish this leg of the road on time. This accomplishment underscores the firm commitment of the United States and coalition to support the Afghan people as they build a democratic, stable, and thriving Afghanistan.

Joint Statement Agreed to by President Bush, President Chirac, and Chancellor Schroeder

December 16, 2003

Debt reduction is critical if the Iraqi people are to have any chance to build a free and prosperous Iraq. Therefore, France, Germany, and the United States agree that there should be substantial debt reduction for Iraq in the Paris Club in 2004, and will work closely with each other and with other countries to achieve this objective. The exact percentage of debt reduction that would constitute "substantial" debt reduction is subject to future agreement between the parties.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

**Memorandum on Determination
To Authorize Drawdown for
Afghanistan**

December 16, 2003

Presidential Determination No. 2004-15

*Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the
Secretary of Defense*

*Subject: Determination to Authorize
Drawdown for Afghanistan*

Consistent with the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, including section 202 and other relevant provisions of the Afghanistan Freedom Support Act (Public Law 107-327) and section 506 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, 22 U.S.C. 2318, I hereby direct the drawdown of up to \$135 million of defense articles, defense services, and military education and training from the Department of Defense for the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan.

The Secretary of State is authorized and directed to report this determination to the Congress and to arrange for its publication in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

**Remarks on the 100th Anniversary of
the Wright Brothers' First Flight at
Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina**

December 17, 2003

Thank you all very much. Rain will never dampen our spirits. I'm honored to be here, and I'm honored to be in the great State of North Carolina.

Madam Secretary, thank you for your fine leadership and your friendship. Secretary Mineta, thank you for your great leadership, as well. I'm proud that you're serving in my Cabinet. Mr. Governor, I appreciate your kind comments. I appreciate the values you hold dear to your heart, and I thank you for leading this great State.

To John Travolta, we shall call him "Moon Man" from now on. I appreciate your friendship. I appreciate your love of flight. Thank you for being such a fine entertainer for millions of Americans, but most importantly,

thanks for being a great American. I'm proud you're here.

I appreciate the fact that the Secretary of the Navy, Gordon England, is here. The Secretary of the Air Force, James Roche, is traveling with me today. I appreciate Sean O'Keefe, who is the Administrator of NASA, who has come today. I thank all members of my administration who have joined us. I hope you were smart enough to have brought an umbrella. *[Laughter]*

I know we've got Members of the Congress who are here. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist from Tennessee is with us today. Senator Frist, thank you for coming. Senator Elizabeth Dole from the great State of North Carolina is with us. Senator Dole, thank you for being here. All Members of Congress from North Carolina and from other States, thank you for being here. I know we've got mayors and State officials.

I appreciate so very much American heroes who are here, well-known and not so well-known heroes. Let me name four of the well-known heroes who are here: Neil Armstrong; Buzz Aldrin; John Glenn; one of the great fighter pilots ever, Chuck Yeager, is with us today. We're honored to be in your presence. Thank you for being pioneers.

I'm also pleased that we're joined by Stephen Wright and Amanda Wright Lane, who both bear one of the great American names.

Powered flight has advanced in ways that could not have been imagined on December 17, 1903. And in the future, flight will advance in ways that none of us can imagine as we stand here today. Yet always, for as long as there is human flight, we will honor the achievement of a cold morning on the Outer Banks of North Carolina by two young brothers named Orville and Wilbur Wright.

Orville Wright lived to see the days of barnstorming and military aviation, the jet engine, commercial airlines, and the DC-3. The thrill of his life, however, was surely right here when he felt that first lift of the wing. He flew just 12 seconds and 40 yards, moving so slowly that his older brother ran alongside. And later in the day, with Wilbur at the controls, the machine stayed in the air for 59 seconds and traveled 852 feet. Yet everyone who was here at that hour sensed that a great line had been crossed and the