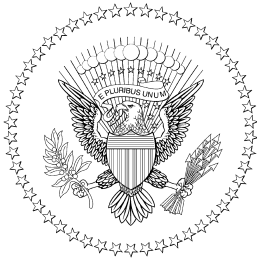


Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



Monday, March 7, 2005
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Editor's Note: The President was in Notre Dame, IN, on March 4, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, March 4, 2005

The President's Radio Address

February 26, 2005

Good morning. This past week I was in Europe, where I had good discussions with our friends and allies about how to meet the mutual challenges we face, spreading freedom and democracy, defeating terrorism, expanding prosperity, and promoting peace. In our meetings, we reaffirmed the vital importance of the transatlantic alliance for advancing these common interests and values.

Now that I'm back home, I'm eager to move ahead with one of my top domestic priorities, strengthening and saving Social Security. I have already met with tens of thousands of you in nine States to discuss this important issue. During the recent congressional recess, many Senators and Congressmen have held their own townhall meetings to discuss Social Security reform with their constituents. For example, Senator Rick Santorum hosted forums all across Pennsylvania this week, and Wisconsin Congressman Paul Ryan held nearly three dozen listening sessions in his district. I am pleased with the progress of the national discussion on this issue, and I look forward to hearing everyone's ideas when the Congress returns.

Meanwhile, I'll be visiting New Jersey and Indiana next week, and I plan to keep traveling across the country to talk about Social Security. I will continue to reassure those of you born before 1950 that your Social Security benefits will not change in any way. You will receive your checks, and that is a fact.

I will also make clear to younger workers that Social Security is heading toward bankruptcy. Massive numbers of baby boomers, like me, will soon begin to retire. People are living longer, and benefits are scheduled to increase dramatically, and fewer workers will be paying into the system to support each retiree. For you younger workers, the current system has made promises that it cannot keep, and that is also a fact. Every year we

wait to address this problem will make any eventual solution more painful and drastic, and we will saddle our children and grandchildren with an ever-greater burden. We need to act now to fix Social Security permanently.

As we fix Social Security, we must also make it a better deal for younger workers. I have proposed allowing you to set aside part of your payroll taxes in personal retirement accounts. These accounts would be voluntary; the money would go into a conservative mix of bond and stock funds that would have the opportunity to earn a higher rate of return than anything the current system could provide. And that money would provide a nest egg to supplement your traditional Social Security check or to pass on to your children. Best of all, it would replace the empty promises of the current system with real assets of ownership.

I have said repeatedly that all options are on the table for strengthening Social Security, with the exception of raising the payroll tax rate. I'm willing to listen to any good idea. And I will work in good faith with Members of Congress from both parties on this issue.

Some in Washington want to deny that Social Security has a problem, but the American people know better, and you have the power to determine the outcome of this debate. I encourage all Americans, particularly our younger workers, who have so much at stake, to ask your elected leaders what they intend to do to keep the promise of Social Security alive in the 21st century. Saving Social Security will not be easy, but if you make clear that you expect your leaders to confront problems head on, not pass them on to future generations, I am confident that we will put aside partisan politics in Washington and meet our duty to you, the American people.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8:20 a.m. on February 25 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February

26. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 25 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Dinner for the National Governors Association Conference

February 27, 2005

It's always a pleasure to host the Nation's Governors here in Washington. Laura and I are proud to have you here for our first state dinner of my second term.

It's a joyous occasion, even made more so by the fact that I learned that the Blancos, Governor Blanco and her husband, are celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary tonight.

Ever since a former Governor of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson, lived in this house, many of our Presidents have first served as Governors. And there's a reason why. The experience of running a State government, of pulling together a capable team, of setting an agenda and working with an elected legislative body, is critical to the success of any administration.

My 6 years as Governor of Texas have been invaluable to me as I carry out my duties as the Presidency. And because I know firsthand how—the valuable experience Governors get, I've asked a lot to serve in my Cabinet. I had six Governors in my first Cabinet. I am pleased that Mike Johanns—Johanns—[*laughter*]*—and Mike Leavitt—[laughter]*—have agreed to serve in my second term. I'm proud you guys are here.

When our Founders devised our Federal system two centuries ago, they recognized, in Jefferson's words, that “our country is too large to have all its affairs directed by a single government.” The President and the Governors are partners in our great enterprise, and that means we share great responsibilities. Together, we'll work to secure our homeland, to protect our environment, to strengthen our economy. Together, we will work to ensure that every child gets a good education and good health care. And together, we'll work to make sure that we care for those in our society who hurt and who need help. I'm proud of our work together

during the last 4 years. I look forward to working with you for the next 4 years.

I want to ask you to join me in a toast to our partners, the Governors and the administration, in building a more perfect Union. To the Governors of the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:06 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco of Louisiana and her husband, Raymond Blanco; Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns and his wife, Stephanie Johanns; and Health and Human Services Secretary Michael O. Leavitt and his wife, Jacalyn S. Leavitt. The transcript of these remarks was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 28.

Remarks to the National Governors Association Conference

February 28, 2005

The President. Thank you. Please be seated. Didn't take you long to get back. [*Laughter*] Hope you enjoyed that as much as I did last night. It was—Marvin was great.

I'd like to have a few—I'll make a few opening comments, and then I'll be glad to field some questions. First, I want to thank Governor Warner and Governor Huckabee for leading the NGA; I appreciate the job you've done. I thought the messaging in our local newspapers here was very positive: “Governors coming together to try to figure out how to solve common problems.” It's a good message for all of us here in Washington to hear. This town can be fairly bitter at times, and I remember fondly my days of working with people in both parties to try to get positive things done for my State. I hope that the spirit in which you all have come to Washington spreads throughout the Nation's Capital.

I appreciate the members of my Cabinet who are here. Your name is?

Secretary Johanns. Johanns. [*Laughter*]

The President. It takes a while to get to know every member of the Cabinet. [*Laughter*] And Mike Leavitt and Chertoff—oh, there you are. Good, yes. I appreciate—I hope you find these folks as candid and as

bright as I have found them. I really appreciate all three members of my Cabinet willing to come and serve in Washington. As you know, your administration can be defined by who you surround yourself with, and I've surrounded myself with good, capable people—and I hope you found that to be the case—candid, open people that are interested in working with our Governors.

And we've had some challenges that we have faced together. Our economy, as you know, got rocked by a recession and then an attack and corporate scandals. But I'm pleased to know that your budgets are improving, that revenues are on the rise. That's because the economy is growing, and we're adding jobs. And the fundamental question is, how do we keep the economic growth alive? I spend a lot of time thinking about that here in Washington. I brought some ideas forward to the Congress, such as making sure the tax relief that we passed is permanent, that people are able to predict their tax rates in a better way so that they can plan. Part of making sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong is so there's a kind of certainty. And we're working with Congress to make sure there's certainty.

The Tax Code, itself, needs to be reformed. I think the Tax Code is one that inhibits the flow of capital and growth. And so I've called upon former Senators Mack and Breaux to bring forth some ideas about how to simplify the Tax Code to make it more entrepreneurial-friendly. That report should come out this summer. It will be an interesting challenge, but it's one that is a necessary challenge for Congress to work to simplify the code.

We've started with legal reform here. I hope—I encourage you all in your own States to do the same thing. It turns out America is one of the most litigious countries in the world, and that makes it hard to compete in a global society. We are at a competitive disadvantage when we sue each other so much. And we've got a good class-action bill out of the House and the Senate. We're working on asbestos reform, and I'm working hard to create a consensus that the scales of justice ought to be balanced. And I think a lot of people will tell you they're not balanced

now. So we want to work here in Washington on legal reform; we hope you do.

I'll continue to work to open up markets and, at the same time, enforce our rules to make sure the playing field is level. It's good for your farmers that they're selling products overseas. It's good for your entrepreneurs that they can open up markets. What's not good is when the rules are unfair. And so we'll continue to work to enforce laws on the books.

We need an energy plan—we've got an energy plan; we need an energy bill. And I want to thank you for your support of the Clear Skies legislation. That will help some of you who are having trouble meeting your clean air requirements to do so without affecting your economies. And I want to—I asked you to clap a couple of times during dinner last night. *[Laughter]* I appreciate you—thank you, Joe; yes, it was a good singer.

Look, what I'm telling you is, we're going to deal directly with the twin deficits—the trade deficit. And the best way to deal with that is to make America the best place in the world to do business. By working to sustain economic growth, you're also working to make sure this is a good place to do business. That's the best way to deal with one aspect of the twin deficits.

And the other part of the twin deficit, of course, is the budget deficit. And you've seen our view, our attitude about that. And so I presented a good, lean budget to the Congress. It sets priorities; it meets priorities. It, in essence, does what you do. It says, "If a program isn't working, don't fund it, or if it duplicates efforts, streamline."

And as you know, we have—we're working with our Governors to figure out ways to deal with not only discretionary spending issues but mandatory spending issues, such as Medicaid. We want Medicaid to work. We want poor children covered by SCHIP. But we also recognize that the system needs to be reformed, and we want to work with you to do so. There's no better group of people to work with than the Governors. The Governor is on the frontline of Medicaid, I know full well. We're worried about intergovernmental transfers, and so we put that on the table for discussion, so that the system works the way it's supposed to work.

We want to work with you as well on education matters. And I want to thank Governor Warner for leading the charge for high standards coming out of high schools. It was an appropriate and important message. Some in Congress may want to try to undermine No Child Left Behind. Forget it, we're not going to let them do it, because it's working. And I want to thank you all for implementing No Child Left Behind, using the powers of the—that the Federal—the flexibility the Federal Government has given you to achieve what we all want, which is an educated America. And the hopeful thing is, is that the achievement gap is closing in America. How do we know? Because we measure. So I want to congratulate you for the initial stages of making sure the education system works fully. And I look forward to working with the Governors on implementing ideas about how to make sure the high school systems work.

We want to work with you on the Workforce Investment Act reform. And we train about—I think we spend about 4 billion a year and train 200,000 people. I think we can do a little better job than 200,000 people being trained with 4 billion a year. And so we want to work with our Governors to figure out ways to enhance flexibility, to get the job done, which is to train people for the jobs of the 21st century, and to utilize the fantastic community college systems that you all have helped build all around the country.

We want to work with you on health issues. One of the things that we have done is expand community health centers. I hope you felt the impact in, particularly, your poor counties and poor neighborhoods by the expansion of community health centers. We've expanded or modernized some 630 of them; we plan to do 700 more this year. It's a fantastic way to help take the pressure off your emergency rooms.

I'm a big believer in health savings accounts, and I hope that you all look at health savings accounts as a way for small-business owners to be able to better afford insurance for their employees. It is a great way to enhance consumer participation in the medical marketplace and, at the same time, help small businesses address costs.

I believe in association health plans that will allow small businesses to aggregate to-

gether, to pool risk, and to be able to buy insurance—to pool risk across jurisdictional boundaries. Now, I understand there are some issues. There are some people in your respective States, people who might have got a pretty good lock on selling insurance, that don't like this idea. But the objective is affordable insurance. And so I want to work with Congress to allow association health plans to expand.

We've got an issue when it comes to medical liability reform. I can remember talking to ob-gyns from a lot of States. I'm trying to look around for Governors, particularly in some States that are in particular need of medical liability reform. I've come to the conclusion that this is a national issue. When I first got here, I said the States can handle it—until you look at what the cost of defensive medicine—what it costs to the Federal budget. It costs us billions of taxpayers' money. And I've concluded this is a national issue, and I'm working with Congress to get out a reasonable bill on medical liability reform. It's necessary if you believe that medicine ought to be affordable and available, because we've got a problem. When you've got ob-gyns being run out of business in America, you've got a problem in your States, and you know that. And so I look forward to taking on this issue again at the Federal level.

A couple of other things I want to say, and then I'll answer some questions. Some of you are probably wondering why I took on the Social Security issue. After all, it had been called the third rail of American politics. I am because the demographics have changed dramatically, and you're beginning to see it in your States. You're seeing it through Medicaid. You know about it in Medicare. And of course you know about it in Social Security because most of us are baby boomers, and we're fixing to retire, and there's a lot of us. And yet, we've been promised bigger benefits than the previous generation, and we're living longer.

So you've got baby boomers fixing to retire, who are living longer, who've been made a bigger promise than the previous generation, and the Government can't afford it. There's not enough workers contributing in the system. And we need to do something about it now. And I'm going to—I'm coming

to your States—I'm coming to a lot of States between now and whenever Congress decides to take this issue on, head-on—to remind people not only we have a problem, but we have an obligation to fix it. And I'm looking forward to this debate. I think this is a healthy use of our time in Washington, to see big problems and come together and fix them.

Now, the Medicare bill hasn't taken an effect yet. But it too suffers from the same demographic issue, because you've got a lot of baby boomers that are going to retire, and the fundamental question is, how do we deal with it? My attitude—and I've told Congress, "Let the reforms that we've just passed kick in." They hadn't kicked in yet—2006 is when you begin to have prescription drugs become available to seniors, and 2006 is when you're going to see drugs begin to replace—over time, drugs begin to replace hospital stays. See, the old system would pay for a heart surgery but not a dime for the prescription drugs that might prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. It was very cost-ineffective. Nor did it offer our seniors a modernized system. And so we look forward to working with you and Congress on Medicare reform after we solve the Social Security problem.

And finally, I urge you to continue to take advantage of the Faith-Based Initiative. I believe that the best way to cure many of society's ills is to surround them with love, and faith-based groups exist purely because they want to love somebody or do love somebody. And we're working really hard to make sure that Federal money is accessible on a competitive basis to our faith-based programs around the country.

I've traveled our country a lot, and I found these just fantastic institutions that are changing America one soul at a time. And I urge you, if you don't have an office, to set up a faith-based office and take advantage of the fantastic opportunity available to—that we're trying to make available to the faith community.

You know, not every problem is going to be solved by a faith-based group, but at least you ought to include faith-based groups in the mix. It makes sense to me to make sure that taxpayers' money is accessible on a com-

petitive basis. And it's all aimed—the program is all aimed at helping change this country for the better.

Let me talk about foreign policy right quick. I know a lot of you have got Guard troops in Iraq. I want to thank you for supporting those troops. Whether you agree with my decision or not, you've done your duty as commanders in chief to support the troops, and I appreciate it a lot. But more importantly, they appreciate it, and their families appreciate it.

I thought the hug at the State of the Union helped talk about the mission better than any words could have. And I hope that helped you when you explain to the families in your State what's happening. The gratitude of the Iraqi woman toward the American mom whose son had died was profound, gratitude that the country was free. And freedom is on the march. These are exciting times in our world.

But I want to thank you for doing your duty and supporting those kids, men and women, who are over in harm's way. We're making progress there. The mission is to get the Iraqis in a position where they can defend themselves. And we'll try to do that as soon as possible, get it done as quickly as we can, and then our troops are coming home with the honor they've earned, as I said in the State of the Union.

I'm looking forward to working with you all. I'm excited about the next 4 years. I've got the energy and the drive and the desire to do the best I possibly can to make America as hopeful and optimistic place as it possibly can be, and I know it can't be done without cooperation with the Governors.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:13 a.m. on the State Floor at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to composer Marvin Hamlisch, who performed at a dinner for the National Governors Association Conference the previous night; Gov. Mark R. Warner of Virginia, chairman, and Gov. Mike Huckabee of Arkansas, vice chairman, National Governors Association Executive Committee; former Senators Connie Mack, Chairman, and John B. Breaux, Vice Chairman, President's Advisory Panel on Federal Tax Reform; Gov. Joe Manchin III of West Virginia; and Janet Norwood, mother of Sgt. Byron Norwood, USMC, who was killed in Iraq on November 13, 2004, and Iraqi

citizen and political activist Safia Taleb al-Suhail, both of whom were guests of the First Lady at the President's State of the Union Address on February 2. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Proclamation 7871—American Red Cross Month, 2005

February 28, 2005

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

Americans have a long history of rising to meet humanitarian challenges, and the American Red Cross is a leader in these efforts. Since 1881, the American Red Cross has met disaster with compassion and courage. During American Red Cross Month, we honor this dedication and reaffirm the importance of volunteering time and contributing resources to make our communities and the world better.

From offering blood drives and lifesaving courses to providing disaster relief services at home and abroad, American Red Cross employees and volunteers work countless hours to care for those in need and serve a cause greater than self. As a result of the recent tsunami in the Indian Ocean, over 150,000 lives were lost and many more were left homeless and without food and water. The American Red Cross swiftly dispatched relief workers to assist those affected, and to distribute supplies, counsel survivors, and help people return home.

Here at home, the American Red Cross helps support our troops by transmitting emergency messages to members of the Armed Forces and their families. In this past year, the Red Cross has also contributed significantly to relief efforts for hurricanes in Florida, flooding in Western Pennsylvania, wildfires in the Western United States, and mudslides in California. These good works provide hope and healing to those dealing with profound loss and demonstrate the character of the American Red Cross.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America and Honorary Chairman of the American

Red Cross, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 2005 as American Red Cross Month. I commend the efforts of American Red Cross employees and volunteers, and I encourage all Americans to donate their time, energy, and talents to support this organization's humanitarian mission.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-eighth day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-ninth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 10:26 a.m., March 2, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on March 3.

Remarks at the White House Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Leadership Conference

March 1, 2005

Thank you all. Thank you for coming. Please be seated. Thanks for coming. Thank you for the warm welcome. It is great to be here with leaders from around our country who are leading our Nation's faith-based and community groups.

I am here to talk about my continued commitment to faith-based and community groups because I'm firmly committed to making sure every American can realize the promise of our country. It is said that faith can move mountains. Here in Washington, DC, those helping the poor and needy often run up against a big mountain—[laughter]—called bureaucracy. And I'm here to talk about how to move that mountain so that we can reach out and partner with programs which reach out to people who hurt.

You know, one of the tests of character for America is how we treat the weakest of our citizens. Interesting test, isn't it? What are we doing in Government to help people who need help? Part of the test of Government is to understand the limitations of Government. Government—when I think about

Government, I think about law and justice; I really don't think about love. Government has got to find ways to empower those whose mission is based upon love in order to help those who need love find love in society. That's really what we're here to talk about.

I was talking earlier with some of our leaders, and I was reminding them that I think de Tocqueville, the Frenchman who came to America in the early 1800s, really figured out America in a unique way when he said that "Americans like to form association in order to help save lives. Americans formed association in order to channel the individualistic inputs of our society to enable people to serve a cause greater than themselves."

Really, what we're doing is we're carrying on that philosophy today, a vision and philosophy that I think makes America a unique country and gives us, those of us responsible for helping lives, a unique opportunity to empower people, encourage people, partner with people to save lives in America. And that's what we're here to talk about today.

I want to thank the members of my administration who've joined us, because the efforts to partner with faith-based and community programs require a commitment by all of us in the administration, not just the President or not just the people in the White House Office but people throughout Government.

Margaret Spellings—Madam Secretary, thank you for coming. I appreciate you. She's the Secretary of the Department of Education. I see my friend Robert McCallum, who's the Associate Attorney General for the Department of Justice. Thank you for coming, Robert. Hector Barreto is the Administrator for the Small Business Administration. Yes, there is a connection between faith- and community-based groups and business. It's called helping make sure the entrepreneurial spirit and entrepreneurial know-how reaches every corner of America.

I want to thank David Eisner, the CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service, for joining us. And I want to thank Stephen Goldsmith, sitting right next to David, who's the Chairman. I want to appreciate everybody else who is here from my administration. Make sure you get back to work right after the speech is over. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate three Members of the United States Congress who have joined us: Congressman Mike Ferguson from New Jersey; Congressman Mark Green from Wisconsin; and Congressman Jim Ryun from Kansas. I'm not interested in jogging—[*laughter*—] if you know what I mean.

I appreciate the leaders in the armies of compassion—one of my favorite phrases, the armies of compassion. It's a strong word, isn't it? I want to thank the generals and sergeants and privates—[*laughter*—] who are here from the armies of compassion. Thank you all for taking time out of your day to come and hopefully be reassured that this initiative is one that has got a lot of momentum and impetus and reassured that we want to help change America.

I appreciate the fact that many in this room have come from many different faiths and traditions. The Faith-Based Initiative is not about a single faith. In this country we're great because we've got many faiths, and we're great because you can choose—whatever faith you choose or if you choose no faith at all, you're still equally American. It's one of the great traditions of America that we will always hold sacred and always should hold sacred.

But no matter what your faith is, we're united in the conviction that to whom much is given, much is expected, and that the liberty and prosperity we enjoy, the great freedom we enjoy in America, with that freedom comes an obligation to reach out to brothers and sisters who hurt. And so I recognize—and the first point I want to make is, I recognize the great work faith organizations are doing in this country. In other words, I stand here in confidence knowing that this initiative makes sense because I'm a results-oriented guy, and faith organizations are achieving results we want.

I just met Curtis Jones. He was an 11-year-old boy from one of our Nation's Capital's rough neighborhoods. And he walked into the doors of UNIQUE Learning Center. A volunteer would tutor and mentor Curtis for the next 7 years. I just asked Curtis about the volunteer. He said he was the local judge. Think about that. It's interesting, isn't it? You've got a really busy person; he's on the bench; and so he decides to tutor Curtis for

7 years, not 7 days, 7 hours, 7 minutes, but 7 years. All those who helped Curtis, particularly the mentor, must have taken great joy when they realized Curtis graduated from Penn State University with a degree in telecommunications. Where are you, Curtis? There you go.

The mentors and the folks at the Learning Center get a lot of credit. As Curtis said, "I wouldn't be here—I wouldn't be where I am today without the Learning Center." But Curtis, never forget that ultimately it was your decision. You made the choice. You decided to receive help and then aim big and get your degree. And I congratulate you. I'm proud of you, as is everybody else. But it's important for people to know there are stories like this all across America. This isn't just a story for Washington, DC; this is a story where lives have been transformed because somebody has put their arm around somebody who hurts, somebody out of a faith-based organization or community-based organization, and said, "What can I do to help you, Curtis? What can I do to make sure that you can, with your choice, have an opportunity to realize the dreams of America?"

And the goal is to bring the healing touch, like Curtis found at the UNIQUE Center, to lives all across America. That's what we're here to talk about today.

Unfortunately, there are some roadblocks, such as the culture inside government at the Federal, State, and local level that is unfriendly to faith-based organizations. One of the keys to solving a problem and achieving a goal is to recognize roadblocks and then have the will to remove those roadblocks. But there is a cultural problem. You know, it's manifested itself, for example, when the Federal Government denied a Jewish school in Seattle emergency disaster relief because the school was religious. That's an indication that there's a roadblock. We have a cultural problem when FEMA money—we're going out to help lessen the effects of a disaster that hurt—hit, and all of a sudden, the school was denied Federal money because of the nature of the school.

Or for example, the Federal Government—when I came in office, I found out the Federal Government was threatening to cut off funds for an Iowa homeless shelter.

The shelter was receiving money from the Federal Government, and the shelter was doing good work. The shelter was helping to meet an objective, which was to provide housing for the homeless, but they were threatening to cut off money because the governing board was not sufficiently secular. Think about that. It kind of defeats the purpose of a faith-based organization, doesn't it, when the Government says, "We will design the board of directors for you." It's a process world we live in, oftentimes, in the Nation's Capital. Instead of focusing on the results, instead of asking the question, "Was this homeless shelter working," they asked the question, "Tell me about the board of directors you've got."

And so today, after 4 years of work, we continue to confront this culture, a culture of process instead of results, head on. And the goal is, over the next 4 years, to change the culture permanently so faith- and community-based organizations will be welcomed into the grantmaking process of Government. That's the goal.

I like to ask questions. The job of a President is to call people and say, "How are we doing?" Part of my job is to be the accountability person in the White House, you know, "Are we making progress?" So let me give you some of the progress that has been made in terms of achieving our goal, which is a hopeful America for every person. Today, 10 Federal agencies have got faith-based offices, 3 of them set up last year. In other words, a lot of money comes out of these different bureaucracies, and in order to make sure people feel comfortable accessing the grantmaking process, and/or that the bureaucracy itself is fair in enabling faith-based organizations to apply, there's an office in these different bureaucracies. You know, Housing and Urban Development has got one; Margaret has got one; McCallum's organization, the Justice Department, has got one.

And so I've not only said, "You must have one," I then asked, to make sure, "How are they working? How are you changing the rules on Federal contracting?" And the answer is universally, "Yes, we have, to make sure that faith-based bidders are not being

unfairly shut out of the competition for Federal money.” That was the first thing I looked for in these offices, “Tell me whether or not people are allowed to apply for money on an equal basis.”

I want to call attention to my friend Jim Towey. Towey is in charge of the Faith-Based Office in the White House. His job is to answer your questions, to hold meetings such as this. His job is to answer my questions. [Laughter] He did such a good job, he got a promotion in the White House, so that the man who works full-time to help others feed the hungry can feed his own five children. [Laughter] Towey, by the way, interestingly enough—he’s probably tired of hearing me say this, but I find it an interesting comment about our society—Jim Towey was Mother Teresa’s lawyer. Think about that. [Laughter] Maybe we’re a little too litigious in America. [Laughter]

Anyway, he did a heck of a job being a lawyer, and he’s doing a fine job of judging faith-based groups by their results. And that’s important for our society to do. We ought to judge faith-based groups by results, not by their religion. And that’s part of the cultural change that we’re working on here.

Since 2003, the administration has increased grants to faith-based organizations by 20 percent. That’s a positive development. That’s the kind of news that I like to hear, particularly when those faith-based programs are changing America one soul at a time. Last year, 10.3 percent of all Federal grants—those are grants coming out of Washington; those are not formula-based grants to States—10 percent of those grants went to faith-based organizations. That’s up from 8.1 percent. So I asked Towey, I said, “How are we doing?” He said, “Well, the percentage of grants to faith-based programs has grown, and that’s good.” Ten percent isn’t perfect. Ten percent is progress. That means about \$2 billion in grants were awarded last year to religious charities. That’s a start. And so, 6 months from now, I’m going to say, “Jim, how are we doing?” Then he’s going to call the faith-based offices, and he’s going to say, “The President wants to know how you’re doing.” [Laughter]

I also asked the question, “Are we encouraging social entrepreneurship in America?”

That’s one of my favorite words. Think about it: social entrepreneurship. Oftentimes, you think about entrepreneurship, you think about starting a business or balance sheets or income statements. There’s a different kind of income statement in life, and that’s the income statement of the heart, the balance sheet of the heart. And so I like to talk about social entrepreneurship, those courageous souls who are willing to take a stand in some of the toughest neighborhoods in America to save lives.

So what we want to know is, what I want to know is, are we helping increase the number of new groups, small groups, first-time applicers for Federal money? Are we doing that? Are we getting beyond those great, courageous faith-based programs that have been providing help for a long period of time? Are we reaching beyond the Salvation Army or the Catholic Charities, the fantastic pillars of the faith-based program? And the answer is, we are.

Let me give you an example. The Peacemaker Family Center in Miami is a small ministry of the Trinity Church that helps low-income and unemployed families. Towey visited there, so he’s telling me on the way over in the limousine, that this is a desperate part of Miami—that this program is in a desperate part of Miami. And yet, in the midst of desperation is a little beacon, a light. And so the center received a \$50,000—seed money, it’s called—from the Compassion Capital Fund mini-grant program. It’s the first Federal funding the organization had ever received.

And so the pastor there is a woman named Linda Freeman, and says that the funding, the mini-grant, was the turning point for her program—exactly what Jim Towey and I were hoping to hear. Why? Because the center was able to raise—was able to hire a writer for grants with that money. In other words, the center was able to take a leap forward in terms of being able to convince others that the program was worthwhile, leveraged the grant, and has expanded from 3 employees to 25 employees in a quick period of time. That’s exactly what we hope happens.

So this little program, in a dark neighborhood, had three employees. Think about that. It was somebody with an idea, somebody who

heard a call, not from Government but from a higher authority, to try to help people in need. And so they had a program with three people. Three people—I mean, it's a small program but working hard to save any life they could save. And so the mini-grant enabled the person, Linda, to leverage, to hire somebody to help in the grantmaking process, to expand their scope, to get more notice. And obviously, more help is coming in, not from the Federal Government, from local government—local charities, so they're now up to 25 people, and they're expanding, helping to achieve the goal, which is to save as many lives as possible. It's the Federal goal, State goal, local goal, universal goal for America to help people realize the great promise of the country.

And so I asked the question, "How many programs like Linda's did we help last—over the last 2 years?" And it's 600—600 programs. So we're beginning to fuel social entrepreneurship. Those are the kinds of questions I will continue to ask, you'll be happy to hear, in order to help us achieve the objective.

So we've making progress. There's more to do. And I want to talk about four steps that we intend to take and will take—not "intend" to take, "will" take over the next 4 years to achieve our goal of helping the poor and the needy.

The first step will be to expand individual choice when it comes to providing help for people who hurt. I believe citizens in a free society must make responsible choices about their lives every day. And by giving those who look for help the opportunity and the responsibility to choose the help that's best for them, we'll not only give them better care but we'll put them on the path to productive citizenship.

Now, we are expanding individual choice in programs in Washington. And the first place that we really worked hard to expand that choice is—that my administration has, is in the drug treatment programs. It is—there's all kinds of ways to quit drinking, but one of the most effective ways to quit drinking is for a person to make a choice to go to a place that changes your heart. If you change your heart, then you change your habits.

The idea in the Access to Recovery program was to direct resources to the individual—there's some 100,000 a year who aren't able to get help for their alcohol and drug issues—to let them make the choice about the program that suits their needs. See, that's how it works. It says, "We will fund you, and you choose. If you think a—kind of the classic clinical approach will work for you, give it a shot. If you think the corner synagogue will work for you"—like the synagogue I saw in Los Angeles that's saving life after life after life because of a belief in the Almighty—"give it a shot. But you get to make the choice."

And so, giving an example, there's the Meta House in Milwaukee, is a nonprofit that specializes in treating women addicts. And the people of the Meta House know better than a lot of other type of programs that kicking addiction is never easy, and they've got what they call a "tough love" program. This is their approach. It's not a universal approach; it happens to be their approach, tailored to what they think will work.

And one mother said, as a result of this approach, of "tough love," admitting you've got an addiction—they make people stand up and say, "I've got an addiction," and they talk about what amends they're going to make—says—and I love this quote—she says, she feels like she has "an angel on her shoulder." Isn't it an interesting description about a tough love addiction program for somebody who says—who's made the choice—in other words, she was given the coupon that's redeemable where she chooses. She chose the Meta House in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. And as a result of that, she said, "I feel like I've got an angel on my shoulder." It's an inspirational program that makes people feel like they've got an angel on their shoulder as they're trying to recover from alcohol or drugs.

And so what I want to do is apply this concept of individual choice beyond just the alcohol and drug rehabilitation programs, such as mentoring programs or housing counseling or traditional—transitional housing programs or after-school programs or homeless services. And so I've asked the Cabinet officers and their faith-based and community offices to come up with ways to expand individual

choice into how their departments can implement this philosophy.

Now, I understand people are skeptical about this approach, because they say, you know, "People in need don't want it." Or the other classic excuse is, "People in need are not sophisticated to make the choices for themselves." I firmly reject that point of view. This approach has worked, by the way.

President Bush—former President Bush, affectionately known as Number 41—[*laughter*—introduced choice in the childcare and development block grants to States. In 1990, he started to implement this philosophy. And it turns out that when you analyze the results of that decision, that American parents decided they liked making the decisions as to where they send their children to child care.

Today, more than 80 percent of the money in this program that goes out the door is in the form of individual coupons. In other words, consumer demand was quite large when it came to saying, "I'd like to make the choice where my child goes, where I put my child, not you, Government." And these were people from all walks of life, by the way. These are the people that some say aren't sophisticated enough to make the choice. Parents are sophisticated enough to decide what's best for their children, and the Government has got to realize that.

The second step is to continue to build our culture of compassion by making sure State and local agencies do not discriminate against faith-based and community-based programs when they hand out Federal dollars. In other words, one of the roadblocks to full implementation of this initiative is to not only make sure the Federal Government responds positively but the State and local governments do as well.

Let me give you an example of part of the issues that faith-based programs face at the State and local government. Janesville, Wisconsin, authorized the Salvation Army to use Federal funds to help purchase a small apartment building to use for transitional housing for the homeless. The city council wisely said, "Why don't we go to an expert? The Army—the Salvation Army has done this for years. They know what they're doing." And that was good news. The bad news is, is that when it approved the funding, the city added a pro-

vision declaring that religious ceremonies are not to be conducted on the site initiated by the Salvation Army. That doesn't make any sense, to tell a faith-based provider that they cannot practice the religion that inspires them in the work of compassion.

And so when we learned what happened there with the city council, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the office we set up, sent a letter informing the city that as long as the religious services were not funded with Federal money—in other words, the money was not—Federal money was not used to proselytize—and participation was voluntary, the city had no right to tell the Salvation Army that the price of running a center was to give up its prayers. It's an important concept that you just heard. I mean, it's a—and fortunately, the Janesville city council reversed its previous stand.

Now, we've got to continue to encourage State and community and local governments to not discriminate against faith-based programs, to welcome faith-based programs, to understand a faith-based program will not use money to proselytize, that faith-based programs fully understand that participation in any religious ceremony is voluntary, but that the governments have got to understand that faith-based programs can help Governors and mayors achieve the common goal that we all share, which is a hopeful America for every single citizen. That's an important objective of this administration. And one of the roadblocks, frankly, happens because some States and some local governments receive formula grants—all of them receive formula grants from the Federal Government, but they haven't opened up those grants to competitive bidding.

And so, yesterday, when I spoke to the Governors, I urged them to set up faith-based offices in their Governors' offices. Now, half of the Governors have done so. And if you're in a State where your Governor hasn't, I would urge you to get the Governor to say, "Wait a minute," to the State bureaucracies, "Allow faith-based and community-based groups to bid on Federal money that has been sent down by formula to the States." In other words, we've talked about the Federal grantmaking process, but a lot of money goes out of Washington, DC—

about \$40 billion of it—through formula grants. And to me, that's an area where the faith-based community ought to have the chance to bid as well. There's about a hundred mayors have set up faith-based offices, so that's progress. Half the States, 100 cities—we're making progress to make sure that this initiative is accepted at the Federal, State, and local governmental level.

Third step is to get Congress to pass charitable choice legislation. The legislation guarantees in law that faith-based organizations are treated equally when they compete for Federal dollars, and it also protects their religious independence in hiring workers. Charitable choice is something I've supported every year, and every year it's got stuck. There's kind of a consistent pattern there. *[Laughter]*

And so I acted. I signed an Executive order that said that all faith-based groups should have equal access to Federal money. In other words, instead of waiting for Congress to pass charitable choice legislation, I said that a group with a cross on the wall or a rabbi on the board of a faith-based program would not be excluded from the awarding of Federal grants. That's what the initiative said; it said, "Since Congress isn't moving, I will." And that Executive order still stands, but I believe that Executive order ought to be codified into Federal law, and Congress needs to act this year to do so. I think it's important.

Faith-based organizations also need a guarantee they will not be forced to give up their right to hire people of their own faith as the price of competing for Federal money. There are some in our society in the faith community that say, "Why would I want to interface with Government?" And we've got to rid people of that fear. In other words, if we want this program to be effective and to save lives, people have got to say, "Interfacing with Government will not cause me to lose my mission." And part of Towey's job and part of the faith-based offices—the job of the faith-based offices is to go around the country assuring people about the new culture in Washington, DC.

One of the key reasons—and it's important for people here in Washington to understand—one of the key reasons why many

faith-based groups are so effective is a commitment to serve that is grounded in the shared values and religious identity of their volunteers and employees. In other words, effectiveness happens because people who share a faith show up to help a particular organization based on that faith to succeed. And that's important now for people in Washington to understand.

The right of religious groups to hire within their faith is included in Title VII of the landmark Civil Rights Act. But Congress has sent conflicting signals about whether that right still applies when a group gets Federal funding. When it comes to drug treatment and aid to needy families, Congress has included language in law that affirms their right to preserve their religious identity in their hiring decisions—the "their" being the faith-based groups. Congress has affirmed that right.

When it comes to programs such as the Workforce Investment Act, Congress has required faith-based groups to forfeit the right. In other words, we're seeing mixed signals. Conflicting laws and regulations discourage faith-based groups. The purpose is to remove roadblocks, to encourage people to participate, not discourage people.

And so I want this issue resolved. Congress needs to send me the same language protecting religious hiring that President Clinton signed on four other occasions. And they need to do it this year. And if we can't get it done this year, I'll consider measures that can be taken through executive action.

The fourth step in advancing a culture of compassion is in ridding the Federal Tax Code of provisions that can discourage charitable giving. Today, a retired American who wants to donate a portion of his or her IRA to charity first pays taxes on the money withdrawn. In other words, "I want to give some money. I've retired. I've got an IRA. I feel compassionate. I want to help an organization that's changing lives. I want to be a part of achieving your goal for America, and so, therefore, I'm going to give you some money, but I have to pay tax on it first."

So we've decided to do something about that, and my 2006 budget includes a proposal that will allow all retirees to make contributions to charities from their IRAs tax-free.

It's a simple change, but it's a substantive change to law. And I believe it will help encourage giving. Listen, America is a generous country, and a lot of people give. They don't need the tax law to encourage tithing, for example. But it always helps on the margin to have good tax law. *[Laughter]*

We've also got another interesting provision in the 2006 budget, and I appreciate the Members of Congress being here to listen to this. It would allow greater deductibility for food donations at a time when food pantries are having trouble keeping their shelves filled. And we're doing a better job of managing surpluses in America. In other words, technology is—and the agricultural sector is coming down, so the ag community does a better job of managing surpluses in America. It's harder to get those surpluses, since there aren't—the surpluses are smaller, to the food pantry, so we've got a problem. And plus, current law discriminates against farmers or ranchers or small businesses or restaurants who do not get the same break, tax break, that some corporations get, and that's not right.

And so the proposal would encourage more food donations by expanding and increasing the deduction of all taxpayers, large and small, sole proprietorships, incorporated, all who are engaged in a trade or a business, that can claim deductions for food donations. It's a practical thing to do, isn't it? I mean, if food pantries are having trouble getting food, why not have the Tax Code encourage people to give food? And so Congress needs to work on helping us help those who want to be generous anyway with a little help in the Tax Code.

It's important for our fellow citizens to understand that the efforts that I've spoken about today do not involve the Government establishing religion. The State should never be the church, and the church should never be the State. And everybody in America understands that.

Anybody who accepts money from the Federal Government, any faith provider, cannot discriminate based on religion. It's an important concept for our fellow citizens to understand, that no one in need will ever be forced to choose a faith-based provider. That's an important concept for people to

understand. What that means is if you're the Methodist church and you sponsor an alcohol treatment center, they can't say only Methodists—only Methodists who drink too much can come to our program. *[Laughter]* All drunks are welcome, is what the sign ought to say—welcome to be saved, so they become sober.

When the Government encourages the helping hand offered by the armies of compassion, it is important to understand that Government is acting through common sense, that Government is doing what you would want it to do, saying, "Can we achieve results? How best to achieve an objective?"

The goals that we've set here in our Nation, which is a compassionate country for everybody, to bring light where there's darkness, to help people who struggle, that goal—they are large. I mean, these goals are large goals; I mean, really big goals, important goals. And it's important for our fellow citizens to understand that to achieve those goals, we need all the help we can get. And the best help you can find, in my judgment, is the help from the armies of compassion, those brave soldiers who on an hourly basis answer a universal call to love a neighbor just like they would like to be loved themselves.

I can't think of a better motto for an army, to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. And I can't think of a better role for Government, to say we stand with that army. We stand ready to help energize that army. We want that army to succeed because we want every American from every background in every neighborhood to realize the full promise of this blessed country.

I want to thank you for being generals, lieutenants, sergeants, and privates in the army of compassion. Thank you for giving me a chance to lay out an agenda for the next 4 years that will invigorate this incredibly important initiative of Government.

May God bless you, and may God bless your work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:11 a.m. at the Omni Shoreham Hotel.

Remarks in a Discussion on Job Training in Arnold, Maryland

March 2, 2005

The President. I appreciate the warm welcome. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. Thank you all. Go ahead and be seated; we've got some work to do. We're here to talk about an important issue, and that is how to make sure people get the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. That's what we're here to talk about.

No better place to talk about that than at a community college which is working, and we're here at a good community college. I want to thank Marty Smith. She is one of our panelists. As you can see, we've got a distinguished panel. You're about to hear some interesting stories that I think will pertain to—will make why I believe the community college system is vital to the future of our country real evident to you.

The Governor is here. How about that? Governor Ehrlich, appreciate you coming. And we've got Kendel, First Lady. And we've got Drew. Mom and Dad here?

Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. Mom and Dad are here.

The President. Mom and Dad—still listening to Mom, aren't you?

Governor Ehrlich. Absolutely.

The President. Yes, so am I. [Laughter] Laura sends her best. She's back at the White House. She wants to say hello to her friends in Maryland. She's doing great. She and I are going to go Pittsburgh next week to talk about her initiative, which I embrace wholeheartedly, and that is how to help young men realize the great promise of this country, how to fight off the temptation to join gangs and instead join society as a productive citizen. Part of that is to make sure the education system works well. So we're here on an education mission, really, to make sure education is relevant.

I want to thank Jim Fielder, who's the secretary of labor for the State of Maryland. I appreciate you being here, Jim.

A couple of things I want to say. First of all, freedom is on the march. It's a profound period of time. Our Secretary of State is returning from her trip to Europe. I will visit with her tomorrow afternoon. I talked to her

on the phone yesterday. I applauded the press conference she held with the Foreign Minister from France, where both of them stood up and said loud and clear to Syria, "You get your troops and your secret services out of Lebanon so that good democracy has a chance to flourish."

The world is working together for the sake of freedom and peace. The world is speaking with one voice when it comes to making sure that democracy has a chance to flourish in Lebanon and throughout the greater Middle East. And when democracies take hold, the world becomes more peaceful; the world becomes a better place for our children and our grandchildren. So I look forward to continuing to work with friends and allies to advance freedom, not America's freedom but universal freedom, freedom granted by a Higher Being.

I also appreciate the good growth of our economy in places like Maryland. Governor, you get—deserve a lot of credit for creating conditions where the entrepreneurial spirit is strong.

Governor Ehrlich. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. You've got an unemployment rate of 4 percent in the State of Maryland. That speaks volumes about good leadership. We've got a national unemployment rate of 5.2 percent. The fundamental question is, how do we keep growing? And so I look forward to working with Congress to continue to advance commonsensical lawsuit reform.

We did something on class-action lawsuits. Republicans and Democrats got together and said, "Wait a minute. We've got a problem. The scales of justice are not balanced, so let's balance them with reasonable reform." We got a good class-action bill to my desk, which I signed. Now it's time for Congress to do something on asbestos, to get good reform to make sure that job creators and people who are harmed—job creators are able to create jobs and people who are actually harmed by asbestos get the settlements they're due.

Congress needs to continue to work on legal reform, including legal reform to make sure good doctors aren't run out of practice. We need medical liability reform.

We need to get an energy bill to my desk. In order to make sure people can find work here in Maryland, this country needs to have an energy bill, something that makes us—that recognizes we can do a better job of conserving energy, we can spend money on renewable sources of energy. I like the idea of using corn and soybeans to help produce energy. I mean, after all, it would be neat, someday, Governor, if somebody walked in and said, “We’re growing more crop, and therefore, we’re less dependent on foreign sources of energy.” We need to modernize the electricity grid. And I put this in front of the Congress 3 years ago or 4 years ago. They need to get it together. They need to come together, stop debating about an energy plan, and pass one, for the sake of jobs and job creation.

We’ve got to do something about the deficit. I submitted a good, lean budget to Congress. Some of them get carried away when it comes to spending, and we have—we want to make sure that we meet priorities and cut this deficit of ours in half by the year 2009. It’s important. It’s an important signal to capital markets; it’s an important signal to the world that we’re serious about deficits.

And we’re serious about long-term deficits, and we have a long-term deficit when it comes to Social Security. There’s a lot of baby boomers, like me, getting ready to retire—[laughter]—fortunately, in my case, later rather than sooner. And baby boomers are living longer than the generation before us, and baby boomers have been promised more benefits than the generation before us. And yet, there are fewer workers paying for the baby boomers when they retire.

And if you add up the math, it says “problem.” In the year 2018, the Social Security system goes into the red. In other words, more money is going out than is coming in. Just catch this statistic: In 2027, the Government will be \$200 billion short—200 billion short. That’s money going out more than coming in on payroll taxes.

So if you’re a young person going to school here, you ought to be asking the question to public officials, “What are you going to do about the problem?” Now, older Americans have nothing to worry about; nothing changes. I don’t care what the propaganda

says. You’re taken care of and will be taken care of. But younger Americans need to worry, because when you think about a system that goes in the red 200 billion one year, more the next year, more the next year, and more the next year, you need to be asking people like me and Members of the United States Congress, “You better fix it before it becomes a crisis. Don’t be passing on problems to future generations. You were elected, Members of Congress were elected to solve problems now.” And so I intend to work with members of both parties to get this problem fixed.

And I’m going to travel this country a lot talking about the issue of Social Security. Friday, I’m off to New Jersey and Indiana. Every week I’m going to be out talking about the problem, assuring seniors that nothing will change, and reminding young Americans that they need to write the Congress, the Senators and the House of Representatives, and demand action, so that we don’t stick a young generation with serious problems that will wreck our economy and wreck their lives.

Today I want to talk about education. Education, making sure we’ve got an educated workforce, is a vital part of making sure this economy of ours continues to grow. I’ve talked to a lot of employers around and say, “What is the biggest concern you have?” And one of the biggest concerns they have is the fact that they don’t have workers with the skill sets necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. So that’s the challenge we face. And what we’re going to talk about today is a commonsense solution of how to address that challenge and solve that problem.

First thing is, we’ve got to make sure our kids can read and write and add and subtract. The No Child Left Behind Act is working. The No Child Left Behind Act says States get to control the curriculum and decide what to do, but it says in return for increased Federal money, we want to see whether or not a child can read. In other words, we believe in accountability and measuring.

There’s an achievement gap closing in America, and that’s important. But how do we know? Because we measure. You don’t know if you don’t measure. You can’t solve a problem until you diagnose the problem.

And for too long, too many children were just shuffled through the system. Too many minority children, too many inner-city children were just moved through in the hopes that somebody got educated. But that didn't work. So now we're measuring early so we can solve problems early. And No Child Left Behind is paying off.

And we need to extend those high standards to high schools. I appreciate the national Governors coming together to talk about how to build on the reform—not weaken the reforms of No Child Left Behind, how to build on the reforms so that a high school degree means something.

Then the next fundamental question is, what do we do with people coming out of high school or people who have been in high school and have gone into the workplace but realized they want to continue to advance by gaining a new set of skills? That's what we're here to talk about.

Let me tell you something about the community college system. When I was the Governor of Texas, I realized what a valuable asset the community college system was to my State, just like your Governor recognizes what an asset it is to Maryland. Community colleges are available. They are affordable, and they are flexible. And that's important. It's important to have a place of higher education that has got the capacity to adjust its curriculum to meet the needs of an employer base, for example. I mean, if all of a sudden somebody pops up and says, "We need more nurses," it makes sense to have a community college system that says, "We'll help you put the curriculum in place to train people for nursing." And we're going to talk a little bit about that here in a minute.

When you've got a growing economy in the 21st century, there's a certain skill set that's needed to fill the jobs. And what we're talking about today is how to fill those jobs. One of the things we've done in the last couple of years through the Department of Labor was to encourage public-private partnerships. And we'll continue—going to do that over the next 4 years. That's—those are fancy words for saying, "Look, we're going to help employers and community colleges match up needs, demands, with supply." That's what that means.

Last year, I called upon Congress to pass a \$250 million initiative to support our community colleges and to fund partnerships between community colleges and local employers. They funded it, and now some money is going to start heading out. And that's an important part of the initiative I'm talking about. We're going to hear from an employer and a community college on how they work together and how the system functions best when it's flexible.

The second thing that I want to talk to you about is—Congress is now going to debate what's called the—reforms to the Workforce Investment Act. We spend about \$16 billion a year on workforce training, except only about 200,000 people got trained. It's not a very good record. See, part of my job as the President and part of people whose job it is to watch your taxpayers' money, is to say, "Is the program actually working?" It sounds good, doesn't it? "Let's spend money for workforce training." It's just when you train 200,000 people with 16 billion, I think we can do a better job than that. *[Laughter]* And one way to do so is to recognize the problems, the bottlenecks.

The system is very complex and complicated. There's a lot of programs in Washington with all sorts of different rules across, I think, 10 different jurisdictions. A bureaucratic nightmare may be the appropriate way to describe it—kind of, mandates coming out of Washington, DC, tend to complicate the issue of the Workforce Investment Boards and make the Governor's job more complicated. And people at the very end of the system kind of wonder what the heck is going on between the intent of Washington and money actually making it down into the trenches.

And so I've called upon Congress to add—to put these monies together, reduce the bureaucracies, the strings, and to let States—gives States the flexibility to focus on workforce training that meets the best needs of each State. The best reform possible, it seems like to me, is to kind of bundle up the programs in a flexible way that says Governor Ehrlich, elected by the people, ought to work with the local jurisdictions to figure out how best to spend the money to meet the needs of the Maryland citizens. In other

words, more flexibility, in my judgment, will mean more people will be trained for the jobs at hand.

A little problem for some in Washington—why trust the Governor? *[Laughter]* I encountered that when I was a Governor. Good news is, I was a Governor. I trust local people. It's a fundamental part of my political philosophy, the closer decisionmaking is to the people, the better the decisionmaking will be. And so Washington ought to be flexible. We at least ought to shoot for 400,000 people trained a year. *[Laughter]* And it's important.

The other thing is, is when I've mentioned higher ed—community colleges being affordable, they are affordable, but we've got to recognize people still need help coming to a community college. We spend \$80 billion a year at the Federal level in student loans and Pell grants. I've submitted a budget to the Congress that increases Pell grants from 12.4 billion to 18 billion. And the reason why is—that's a year, by the way—because Pell grants are important. I love Pell grants because they help folks that need help. They really reinforce dreams, don't they? You got a society that says, "Aim big; dream big." And what a Pell grant does, it says, for those who can't afford higher education, "The rightful role of Government is to help you realize your dreams."

And so Congress, I'm confident, will act on the Pell grant increase. The Pell grant increase really talks about increasing the maximum grant award. It increases the amount each recipient of a Pell grant can get, and that's good. It needs to be adjusted up, which we want. We also believe students attending college year-round ought to receive Pell grants year-round. This will help create flexibility for the students.

And we've got the loans out there. People say to me, "Do I have to repay my loan?" *[Laughter]* Yes. *[Laughter]* It's part of a responsible society, isn't it? We said, "We want the loans to be more reasonable in repayment schedule and the interest rates to be more reasonable."

In other words, I look forward to working with Congress to help higher ed become more affordable for people from all walks of life. It's a good use of your money. It really

is. And it makes sense, particularly, in a changing world, where the job base is changing and the skill sets for those jobs are changing dramatically.

You know, technology changes, but labor lags behind when it comes to change. And therefore, we have a duty and a responsibility to use our assets, like the community college system, to enable people to get the skills to work. And as that happens, this economy is going to continue to grow. One of the bottlenecks for economic expansion and vitality is to make sure we match jobs that exist with skill sets of willing workers.

Somebody who understands that is the Governor. Governor, thanks for joining us. I'm honored you're here.

Governor Ehrlich. Mr. President.

The President. Why don't you share with the good folks, the C-SPAN watchers what—*[laughter]*—

Governor Ehrlich. Hi, everybody.

The President. —like my mother. Hi, Mom. How are you doing? *[Laughter]*

Governor Ehrlich. And my mom is here too.

The President. Yes, well, why don't you tell us what you're doing in Maryland. People are interested to know. Just give us where you are.

Governor Ehrlich. First of all, I want some extra credit for wearing my "W" tie today.

The President. Very good, yes. Hot item.

Governor Ehrlich. He didn't even charge me.

The President. I don't know about the pink. *[Laughter]*

Governor Ehrlich. Mr. President, we've been joined today by my Cabinet. And if I can just take one second—and former Governor Marvin Mandel. Would my Cabinet please stand up? These are the folks that implement your policies, your programs.

The President. Thank you.

[At this point, Governor Ehrlich made further remarks.]

The President. Let me—it's important for people to understand what he's saying there, if you don't mind. See, in order for—the way the rules are written, in order for the State

of Maryland to implement a workforce training program that meets your needs, often-times the Governor has to come and ask for a waiver. Think about that kind of system, right? We want to do something. We want to help the country meet an objective, but we need a waiver. We need permission.

And so, I think there's like—I forgot how many waivers have been granted over the last year, but it's a system that says—it begs for reform. You know, the more time you ask for waivers, the less time you're focused on what you're doing.

Governor Ehrlich. The more time you take up with asking for waivers, the less time you have to put money into the workplace to train and retrain. At 3.8, 3.9 percent unemployment, retraining is really part of our focus here. Secretary Fielder, Secretary Melissaratos, they're living this. So we thank you very much.

The President. What are you doing different?

Governor Ehrlich. Well, as I said, we're ahead of the curve. We have begun one-stop shops. We've consolidated programs, basically along the line of what you're advocating.

The President. Nobody knows what a one-stop shop is.

Governor Ehrlich. You're a worker; you go online. You're an employer; you go online. You match it up—a one-stop shop. That's taking advantage of technology. Obviously, by the way, you are one of the best here. Marty is one of the best. You're one of the best community colleges in the State of Maryland. We'll work with our community colleges.

The President. Let me ask you something. Somebody out there listening who's looking for a job in the State of Maryland—one-stop shop online. In other words, they—you've got this all—

Governor Ehrlich. Call Secretary Fielder's department, his agency, and we'll put you in touch with—if you have a resume, you have a job waiting for you in the State of Maryland today. That's the message that needs to go out, not just in Maryland but around the country. We're at 3.8, 3.9 percent. We want to go to 0.0, Mr. President. I want to report to you 0.0. How about that

for a goal? I told you we set high benchmarks around here.

The President. That's right. I like the fact that the State has got a system, a kind of a virtual workforce agency where people can get on the Internet and find out what's available, I presume, where the closest one-stop shop is, if they want to go in in person. At a one-stop shop, people can find all kinds of advice on how to get a scholarship, what's available, the closest community college, what the curriculum looks like in your community college. It is a place all designed to help somebody who wants to advance receive the help necessary to advance.

Governor Ehrlich. And our ability, by the way, to do what we've been able to do and get some waivers, although it is time-consuming, has allowed us to put additional dollars where it belongs, into what you're talking about. More bang for the buck for the taxpayer—in this case, the Federal taxpayer and the Maryland taxpayer—dollars into the field so that employers can truly find the employees they need and, particularly given this economy and how quickly we turn over, post-industrial Maryland, post-industrial America, retrain our workers.

The President. Good job, Bobby.

Governor Ehrlich. Thank you.

The President. They call you Bobby?

Governor Ehrlich. Absolutely, Mr. President. You can call me anything you want, Mr. President.

The President. Dr. Marty Smith. She is the—[*applause*—she's not going to give you an A just because you're cheering loud. [*Laughter*] You have been here how long?

Dr. Martha A. Smith. I'm in year 11.

The President. As the president.

Dr. Smith. Yes, sir, I am.

The President. And so, is this your only community college experience?

Dr. Smith. Actually, I was president of Dundalk Community College, just up the road, for about 7 years.

The President. Good, good. Give us a sense of how the community college system—what's changed and what hasn't changed, just over the last 18 years.

Dr. Smith. Sure. First of all, I have to say, on behalf of all of us, we are so honored

to have you at Anne Arundel Community College.

The President. Thank you.

Dr. Smith. Thank you so much for selecting Anne Arundel Community College.

The President. Thanks.

Dr. Smith. You're welcome.

The President. Appreciate you putting up with the entourage.

Dr. Smith. Oh, they were wonderful. They were wonderful.

The President. That's good. That's the way they should be.

Dr. Smith. And I also want to thank you for our outstanding support and understanding for our country's community colleges. You really get it, as we just heard—

The President. Thank you.

Dr. Smith. —related to job training, so thank you so much.

[*Dr. Smith made further remarks.*]

The President. For those of you who are, like, market advocates, who believe the market is a powerful way to have an efficient delivery of service, listen to what she just said: "We respond. We respond to demand. We adjust. We don't adjust because Government said, 'Adjust.' We adjust because our customers, the students and the employers, have said, 'Adjust; stay relevant.' Otherwise, if you don't adjust, you'll become irrelevant." Great statement. I think it's very important for people to understand the great assets. This is a tremendous asset you have in your State.

So, anyway, the reason I asked what has changed over 18 years is because it was a way for me to lead the witness to say—[*laughter*—a lot has changed. [*Laughter*] Because community colleges have got the capacity to change. Seriously, I mean, I presume the emphasis has shifted quite dramatically.

Dr. Smith. Well, it has. Traditionally, we have talked about associate degrees and certificates and the credit program, but what we understand now is that students don't necessarily, when they're looking for a job that's going to pay them an appropriate salary, they don't care whether it's credit or noncredit. They want it now. They want the skill set and the knowledge set that's going to help

them get into that workforce quickly and be successful and advance in that profession. So it's changed incredibly. Every year, we are developing 20 new short-term programs to really try to meet the specific needs of the industry, and as you know, things are changing so quickly in every industry that it's imperative that we change.

The President. So how do you know? How do you—what do you—how are you structured so that information is able to get to you and your curriculum designers?

Dr. Smith. Well, we have a number of program advisory committees where we have business leaders and employers who give their time and energy to meet with us on a regular basis to say, "This is what we see is coming down the pike for our industry." We have a wonderful Governor's Workforce Investment Board that is investing incredible amounts of time and energy, analyzing each and every one of the high-growth industries so that they can say, "These are the levels of employees that we are going to need in the next 5 years. Community colleges, we look to you to make it happen."

The President. Yes, interesting, isn't it? Fascinating, I think. It's such a hopeful system, and it's working.

So, Joyce Phillip is with us. You work with Joyce, right?

Dr. Smith. I do.

The President. Yes, okay. Joyce, tell us, everybody, what you do.

Joyce Phillip. I'm vice president of human resources at Anne Arundel Medical Center—

The President. Good.

Ms. Phillip. —which is a 260-bed not-for-profit regional medical center, a wonderful place to work.

The President. Well, thank you, yes. So why are you—besides being invited—[*laughter*—why is this conversation relevant to you and your hospital?

Ms. Phillip. This conversation is so relevant to me and to our hospital and to all the industries in Anne Arundel County. We work very closely with the community college. For instance, you know that there are great shortages in allied health fields. Last year, we were able to hire 97 applicants from—who had attended Anne Arundel

Community College. Thirteen of them were nursing students.

The President. Yes, it's interesting, isn't it? So the health care field, it's changing.

Ms. Phillip. Oh, it is changing tremendously.

The President. Skill sets—new skill sets are required.

Ms. Phillip. Yes. And when there are new skill sets that are required, we're able to go to our community college, which is right there, tell them what we need, ask them, "How can we do it?" And they come up with the creative ways to do it, and they make it happen.

The President. Isn't that interesting? So the hospital system says, "We need"—how many people did you hire last year?

Ms. Phillip. Ninety-seven.

The President. Ninety-seven.

Ms. Phillip. Thirteen nurses.

The President. Thirteen nurses. So somebody says—well, you say to the community college, "In order for us to hire these people, they've got to be able to do X, Y, and Z."

Ms. Phillip. That is correct.

The President. The community college then says, "Okay, fine. We will provide professors, teachers, to teach people"—

Ms. Phillip. Develop the curriculum.

The President. —"develop the curriculum for X, Y and Z," and then the people are able to get work. That's—it's as simple as that.

Ms. Phillip. They are. It sounds simple—

The President. It's not. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Phillip. It's not.

The President. I read your mind.

Ms. Phillip. When you are able to partner with the community college, and when you're able to partner with an employer and put some of our money together, some of your Pell grant and Federal money together, we can do it.

The President. Right. Yes, it's good, interesting. And so, is this a field that has got a—constantly in need for new workers?

Ms. Phillip. It's definitely going to be a need for new workers. All you need to do is look at the population as we age. We're going to need people who are going to be able to meet the needs and take care of those

people who have served America and take care of those people who are there.

The President. Do you have programs within your hospitals where you take people who already have a job and enhance their skill set at the community college?

Ms. Phillip. I wanted to say something. That makes me more excited, because we have a program that the community college and the Department of Labor worked on, and it's called School at Work.

[*Ms. Phillip made further remarks.*]

The President. There's something we're about to talk about here. There's a—the term of art these days is productivity and how does the worker become more productive. Well, there's one way a worker becomes more productive, and that is to enhance skills through education, additional education. And when you hear the word "productivity," you think about—you need to think about higher wages. A more productive society is one in which a worker makes more money. That's just a fact of life. So you can either look at the community college system as a way to enhance an individual's productivity, or another way to look at it is, one way to increase your wage is to come back to school and gain a new skill set. This is a wage-increasing institution.

And it's a—somebody who knows that and understands that is Jeannetta Smith. She's with us today. Thanks for coming.

Jeannetta Smith. Thank you for having me.

The President. It's an interesting story. So where were you raised?

Ms. Smith. I'm from North Carolina—Rocky Mount, North Carolina.

The President. There you go. If you've never been there, it's a beautiful part of the world. And so what were you doing there?

Ms. Smith. Shortly after high school, I started working in a textile plant—

The President. Right.

Ms. Smith. —textile factory. North Carolina had lots of textile plants, and the textile industry was leaving.

The President. The textile industry was leaving is right. A lot of people were getting laid off. So what did you do?

Ms. Smith. I thought about it, and I thought I should leave before I got cut. [Laughter]

[Ms. Smith, Anne Arundel Community College student and licensed practical nurse, Northwest Hospital Center, Randallstown, MD, made further remarks.]

The President. Good. By the way, this is—Maryland has got a fantastic community college system; so does North Carolina. And it's been a vital part of helping people transition from what was once a viable industry to the new viable industries within the State, including health care.

Anyway, so you did the 7-year deal. Then what happened?

Ms. Smith. I relocated. I did some travel nursing, and I ended up here in Maryland.

The President. I found that interesting, travel nursing. It's kind of like an itinerant preacher in the old days, you know. [Laughter] What is travel nursing? Explain that.

Ms. Smith. A travel nurse is a nurse that contracts with a hospital in different States or different cities or even in your hometown. You contract for either 3 months or 6 months. Your company finds you an apartment. They furnish it. They provide everything, and you work. So you get to be a tourist for free.

The President. Yes, that's interesting, isn't it? [Laughter] Kind of an interesting concept. It does say there's certainly an opportunity for people. If you're having to—if a hospital has to staff a hospital staff with a travel nurse, I presume that they're looking for full-time nurses. Not to say the travel nurse isn't important, but it just goes to show there's a demand for nursing.

And then, anyway, so you're a travel nurse, and you settle here?

Ms. Smith. Yes.

The President. I don't blame you. [Laughter] It's a beautiful part of the world.

Ms. Smith. It's a wonderful State, also.

The President. Yes, it is. And so what are you doing?

Ms. Smith. I work at Northwest Hospital as an LPN on the subacute unit, but I decided because LPN positions are limited, I wanted to explore other options.

The President. Good.

Ms. Smith. I decided to go to the community college here in Anne Arundel County because it offered a flexible program, LPN to RN transition, which would take one year, and it would increase my salary 50 percent.

The President. Yes, listen to that for a minute. [Applause] Hold on for a second. If you're out there listening as to whether or not somebody who had a high school degree and has spent a few years working after the high school, whether or not going back to a community college makes sense, just listen to what Jeannetta said. By going back to school for a year, she increases her pay by 50 percent. That's an important benefit for people.

Was it hard to go back to school?

Ms. Smith. It was very difficult. As most adults start working, they get bills, mortgages, car payments. So to go back to school requires a commitment of time, which usually means they can't work full-time.

The President. Right. And did you get help?

Ms. Smith. Yes, I did. I was able to benefit not from Pell grants but from Federal student loans, which have been wonderful. I have a 3 percent interest rate, which is a great investment. [Laughter]

The President. It's not exactly a grant, but 3 percent is pretty low.

Ms. Smith. Three percent is great.

The President. Was it easy to get the loan?

Ms. Smith. Yes, yes. No credit check. [Laughter]

The President. We don't need to go that far. Wait a minute. Of course, you would have passed anyway. [Laughter] Whew. [Laughter]

Ms. Smith. But in addition to the Federal student loan, Northwest Hospital also offers tuition reimbursement, which has been fabulous in helping me make my ends meet as I work a part-time schedule there.

The President. Yes, smart employers all across the country are interested in partnering with a potential employee or a current employee by saying, "We'll help you." People should recognize there's a lot of help available if you have the desire to go back to school. Government can't make you have desire. The Government can't say,

“Be desirous.” [*Laughter*] But Government can say, “If you are desirous, we want to help you.” And that’s what Jeannetta found out.

So where are you in your course thing now? You——

Ms. Smith. Well, I graduate in May, May 25th.

The President. There you go, good.

Ms. Smith. And you’re invited.

The President. I’m invited? Thanks for the invitation. [*Laughter*] And so then what happens?

Ms. Smith. Well, I’ll start working at least one year here in Maryland as a med/surg nurse at an area hospital to get my skills up and experience as a registered nurse. And the sky is the limit after that.

The President. You’re going to be the travel thing, travel nurse?

Ms. Smith. Yes.

The President. Fantastic. I love the story. Think about this. Textile worker, hears the textile industry is laying off, which they were in North Carolina, decides to do something about it. Community college provides an opportunity to enhance the skill—her skill set; the Government provides ways to help; and this person is living the American Dream. I mean, this is—I thank you for sharing that with us.

Ms. Smith. You’re welcome. Thank you.

The President. All right, Elliott Ward. Glad you’re here, Elliott.

Elliott Ward. Glad to be here, sir.

The President. Thanks for coming, brother.

Mr. Ward. Thanks for having me.

The President. What are you doing?

Mr. Ward. Working hard.

The President. Me, too. [*Laughter*] It’s what you expect of me, though. [*Laughter*] Give me a little bit on your background. Went to high school——

Mr. Ward. Went to high school, and immediately out of high school I went into the military. I served 4 years in the U.S. Army.

The President. That’s good. Thanks. What high school?

Mr. Ward. Carver Vocational-Technical in Baltimore City. Born and raised in Baltimore City, Baltimore through and through.

The President. Are you a Ravens fan?

Mr. Ward. I am a Ravens fan.

The President. That’s good. That’s the right answer if you’re from Baltimore. Went to high school, went to the Army——

Mr. Ward. Once I got out of the military, I entered into a series of security positions. And a while after that, I was blessed with a son, who is here this morning.

The President. Where is the man?

Mr. Ward. Malcolm is right over there.

The President. Hi, Malcolm. I’ll see you afterwards.

As I understand, you’re a single dad.

Mr. Ward. Yes, I am.

The President. Thanks for doing your duty.

[*Mr. Ward, College of Notre Dame of Maryland student and certified pharmacy technician, Johns Hopkins Health System, Baltimore, MD, made further remarks.*]

The President. That’s good. Good job. By the way, the Labor Department entered into a contract with Johns Hopkins and the Baltimore Community College in order to have one of these collaborative efforts, a little extra funding to help employers and employees match up. Keep going.

Mr. Ward. Well, upon completion, I was offered employment as a pharmacy technician at Johns Hopkins Hospital, which I gladly accepted. I continued to go to school, as a part of the also-added benefit is the tuition-assistance program that Johns Hopkins offers. And after this semester, I’ll be 15 credits—about 15 credits away from having enough credits, 65 credits, to enter pharmacy school.

The President. Yes, see, that’s interesting, isn’t it? So then you get to pharmacy school. How long does that take?

Mr. Ward. That will be 4 intense years instead of 4 intense months.

The President. Yes, that’s okay. [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. Ward made further remarks.*]

The President. Are you getting any help to afford all this?

Mr. Ward. Well, the tuition assistance through Johns Hopkins helps a great deal.

The President. Yes. Part of the grant, by the way, is to help pay for tuition assistance.

Mr. Ward. It's a wonderful thing. [*Laughter*]

The President. It sure is. What's even more wonderful is both of your desires to use what's available to improve your skill set so you can realize dreams—in your case, be as good a dad as you can be. That's wonderful. That is what is possible and is happening all across the country.

So the reason we have people come and talk, other than me, is so, one, you'll listen—[*laughter*—and two, so the stories make sense. These stories make sense to me. It makes sense to support the community college system, a system that is able to adjust to meet the needs of the people that we taxpayers expect the community college to serve, people wanting to work, employers trying to find a skill set so the communities can stay vibrant and whole and jobs are available.

I told you, one of the objectives of Government is to set the conditions right for job growth. And a lot of that always times—a lot of times focuses on tax policy. And obviously, good tax policy matters, and—but also what matters is to make sure that people understand the relevance and importance of education. We must never lose sight of the need to have an education system which not only provides—gives people the basic skills working their way through elementary and secondary and high school but, equally importantly, an education system that's capable of keeping this country competitive by adjusting to the workplace as it really is.

I've come to herald success and a Governor who's successful in implementing a vision because he's got community colleges and community college presidents who are responsive to the needs of people. Again, I want to thank you all for letting me come. I hope you have found this as interesting as I have.

May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10 a.m. at Anne Arundel Community College. In his remarks, he referred to Kendel S. Ehrlich, wife of Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., of Maryland, and their son Drew; Nancy and Robert Ehrlich, Sr., the Governor's parents; and Foreign Minister Michel Barnier of France. Governor Ehrlich referred to Secretary Aris Melissaratos of the Maryland Department of

Business and Economic Development. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on Presenting the Congressional Gold Medal Posthumously to Jackie Robinson

March 2, 2005

Members of Congress, Mrs. Robinson, and Sharon and Dave, Laura and I are honored to be with you all as we honor your husband and your dad. Reverend Jackson. You know, I figure I'm the ninth speaker. [*Laughter*] I spent a little time in baseball. Commissioner, it's good to see you, and appreciate the McCourts being here, of the great Los Angeles Dodgers family. But a lot of times, the ninth hitter was told by the manager, "Keep your swing short." [*Laughter*] I kind of guess that's what Nancy Pelosi meant when I got up here. She said, "You are the ninth speaker." [*Laughter*] "How about keeping it short?"

I'm honored to be here for the—to present the Congressional Gold Medal to Mrs. Robinson. It's a great tradition of our Congress to honor fantastic and noble Americans, and we're doing just the thing today with Jack Roosevelt Robinson.

You know, he was a great ballplayer. Anybody who follows baseball knows how great he was—fantastic statistics, MVP, all the big honors you could get. But his electricity was unbelievable. Think about this. This is a guy who inspired little 7-year-olds to dream of wearing "42" and dashing for home in Brooklyn, and a 7-year-old like me hoping to get his Topps baseball card, even though I was an avid Giants fan. He was an amazing guy. And his story was powerful then, and it is powerful today.

His story is one that shows what one person can do to hold America account—to account to its founding promise of freedom and equality. It's a lesson for people coming up to see. One person can make a big difference in setting the tone of this country.

He always fought for what he called "first-class citizenship." That's an interesting phrase, isn't it, "first-class citizenship," not

second-class, not third-class—first-class citizenship for all. As John Kerry mentioned, it started in the Army. Obviously, it really manifested itself on the baseball field. After all, it was Branch Rickey who said he was looking for a man to cross the color line who could play baseball and had the character necessary to do so. Jackie Robinson had both. And that's why we're honoring him today.

I found Martin Luther King's quote about him interesting. I'm sure you will too. He said, "He was a freedom rider before freedom rides." That's a pretty high compliment, when you think about it. He was—to me, it just says courage and decency and honor.

This son of Georgia sharecroppers was taught by his mother that the best weapon against racism was the use of his talent, his God-given talent, not to waste a minute, and he didn't. And that spirit, passed on from mother to son and now son to family, still lives through the Jackie Robinson Foundation. The Jackie Robinson Foundation is a noble cause to help academically gifted students of color go to college. I know the Dodgers will continue to support that foundation. I hope baseball continues to do so as well.

It is my honor now to join Speaker Hastert and Senator Stevens in presenting the Congressional Gold Medal to Rachel Robinson, in the name of her husband, the great baseball star and great American, Jackie Robinson.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:18 p.m. at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Rachel Robinson, widow of Jackie Robinson, and their daughter, Sharon Robinson, and son David Robinson; Allan H. "Bud" Selig, commissioner, Major League Baseball; Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr., founder and president, Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, Inc.; and Frank McCourt, chairman, and Jamie McCourt, vice chairman, Los Angeles Dodgers.

Remarks Honoring the 2004 World Series Champion Boston Red Sox

March 2, 2005

Please be seated, unless you don't have a chair. [Laughter] So, like, what took you so long? [Laughter] Welcome. And welcome to the citizens of the Red Sox Nation. I'm proud

to be joined by the Vice President. He's a Chicago Cubs fan. So, like, he knows what you've been through. [Laughter] We're really glad you're here.

There's been a lot of people in this town waiting for this day to come. Some have said it would be a cold day when the Red Sox made it here. [Laughter] I am honored to welcome the world champs, the mighty Boston Red Sox, to the White House.

I want to welcome the members of the Massachusetts delegation who are here. I know that Senator Kennedy is here. Senator Kerry is on his way. We have just finished a ceremony honoring Jackie Robinson. I know members of the congressional delegation are here from like Massachusetts, and everybody else that claims to be a Red Sox State. [Laughter] You all are welcome here.

I appreciate the commissioner coming. And Bob, it's good to see you. I thank the members of my Cabinet who are here. I appreciate the mayor being here, the mayor of Boston. You've had a heck of a year, Mayor. [Laughter] I want to thank and welcome my friend Tom Werner and Larry Lucchino. I'm sorry John Henry is sick. You know, Lucchino, I knew you'd amount to something eventually. [Laughter]

I appreciate the way this team played baseball. You know, it took a lot of guts, and it took a lot of hair. [Laughter] It took a great manager and coaching staff, and I'll never forget calling Terry Francona after the team won the championship, and he—the only thing I remember him saying was, "It's all—it all depended upon the players," which is why he's a good manager, isn't it?

I appreciate the fact that Dom DiMaggio and Jimmy Piersall are with us. You guys represent a lot of great Boston Red Sox players that a lot of us grew up watching play, and you're welcome here in the White House, and you're representing a great tradition of wonderful folks.

You know, the last time the Red Sox were here, Woodrow Wilson lived here. [Laughter] There were only 16 teams in baseball then. After the World Series victory in 1918, a reporter from Boston said, "The luckiest baseball spot on Earth is Boston, for it has never lost a World Series." [Laughter] That's one optimistic writer. [Laughter]

Senator, welcome. Good to see you. Only time I—I like to see Senator Kerry, except when we’re fixing to debate—[laughter]—if you know what I mean. [Laughter]

No one really expected the answer to the “Curse of the Bambino” would come from a group of players that call themselves “idiots,” except for maybe idiots who don’t understand baseball. This is a heck of a team. This is a team that came together from South Korea and Dominican Republic, from Anchorage, Alaska, Fort Riley, Kansas, and incredibly enough, Midland, Texas. [Applause] Oh, yes. Finally, somebody from Midland amounted to something. [Laughter]

I love the way this team played, and so do baseball fans. I mean, this is a team that won eight games in a row when it wasn’t supposed to. It’s kind of courage and a couple of stitches. You answered 86 years of prayer. That’s an amazing feat, isn’t it? I mean, when the Red Sox won, people all over the world cheered. They cheered in New England, and they cheered in Baghdad, Iraq. One guy said—from Boston—he said, “Now we just have to wait for the other six signs of the apocalypse.” [Laughter]

I really appreciate what Boston does off the field too. The Jimmy Fund is a classic example of a sports franchise giving something back to the community in which they play. You created the Red Sox Scholars, which awards scholarships to disadvantaged fifth graders. I appreciate what individual players do. I know firsthand what the Schillings do, the SHADE Foundation to work to prevent skin cancer and the—and Shonda and Curt’s leadership in the battle against Lou Gehrig’s disease. I appreciate what the Red Sox are doing in the Dominican Republic with “Senor Octubre.”

But most of all, our purpose here is to welcome champs. We wish you all the best in the upcoming season. We know that you’ve been able to do what has been viewed to be the impossible. And just like that sports-writer said in 1918, you know, Boston is the place to cover champs.

Welcome to the White House. May God continue to bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:54 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Allan H. “Bud” Selig, commis-

sioner, and Robert A. DuPuy, president and chief executive officer, Major League Baseball; Thomas C. Werner, chairman, Larry Lucchino, president and chief executive officer, John W. Henry, principal owner, and Terry Francona, manager, Boston Red Sox; Red Sox pitcher Curt Schilling and his wife, Shonda Schilling; former Red Sox players Dom DiMaggio and Jimmy Piersall; and Red Sox designated hitter David “Senor Octubre” Ortiz.

Proclamation 7872—Women’s History Month, 2005

March 2, 2005

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

During Women’s History Month, we celebrate the achievements of our Nation’s women. For generations, American women have helped build our great Nation through their leadership as writers, teachers, artists, politicians, doctors, and scientists, and in other professions. As mothers, daughters, and sisters, women have supported and strengthened American families and communities. Women are at the forefront of entrepreneurship in America, creating millions of new jobs and helping to build our Nation’s economic prosperity.

We celebrate those who have broken down barriers for women, such as Jacqueline Cochran, who was the founder and director of the Women’s Air Force Service Pilots during World War II and the first woman to break the sound barrier. Gerty Theresa Radnitz Cori was the first American woman to receive a Nobel Prize in the sciences, and her research significantly advanced the treatment of diabetes. In 1926, Olympic Gold Medalist Gertrude Ederle became the first woman to swim the English Channel. Marian Anderson, a Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient, opened doors in music as the first African American to perform with the New York Metropolitan Opera. Juliette Gordon Low encouraged community service and the physical, mental, and spiritual development of America’s young women as founder of the Girl Scouts of the United States of America. As we work to advance freedom and peace and fight the war on terror, American women

in uniform are serving at posts at home and across the world, taking great risks as they make our Nation more secure.

As we commemorate Women's History Month, I encourage all Americans to celebrate the extraordinary contributions and accomplishments of American women and to continue our progress in making our society more prosperous, just, and equal.

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 March 2005 as Women's History Month. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities that honor the history, accomplishments, and contributions of American women.

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

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:22 a.m., March 3, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on March 4.

Notice—Continuation of the National Emergency Blocking Property of Persons Undermining Democratic Processes or Institutions in Zimbabwe

March 2, 2005

On March 6, 2003, by Executive Order 13288, I declared a national emergency blocking the property of persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Zimbabwe, pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701–1706). I took this action to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States constituted by the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe's democratic processes or institutions, thus

contributing to the deliberate breakdown in the rule of law in Zimbabwe, to politically motivated violence and intimidation in that country, and to political and economic instability in the southern African region.

Because the actions and policies of these persons continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States, the national emergency declared on March 6, 2003, and the measures adopted on that date to deal with that emergency, must continue in effect beyond March 6, 2005. Therefore, in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency blocking the property of persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Zimbabwe.

This notice shall be published in the *Federal Register* and transmitted to the Congress.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 2, 2005.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:22 a.m., March 3, 2005]

NOTE: This notice was published in the *Federal Register* on March 4.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency Blocking Property of Persons Undermining Democratic Processes or Institutions in Zimbabwe

March 2, 2005

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency blocking the property of

persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Zimbabwe is to continue in effect beyond March 6, 2005. The most recent notice continuing this emergency was published in the *Federal Register* on March 5, 2004 (69 *FR* 10313).

The crisis constituted by the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe's democratic processes or institutions has not been resolved. These actions and policies pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency blocking the property of persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Zimbabwe and to maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 2, 2005.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Supplemental Budget Requests for the Legislative Branch and the Judicial Branch for Fiscal Year 2005

March 2, 2005

Dear Mr. Speaker:

As a matter of comity, I am transmitting to the Congress, without modification, the enclosed requested amounts from the Legislative Branch and the Judicial Branch for FY 2005.

The details of these requests are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on Interdiction of Aircraft Engaged in Illicit Drug Trafficking

March 2, 2005

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with the authorities relating to official immunity in the interdiction of aircraft engaged in illicit drug trafficking (Public Law 107-108, 22 U.S.C. 2291-4), and in order to keep the Congress fully informed, I am providing a report prepared by my Administration. This report includes matters relating to the interdiction of aircraft engaged in illicit drug trafficking.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 2, 2005.

Remarks at a Swearing-In Ceremony for Michael Chertoff as Secretary of Homeland Security

March 3, 2005

I'm pleased to be here at the Department of Homeland Security with our new Secretary, Michael Chertoff. And I'm honored to share this moment with Meryl and their children.

This is the third time, not the first or second but the third time that I've asked Mike to serve our Nation. I keep asking him back for a reason: He is a talented public servant, with an outstanding record of achievement and a deep commitment to the cause of justice. As a Federal court of appeals judge, Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Attorney, and Federal prosecutor, Mike has worked tirelessly to make our people safer and our Nation more secure. And now he will carry on that vital work as the Secretary of Homeland Security.

I appreciate Michael's in-laws for being here. Always a good thing, Mike—[*laughter*—to listen to your mother-in-law. [*Laughter*]

I thank Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, not only for being here to administer the oath of office but for serving our Nation with such class and such dignity. I want to thank the

Members of the United States Senate, Senator Lautenberg and Senator Corzine from New Jersey, for being here, and thank you for helping shepherd this good man's nomination through the Senate. I want to thank all the Members of the House of Representatives who are here, and there is a lot from New Jersey that have joined us. I want to thank the members of my Cabinet who are here, and former members of my Cabinet. And I want to thank the employees of the Department of Homeland Security. You have got a great boss.

Since September the 11th, 2001, we have taken unprecedented steps to protect the American people. We have assembled a strong coalition of nations to secure our respective countries. We have closed down terrorists' networks and chased down their leaders in mountains and deserts around the world. We've removed two dangerous regimes that harbored terrorists and threatened the peace. We convinced a third to voluntarily abandon its nuclear and chemical weapons programs. We have broken up the world's most dangerous nuclear trading network and busted up terrorist cells around the globe.

We have been relentless and we will continue to be relentless in our mission to secure the people of this country. From Florida to California to Massachusetts, we have arrested and prosecuted terrorist operatives and their supporters. By our actions, we are sending the world a clear message that terrorists will not be permitted sanctuary or safe haven or the tools of mass murder.

As we have taken the battle to the enemy, we have also taken extraordinary measures to better protect the homeland. We've carried out the largest reorganization of Government in a half century, merging 180,000 people from 22 Government organizations into a single Department with a single mission, protecting America from attack. The success of the men and women of the Department of Homeland Security do not always make the headlines. But I understand what you've done, and I appreciate your hard work. By your tireless efforts behind the scenes, you have helped protect our citizens and secure our Nation, and this country is grateful for all you do.

In the last 2 years, this Department has implemented a vigorous new strategy to guard our borders, posting Homeland Security personnel at foreign ports, strengthening airport and seaport security, and instituting better visa screening for those entering the United States. We've taken important steps to protect our Nation's critical infrastructure, our bridges and tunnels and nuclear powerplants and water treatment facilities and the cyber networks that keep our Government and our economy running.

This Department has also taken action to strengthen the hand of our partners in State and local law enforcement. Local police and other authorities are those most likely to encounter terrorists, and we're giving them the tools and information they need to do their jobs. We've established secure connections to emergency operations centers in every State and every Governor's office to ensure that they get threat information on a real-time basis. We've helped States establish mutual aid agreements and reasonable response plans, so that when first-responders need help from their neighbors, they can be sure the right assistance will get to the right people at the right time.

We've provided more than \$14 billion over the last 4 years to train and equip State and local first-responders across America, funds for mobile command centers, communications equipment, mobile decontamination equipment, HAZMAT trucks, mobile WMD detection equipment, and other capabilities they need to protect our citizens and our communities. Since 2001, we've trained more than 600,000 first-responders and more than tripled spending on homeland security. And all of you in this Department and the Members of the Congress can be proud of the accomplishments and the progress we have made.

You have done all this and more under the skilled leadership of Tom Ridge. Tom is a longtime friend, and I thank him for his leadership and his dedicated service to our country.

And I have found an able successor in Mike Chertoff. As the 9/11 Commission said in its report, America is safer because of your efforts, but we are not yet safe. Mike Chertoff knows we cannot afford to become

complacent. He understands that as we adapt our defenses, the terrorists will adapt their tactics in response. He understands they continue to pose a great threat to the American people.

Recently, we learned that Usama bin Laden has urged the terrorist Zarqawi to form a group to conduct attacks outside Iraq, including here in the United States. We're on a constant hunt for bin Laden. We're keeping the pressure on him, keeping him in hiding. And today, Zarqawi understands that coalition and Iraqi troops are on a constant hunt for him as well. Coalition and Iraqi forces have caught and killed several of his key lieutenants. We're working every day and night to dismantle his network and to bring him to justice.

Bin Laden's message is a telling reminder that Al Qaida still hopes to attack us on our own soil. Stopping them is the greatest challenge of our day. And under Mike's leadership, we will do everything in our power to meet that challenge. Mike is wise, and he is tough—in a good way. [Laughter] And he knows the nature of the enemy. As head of the Criminal Division at the Department of Justice, Mike helped trace the September 11th attacks to the Al Qaida network. And it didn't take him very long to do so. He understands that the terrorists are brutal and determined and that to stop them, all our agencies must work more closely together using every resource and technological advantage we have.

I have given Mike an ambitious agenda to carry out. We will continue to work to fully integrate the agencies within the Homeland Security Department. We will build on the progress that has been made. We will continue working to reduce our Nation's vulnerabilities and prepare effective responses for any future attack. We will speed the development of new 21st century vaccines and treatments to protect Americans against biological, chemical, nuclear, and radiological attacks. We will continue our historic investments in homeland security to match the threats facing our country. We will protect the American people from new dangers while protecting their civil liberties.

Mike understands that we need to work closely with State and local officials because

he has shared their vantage point. Like men and women who wear our Nation's uniform on distant battlefields, those who wear the uniform here at home risk their lives every day to protect our people. By their service and sacrifice, our police, our firefighters, and emergency rescue personnel are making the homeland safer. And our Nation must constantly thank them for their work.

Mike is the right person to lead this Department in this vital work. He knows that to win the war on terror abroad, we always must remember where it began, here in the homeland. He will be an outstanding Secretary of Homeland Security. Mike, thank you for willing—for your willingness to serve our Nation once again. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:25 a.m. at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to Meryl Chertoff, wife of Secretary Chertoff; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. He also referred to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission). The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Chertoff.

Remarks at the Central Intelligence Agency and an Exchange With Reporters in Langley, Virginia

March 3, 2005

The President. I want to thank Director Goss for his hospitality. It was such a pleasure to come out and see hundreds of folks who work here at the Central Intelligence Agency.

I came for a couple of reasons. One, I wanted to assure the people here that their contribution was incredibly vital to the security of the United States and that, together, we've achieved a lot in securing this country. There's a lot of really incredibly bright, capable, hard-working, dedicated Americans who work in this building. So my first mission was to thank them.

And the second thing was to explain that the reforms that we'll be implementing through the good graces of Ambassador

Negroponte, if confirmed by the Senate, will actually help the CIA do its job better.

And I got a great reception. I want to thank you, again, Director, for your hospitality. We're making progress in the war on terror. The world is changing. And this country of ours will continue to do our duty, which is to find terrorists, bring them to justice through good intelligence and hard work and some brave souls, and at the same time, work to spread freedom and liberty around the world.

I'll answer a couple of questions. Tom [Tom Raum, Associated Press].

Implementing Intelligence Reform

Q. Mr. President, your CIA Director, Mr. Goss, said yesterday that he has to wear five hats now and that he was concerned there were some ambiguities in the new arrangement about his relationship with Mr. Negroponte and Secretary Rumsfeld. Do you feel there are such ambiguities, and will you move to—if there are, will you move to clear them up? And will this prevent—will this present a problem for the flow of intelligence in this time, this transition period?

The President. That's an excellent question. Porter and I have discussed this, of course, because I don't want there to be any interruption of intelligence coming to the White House, and there won't be. As a matter of fact, Porter Goss comes every morning with the CIA briefer to deliver the briefing. And that, of course, will go on. And it's—secondly, we don't even have Ambassador Negroponte confirmed yet. In other words, it's hard to implement reforms without somebody to be the reformer. And so the process is ongoing. Obviously, when his name gets up to the Senate, we hope there's a speedy confirmation.

But one of the purposes of the whole process, Tom, is to make sure that information flows are smooth and that efforts are coordinated. The CIA is the Central Intelligence Agency; it's the center of the intelligence community. But there's a lot of other intelligence-gathering operations around Government. And the job of Ambassador Negroponte is to be—to take the information and make sure it is coordinated in its distribution to not only the White House but

to key players in my administration. And so I'm confident that the process will work.

Obviously, one of the reasons I came here is because I know there's some uncertainty about what this reform means to the people of the CIA, and I wanted to assure them that the reforms will strengthen their efforts and make it easier for them to do their job, not harder. I'm glad I came out.

Terry [Terry Moran, ABC News].

Social Security Reform

Q. Mr. President, on Social Security reform, what's your judgment about where this process stands right now, with polls showing the public skeptical; some Republicans, like Senator Grassley, are seeming to back away from your proposal; and Democrats wanting to declare it dead.

The President. I would say this: I am—know we're at the early stages of the process. I've only had nine trips around the country so far—or nine States on my trips. I've got a lot more work to do. Now, I do believe we're making progress on the first stage of getting anything complicated and difficult done in Washington, and that is to explain the problem. And the surveys I have seen, at least, say that the American people understand we have a problem. And I'm going to continue going out to explain that to people, the nature of the problem. And the problem is, in 2018, the system starts losing money. In 2027, it's 200 billion in the hole, and it gets bigger every year thereafter. In other words, we can't pay for the promises we've made. That's the problem.

And my second phase of this explanation to the American people is to say to seniors who have retired or people near retirement, you don't have anything to worry about; you're going to get your check. I've got a lot of work to do on that, and I understand that. But we're making progress. People are beginning to say, "We have a problem." The next phase, when people say we have a problem, is going to be, "What are you going to do about it?" And I'm willing to put out some ideas about what to do about it. In my judgment, ultimately, I think politicians need to be worried about not being a part of the solution.

And so I'm looking forward to continue to make the case. As you know, Terry—you have followed me a lot—I like to get out amongst the people. I get energized—I get energized by being with people, and I get energized when I think about taking on big problems, because that's why we got elected. The American people expect people to come together to solve problems. And I'm looking forward to listening to Republicans and Democrats. I said, "Put your ideas out there. There will be no political third rail when it comes to Social Security." Now is the time for good people of good will to come together and get the problem fixed.

Tax Reform

Q. Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan said today that a consumption tax, maybe even a national sales tax, might spur greater economic growth. What do you think about that?

The President. I think that I'm going to wait until the tax commission I put together, the reform commission headed by former Senator John Breaux, Democrat of Louisiana, former Senator Connie Mack, Republican of Florida, comes forward with some ideas. I told the American people I want to work to simplify the Tax Code and make it easier to understand, so people are spending less time filing paper, and I believe a simplified Tax Code will spur entrepreneurial activity. And so I'm looking forward to what the commission has to say.

War on Terror

Q. You mentioned Usama bin Laden earlier this morning, and you've said several times that there's progress being made on the war on terrorism. But more than 3 years after September 11th, you still don't know where he is. How would you assess the adequacy of the intelligence you're getting on bin Laden, and do you expect that he's going to be found anytime soon, even within your second term?

The President. If Al Qaida was structured like corporate America, you'd have a chairman of the board still in office, but many of the key operators would no longer be around. In other words, the executive vice presidents, the operating officers, the people responsible for certain aspects of the organi-

zation have been brought to justice—a lot of them have been. And we are—spend every day gathering information to locate Usama bin Laden and Zawahiri, obviously people like Zarqawi. We're not resting on our laurels. We've had great successes, and—but that doesn't mean that we should stop.

And one of the reasons I came out here was to remind people that we've had great successes. I appreciate their successes—Khalid Sheik Mohammed, Ramzi bin al-Shibh. I can go down the list. But there's more work to be done. And it's a matter of time. As far as I'm concerned and as far as the CIA is concerned, it's a matter of time before we bring these people to justice. And I can't thank the intelligence gatherers, the analysts, and the operators—I can't thank them enough for the sacrifices they're making.

Last question.

Iran/Syria

Q. Mr. President, on Iran, you spoke to Condoleezza Rice yesterday, we were told. What can you tell us about the pros and cons that you're weighing now as you reach a decision on going forward with the EU?

The President. Yes, let me just tell you how I see the state of action here. First, I am most appreciative that our friends in Europe agree with the United States that Iran should not have a nuclear weapon, period—no ands, ifs, or buts. And I thought that was a very important statement from the leaders I met with. And by the way, Mr. Putin feels the same way. And to me that is a very—a positive start for achieving our common objective. First, you got to agree to the goal, and the goal is no weapon.

Secondly, I have told our European friends who are handling the negotiations on behalf of the rest of the world that we want to help make sure the process goes forward. And we're looking at ways to help move the process forward.

The guilty party is Iran. They're the ones who are not living up to international accords. They're the people that the whole world is saying, "Don't develop a weapon." And so we are working with our friends to make sure not only the world hears that but

that the negotiating strategy achieves the objective of pointing out where guilt needs to be as well as achieving the objective of no nuclear weapon. And I felt good about our visits.

I did visit with Condi yesterday, and I'm about to go visit with her again in the Oval Office to discuss not only this issue but other key issues, including Lebanon, where the message is loud and clear from the United States and France and many other nations that Syria must withdraw not only her troops but her secret service forces out of Lebanon now. And I look forward to talking to Condi about getting an amplification on her visit with our allies overseas. I look forward to not only hear their words; I want to hear about their body language. I want to hear about their enthusiasm for the project. I think I'm going to find it was quite high because the people now understand that if you believe in democracy, why not let the democracy in Lebanon flourish and grow? And the United States of America strongly supports democracy all around the world, including Lebanon. And it cannot flourish so long as Syrian troops are there. It's time for Syria to get out.

Listen, thank you all. I appreciate seeing you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:11 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to John D. Negroponte, nominee to be Director of National Intelligence; former Senators Connie Mack, Chairman, and John B. Breaux, Vice Chairman, President's Advisory Panel on Federal Tax Reform; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; Ayman Al-Zawahiri, founder of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and senior Al Qaida associate; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Khalid Sheik Mohammed, senior Al Qaida leader responsible for planning the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack, who was captured in Pakistan on March 1, 2003; Ramzi bin al-Shibh, an Al Qaida operative suspected of helping to plan the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack, who was captured in Karachi, Pakistan, on September 11, 2002; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

Remarks on the Nomination of Stephen L. Johnson To Be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency

March 4, 2005

The President. Good morning. I am pleased to announce my nomination of Stephen Johnson to be the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Steve Johnson is a talented scientist and skilled manager with a lifelong commitment to environmental stewardship. He has 24 years of experience at the EPA, spanning all four decades of the Agency's history. Since late January, he has served as Acting Administrator. He knows the EPA from the ground up and has a passion for its mission, to protect the health of our citizens and to guarantee the quality of our air, water, and land for generations to come. I've come to know Steve as an innovative problemsolver with good judgment and complete integrity. I'm proud to ask him to become the first career EPA employee to hold the office of Administrator, and I'm glad he's agreed to do so.

When confirmed by the Senate, Steve will also become the first professional scientist to lead the EPA. He will use that background to set clear, rational standards for environmental quality and to place sound scientific analysis at the heart of all major decisions. Steve shares my conviction that we can improve the Earth while maintaining a vibrant and competitive economy. He will work cooperatively with leaders in government, industry, and environmental advocacy to continue using our resources wisely. He will listen to those living closest to the land, because they know our environmental needs best.

For the last 4 years, Steve has served at the side of EPA Administrators Mike Leavitt and Christie Todd Whitman, and he shares in their record of achievement. Today, America's air and water are cleaner than in 2001. The clean diesel rule we finalized will cut emissions from heavy-duty vehicles by more than 90 percent over the next 10 years. Our brownfields initiative has helped restore

more than a thousand abandoned industrial sites to productive use in their community. We've taken landmark steps toward improving water quality in one of our Nation's most treasured natural resources, the Great Lakes.

All Americans are benefiting from the EPA's practical approach and emphasis on results, and Steve will build on that progress. His immediate task is to work with Congress to pass my Clear Skies Initiative. This innovative legislation will reduce powerplant pollution by 70 percent without disrupting the economy or raising electricity prices. The bill will give Governors the flexibility they need to meet strict new air quality standards, improve public health, and protect vulnerable ecosystems from acid rain. Clear Skies is a commonsense, pro-environment, pro-jobs piece of legislation, and Congress needs to get it to my desk this year.

Steve will also bring valuable experience that will help us improve our homeland security. As an expert on pesticides, he helped design new regulations to improve food safety. In his new role, Steve will lead Federal efforts to ensure the security of our drinking water supply. My budget includes a new program to better monitor urban water systems, so we can detect contamination as quickly as possible. EPA personnel are playing an important role in the war on terror, so my budget increases support for EPA homeland security programs by more than 70 percent this year.

As he embarks on all these duties, Steve has the trust and admiration of his longtime colleagues, the thousands of hard-working EPA employees across the country. He is also fortunate to count on the love and support of his wife, Debbie, and their children and grandchildren, who are with us here today—and his mother- and father-in-law. [*Laughter*]

I ask the Senate to confirm this nomination promptly. I look forward to welcoming Steve Johnson to my Cabinet as America's 11th Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Congratulations, Steve. Appreciate you.

[*At this point, Administrator-Designate Johnson made brief remarks.*]

The President. Good job, sir.

Administrator-Designate Johnson.

Thank you.

The President. You bet.

Administrator-Designate Johnson.

Thank you very much, sir.

The President. Smile—smile for the camera. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:45 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Debbie Johnson, wife of Administrator-Designate Johnson. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Administrator-Designate Johnson.

Remarks in a Discussion on Strengthening Social Security in Westfield, New Jersey

March 4, 2005

The President. Thanks for coming. Okay, let's get to work. Thanks for coming. A hundred years since a President has been here. I don't know what took the other ones so long to get here. [*Laughter*] Mr. Mayor, thanks. Mayor Greg McDermott, I appreciate your inviting me here, appreciate you being at the airport. I appreciate you and the local officials putting up with the entourage. Thank you all for coming.

My regret is Laura is not with me. She is doing great, though. She is a fabulous woman, and I'm a lucky guy that she has agreed to marry me.

I've got some things I want to talk about. I want to talk about freedom and peace. I want to talk about growing this economy. I want to talk about Social Security.

Before I do so, I do want to say thanks to Congressman Mike Ferguson for his great leadership in the House of Representatives. And Maureen—good to see you, Maureen. I see her. She's doing great. Thanks for coming.

Rodney Frelinghuysen is with us. Rodney, thank you, sir. Rodney and I were talking about, on Air Force One, how hard it is to be a baby boomer and trying to jog. [*Laughter*] Part of the problem we're going to face in Social Security is there's a lot of baby boomers like me and Rodney who are getting

ready to retire. But I'm going to wait a little bit and talk about that.

I want to thank Scott Garrett for joining us—Congressman Scott Garrett. I'm very honored that Congressman Steve Rothman is with us. I'm honored you're here, Congressman. Thanks for coming. I appreciate you coming. Thanks for being here.

I want to thank—there's a Congressman you probably have never heard of, or maybe you have. I shouldn't do that. I mean, that's unfair. I'm going from New Jersey to South Bend, Indiana, and a good fellow from South Bend, who happens to be the Congressman, said, "Can I have a ride?" And I said, "You bet." And his name is Chris Chocola, from South Bend, Indiana. Congressman, thanks for coming.

Mike Chertoff—anybody ever heard of him? He's now at the Department of Homeland Security—raised right here. So we're standing on the stage during the swearing-in—or maybe right before or right after—and he said, "Tell the home folks thanks." So, okay, Chertoff said, "Thanks." And I say thanks to Mike Chertoff for agreeing to serve in the Department of Homeland Security. He has got a big job. But he's capable of handling that job, and that job is to do all we can to make sure all Federal agencies work together to protect the American people.

And speaking about protecting the American people, I want to thank the family members and the supporters of the Guard unit right here from this armory that is in Iraq right now. When you e-mail your loved one, tell them the Commander in Chief is incredibly proud, and so is the rest of the country. And we are thankful for the sacrifice and service not only of the men and women who wear the uniform but of their families as well.

I want to thank—welcome Jason Reed, 2004 Olympic Gold Medalist in rowing. I appreciate you coming, Jason. Good job.

Today when I landed, I met John Herrmann. John is a volunteer with the retired and senior volunteer program of Union County, New Jersey. What he does—he knows something about accounting, and so at tax time he helps the disabled or low-income or elderly individuals fill out their tax forms. What he is—he's a soldier in the army

of compassion. He's a person who has taken his life—time out of his life to lend his talent to help a neighbor in need.

And the reason I bring that up is there's all kinds of ways to serve our country. We've got those wearing the uniform serving our country, whether it be abroad or here at home. But you can serve your country as well by feeding the hungry or finding shelter for the homeless or helping a low-income person fill out a tax reform [form] *. You can serve your country just like John Herrmann is by volunteering and loving a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourselves. If you want to serve America, do so by helping save a soul and save a life. This country's real strength is the hearts and souls of our American citizens.

We're living in amazing times. You know, we're—I want the youngsters here to just remember the times in which you are growing up. In Afghanistan, millions voted for a President. The Palestinians elected a new leader. In Iraq, over 8 million people, in spite of the violence, in spite of the threats, said, "We refuse to be intimidated. We're going to vote. We want to be free."

Freedom is a powerful force for good. That's what the youngsters have got to recognize—and that freedom is just not a Western idea; freedom is not an American idea; freedom is a—in my judgment—a gift from a higher being, a higher power. Everybody desires to be free. And the job of the United States is to work with others to help people realize what's deep in their soul, and that is the desire to live in a free society. And it's in our interest we do so.

Many of you were affected by the attacks of September the 11th. We'll stay on the hunt. We'll disrupt Al Qaida. We'll find them wherever they hide. But I will tell you the long-term solution to defeating hatred and hopelessness and the dark vision of Al Qaida and the likes of them is to spread freedom and hope around the world. And that's what you're seeing today.

It's an amazing time. I just came back from Europe. I had a great trip. I want to thank our friends overseas for being such wonderful hosts to Laura and me. I sat down with

* White House correction.

the French President, and we came—we understand some things. And one of the things we really understand is that Syria—Syrian troops, Syrian intelligence services, must get out of Lebanon now.

Lebanon is a democracy. Lebanon is a democracy, and we strongly support that democracy. I was pleased that Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia sent the very same message. The world is beginning to speak with one voice. We want that democracy in Lebanon to succeed, and we know it cannot succeed so long as she is occupied by a foreign power, and that power is Syria. There's no half measures involved. When the United States and France and others say, "Withdraw," we mean complete withdrawal, no half-hearted measures. And those of you who are trying to analyze our foreign policy, just remember, democracy leads to peace, the peace we all want for our children and our grandchildren.

The economy is getting better. Today we got some good news. We added 262,000 new jobs last month. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent. It's 4.2 percent right here in the great State of New Jersey, and that's good news. But we're living in a dynamic world. Things change, and the fundamental question is, what do we do to keep our economy growing? I've told the Congress one way to do so is to make sure we've got certainty in the Tax Code. They need to make the tax cuts permanent.

I sent up a budget that says I understand we need to do something about the deficits, and I'm looking forward to working with the Budget Committees in both the House and the Senate. I thought it was pretty smart of me to say to the American people at the State of the Union, we're going to be wise about how we spend your money, and if a program is not working, we're not going to spend the money on it. Seems realistic and logical.

I want to thank the House and the Senate for getting a good piece of legal reform to my desk. One way to make sure the economy continues to grow is to make sure the scales of justice are balanced. They were not balanced when it came to class-action lawsuits. Too many class-action lawsuits were driving too many good people out of business, which meant people weren't able to find a job. And

so we reformed the class-action lawsuit system in America for the better. And they need to do the same thing on asbestos reform and medical liability reform.

I can spend a lot of time on a lot of subjects, but Laura told me, "You're going to have some panelists up there. Give them a chance to speak." [*Laughter*] I will in a minute. [*Laughter*] I know, I'm going on too long. I'm just getting warmed up, then. Here we go. Let me talk about—let me get right to the subject at hand. I've asked some of our fellow citizens to join us on an incredibly important subject, and that's Social Security.

First, let me say to you that the Social Security system has been a very important system, and I understand that. Social Security has provided a safety net for many retirees, and that's an important safety net. But the safety net has got a hole in it, and we need to make sure we save that safety net for future generations of Americans to come.

The first thing I want to tell you about Social Security is that if you're getting your check, nothing will change. No matter what the talk is about reform, nothing will change. I don't care what the ads say. I don't care what the scare tactics say. You're going to get your check, just like the Government said. The problem isn't for the seniors. The problem is for the youngsters coming up; the question is, will you get your check? Will we be able to keep the promise?

A lot of people say, "Well, Mr. President, you're talking about Social Security. It's called the third rail of American politics. That means, if you touch it, you get a huge electric shock. Now, why are you talking about it?" Well, you're going to hear me describe the problem. But I think we have a duty in elected office to confront problems and not pass them on to future Presidents, future Congresses, and future generations.

I didn't run for office to dodge problems. And I don't think the American people—I don't care what your political party is, they don't—I think the American people expect us all to confront problems and deal with them in a fair, open way. That's what I think.

Now, let me tell you why I think we got a problem. And me and Rodney are part of the problem; we're baby boomers, and we're fixing to retire. Matter of fact, a lot of us

turn 62 in 2008. That's the time you start to retire, and there's a whole lot of us. Yet we're living longer. We're living longer than the previous generations of Americans. So you got more people retiring who are living longer, plus we have been promised greater benefits than the previous generation. So we got more people living longer getting bigger benefits. And the problem is, is that the number of people paying into the system is shrinking.

If you look over here, in the fifties, 16 people were paying into the system to pay for one retiree. So if that person was to get \$14,200, say, it would be \$900 a payer. The system now is 3.3 people paying into the system. In a decade, it's going to be two people paying in the system.

Now, this is a pay-as-you-go system. In other words, it says when you retire, somebody is going to have to pay for your benefits. This is not a savings account. One of the myths of Social Security is that your money is going into it and the Government is holding it and saving it for you. That's not the way it works. Your money is going into the system, and it's getting spent, some of it on retirement benefits, other parts on just general Government. And there's an IOU, a paper IOU accumulating. But it's not just sitting there. There's not an account with your name that's saying, on behalf of you, the Government has now got your money. That's not the way it works. So it's a pay-as-you-go. It goes in and goes out.

Now, let me give you some numbers about the consequences of what we're talking about, and this chart says it pretty good. Right now, there are more people paying in—the money coming in on payroll taxes is greater than the money going out, and that's the black part of the chart. But very soon, in a very quick period of time—as a matter of fact, in 2018—the money going out exceeds the money coming in, in Social Security. In other words, baby boomers like me, who will be living longer and have been promised greater benefits, are going to start saying, “Send me my check.” And those of you paying in are going to start to have to pay into a system that is going into the red every year. As you can see, that number gets worse and worse as time goes on.

In 2028, the number of—the amount of the money that needs to be paid in order to make the promises is 200 billion a year above and beyond payroll taxes. And it gets bigger every year. It gets into 300 billion a year. So when you got more money going out, in terms of the promises made to baby boomers retiring and fewer people paying in, this thing gets into the red in a real hurry. That's why I say we got a problem.

Now, 2018, some would say, “That's not—that's pretty far down the road, isn't it?” Think about that—2018, if you're a mom with a 5-year-old child, that person's going to be driving, and you're going to get gray hair before you know it. [Laughter] I mean, we're talking about right around the corner, when you think about it. Those of us in public office must look down the road. We can't say, “Well, don't worry. I'm on a 2-year term,” or “I'm on a 6-year term,” or “I'm on a 4-year term. We'll just let somebody else deal with it,” because the longer you wait, the harder the problem is.

Imagine waiting until 2018, and you're a young worker, and the Government says, “Oh, by the way, I'm going to have to raise your payroll taxes again in order to pay for the benefits we promised,” or, “We're going to have to slash this program, that program.” I mean, eventually, when you're spending at least 200 billion above and beyond that which you've got in payroll taxes and increases every year, something drastic has to happen. If we act now, we can do so in a way that saves the system for younger workers.

I'm going to tell you again; I'm going to keep saying it all around the country—and I like doing this, by the way. I like going around the country saying, “Folks, we have got a problem.” And I like saying to people, don't worry about it if you've been born prior to 1950. Nothing changes. You're going to get what you're promised. But I'm also saying to younger workers, you better listen carefully to this debate because you're the ones who are going to have to pay for it. And if I were you, I'd be saying, “Well, if we have a problem, Mr. President, what do you and the Congress intend to do about it?”

Right now we're wondering whether we've got a problem. I've been reading the newspapers and been seeing some folks saying,

"There's not a problem. He's just exaggerating." Well, I'm going to keep telling people we've got a problem until it sinks in, because we've got one. The facts are irrefutable. You can't dodge whether we have a problem or not. Because, see, the next follow-on question to that is, "If you've got a problem, what do you Republicans and Democrats and a few independents intend to do about it up there? Are you going to sit around and play politics? Or are you going to get it to table and do your duty as public servants?"

And so I started that process. When I gave my State of the Union, I said, "Put your ideas on the table." I said, "Come on, bring some ideas forward. We have an obligation." And I reminded people that Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan had some good ideas. President Clinton, my predecessor, had some good ideas. Former Democrat Congressman Tim Penny had some good ideas—all of them interesting ideas that need to be in the mix in order to permanently solve this problem. And so I want to say again to folks who are listening here today, I'm really interested in working with members of both parties to be able to say we've done our duty.

Now, I've got some ideas, and I wanted to share one of the ideas with you right now. I believe in order to make the system work better for younger workers, they ought to be able—be allowed to, at their choice, to take some of their own money and set it aside in a personal savings account. That's what I think we ought to consider.

Let me tell you why it makes sense to me that—first of all, the Government can't meet its promises. But one way for a younger worker to come close to what the Government has promised is to be able to take a portion of the money and get a better rate of return on your own money than that which the Social Security system gets. See, there's something called the compounding rate of interest. That's when you set aside a dollar or a series of dollars, and it grows over time. And obviously, if the rate on your money is 2 percent, it will grow at a certain pace. If it's 4 percent, it grows double that. And right now the money—your money is earning very little compared to what you can get in conservative stocks and bonds and investments.

I'm talking conservative; I'm not talking about lottery, taking it to the track—[laughter]—a conservative mix of stocks and bonds just like Federal employees get in the employee Thrift Savings Plan. And just like we give people who work for the Government, you can take some of your own money, set it aside, and watch it grow.

Do you realize that if you're a person who earns an average of \$35,000 a year over your working career, \$35,000, and you're allowed to take—put 4 percent of the money—the payroll tax aside in a personal account, and you hold it over time, that when you retire, you'll save a quarter-of-a-million dollars. That's your money. That money, by the way, the quarter-of-a-million dollars, is the capital account. Now, you can't spend all that the minute you retire. This is a retirement account we're talking about. But it's your money, and the interest off that money goes to supplement the Social Security check that you're going to get from the Federal Government. See, personal accounts is an add-on to that which the Government is going to pay you. It doesn't replace the Social Security system. It is a part of making—getting a better rate of return, though, so—to come closer to the promises made. That's important to know.

Secondly, you just can't take it all out. I mean, it's a retirement system. There will be rules about withdrawal. You can't put it in certain things if you—start-ups. There are guidelines to encourage you to make the right kind of investments. Now, you can alter stocks and bonds and different things—your choice. But it's been proven that when you hold money over a period of time in safe, conservative investments, it gets a better rate of return than the money you get in the Social Security system. So there will be guidelines about what you can invest in.

We've got to make sure the system is fair to poor Americans. And so there's ways to make sure the benefit structure is fair. But let me talk to you about investing. There's a certain notion in America that the investor class is only a certain type of person. I just don't believe that. I don't subscribe to that. I don't think that's what America is about. I think we ought to encourage people from all walks of life to own something. I think

ownership is a vital part of being a productive citizen in our country. I think we ought to encourage ownership, not discourage ownership. And I think we ought to recognize people from all walks of life are plenty capable about managing their own affairs.

I'm getting ready, hold on. I'm winding down here. [*Laughter*] Think about a system where you've accumulated a nest egg of your own—the 35,000-a-year person, a quarter-of-a-million-dollar nest egg—and that when you pass on, you can leave it to whom you want. In other words, that person can then take it and spend it tomorrow if they feel like it. But it's your asset. See, it's your money to begin with.

The Social Security system today—if you're a young widow and the money your husband put in, there's nothing there. There's no asset. There's a Government promise that at a certain age you'll get a stipend. But there's no assets there, see? And so what we're talking about is really changing how the system works so that your money can earn a better rate of return, and that after your—when you pass on, you can pass that money on to whomever you want. So we're talking about helping people build up an asset base, which I think is a vital part of a stable future. It also has the added benefit of providing more savings. And when there's more savings, there's more investment. And when there's more investment, there's more jobs. It will be good for the economy as well.

So I'm interested in this idea. I'm excited about it. I've spent a lot of time talking about it to people. I understand we're going to have to explain to people, over time, when we talk with Congress, how this works. I've said it makes sense to phase it in very slowly so that we can better afford the transition cost to go from one system to another. But I'll tell you this: If we don't act, we're looking at about an \$11 trillion hole for the American taxpayers that are coming up. This is a big liability—not for me and baby boomers. We're fine. Rodney and I are just fine. We lucked out when it came time to—the year we were born.

But if you're born—if you're a young worker, you've got a problem. And I repeat, I hope—I hope that as time goes on and this debate goes forward, that you understand the

power of your voice to say to people, "We've seen enough of this, 'We're not going to move because somebody might look good,' or, 'We don't want to do it because my political party told me not to do something.' " Now is the time to get rid of all that—all that deadlock in Washington, and focus on the problem for the good of the generation to come.

All right. Olivia Mitchell is with us. Olivia, tell us what you do.

[*At this point, Dr. Olivia Mitchell, executive director, Pension Research Council, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, and former Member, President's Commission to Strengthen Social Security, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Well, I appreciate that, Olivia. It is very important—[*applause*]. Thank you all. It is very important for those folks—and listen, I understand there's a lot of people who rely exclusively on their Social Security checks, and I know that. And it is very important for people to not be frightened by the discussion about making sure your grandchildren have got a system around. I mean, one of the great things about the generation who now relies upon Social Security is there's a deep concern about generations coming up. And this really is a generational issue, and I want to thank you for bringing that up.

Speaking about that, we've got John Bligh with us. Welcome.

John Bligh. Hi, Mr. President.

The President. How are you?

Mr. Bligh. Fine, thank you.

[*Mr. Bligh, retired senior, East Northport, NY, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Well, I appreciate you, John. Thanks, good job. Thank you, very good.

See, I think the operative word is that he's not worried about getting his check—counts on his check, not worried about it. That's what I—one of the things I'm going to continue saying around this country, and by the way, this is State number 10, and tomorrow is 11, and I'm keeping moving. I just say I'm going to a lot of places. I'm not going to go

away on this issue because it's vital, and we've got to do something for the younger folks.

And the fact that John said he's not worried about the check, the check that he's been promised, is an important statement. He said, "I need it, and I'm not worried about it." And I want others to hear that as well.

Then he invited—Lisa—who invited who? Did you invite Dad, or did he invite himself?

Lisa Engler. Well—I'm sorry—the truth of the matter is, I need my parents on a regular basis to help me, because I have five children—

The President. Five kids, that's good, yes.

Mrs. Engler. —and I really can't do it all on my own. So anyway, yes, I'm Lisa Engler. I'm here with my husband, Will. We have five children.

The President. Right. John is your dad.

Mrs. Engler. And my dad. And Social Security, of course, for me is an issue, because not only did I work in the workforce for 10 years and saw a big chunk of my money go into Social Security, and all the senior managers telling me, you know, "It may not be here for you. Invest in 401(k)," but now, looking at the numbers and everything, it's very frightening as a parent. I have a 3-month-old daughter who, at the age of 65, this system will be bankrupt for almost 30 years. It's frightening.

The President. In 2042, it goes broke, for good. It not only goes in the red, but whatever paper is available in the form of IOUs is gone. I mean, it's just—it's a fact.

Mrs. Engler. And there's no getting around it. I mean, we all know it. We all heard—

The President. No, not everybody knows it yet. They're going to know it.

Mrs. Engler. Oops.

The President. You know it. It's all right.

[Mrs. Engler, stay-at-home mom, Westfield, NJ, made further remarks.]

The President. There you go. [Laughter] Yes, and not only that—that's a good—very good. And not only do you watch your money grow, but you watch people making decisions about the economy. In other words, there's a certain sense of when you own something,

you actually own a stake, and the future matters a lot.

You know, I love the fact that more people are owning their home in America than ever before. I love the fact that people are owning their own business in America, people from all walks of life. And I think it makes sense to encourage ownership when it comes to retirement systems.

Carlos Pagan.

Carlos Pagan. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. First of all, he's a firefighter, and I'm proud of you.

Mr. Pagan. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Good job. All right, where are you a firefighter?

Mr. Pagan. I'm a fireman in the city of Paterson.

The President. Good, yes. Thank you. Staying in good shape?

Mr. Pagan. Yes, sir.

The President. One thing about those firefighters, they stay in good shape. You also—

Mr. Pagan. I own a real estate company in the city of Paterson. Again, my name is Carlos Pagan. I'm 33 years old. I'm raising two kids. I have a daughter named Vanessa; she's 15.

The President. No, you're not 15. [Laughter]

Mr. Pagan. And my son, Steven; he's 13.

The President. So like, teenagers?

Mr. Pagan. Yes, sir.

The President. Yes—I've been there. [Laughter]

[Mr. Pagan, owner, Century 21 Northern Realty, and firefighter, Paterson, NJ, made further remarks.]

The President. Let me tell you an interesting statistic. You know, Carlos—I was getting ready to tell you, the other day I was at one of these forums, and the person said, "People like me"—see, she had read a survey that said people her age thought they were likely to see a UFO before they'd get a Social Security check when they retire. [Laughter] Kind of an interesting observation, isn't it? [Laughter] So here's Carlos, a firefighter, saying, "Just give me a chance to manage some of my own money."

Things have changed in America since I was Carlos' age. I don't remember 401(k)s when I was 30 years old. Maybe they were there; I just wasn't observant of it. I don't think 401(k)s came into being. I don't think there was this notion of defined contribution plans. So here we are, talking to a brave firefighter, talking about, "Give me a chance to contribute to my own plan." It's kind of interesting, isn't it? It's an interesting shift of attitude. There's a lot of folks that may not realize this; there's a whole kind of investor culture that is growing up throughout the whole younger generation. People are used to it, used to the concept of opening up a quarterly statement and saying, "Look at my asset base. Look how it is growing."

That's an important thing that people need to hear, particularly people in the United States Congress, that we're not talking about a foreign idea of allowing people to take some of their own money, in order so that that money can grow at a better rate than that which is in the Government, so that when they come to retire, it can be closer to the benefits promised by the Federal Government. That's what we're talking about.

I think it's interesting, don't you, that Carlos is—he's got an entrepreneurial spirit to begin with, right? When did you start your own business?

Mr. Pagan. Seven years ago, sir.

The President. Making a living?

Mr. Pagan. Yes, doing all right.

The President. That's good, yes. It's what we like to hear. [Laughter] Employing people?

Mr. Pagan. Yes, and this summer, I'm going to employ my daughter for the first time, and she'll be able to contribute to Social Security.

The President. That's good. Good job.

Okay. Brian Dougherty. Welcome.

Brian Dougherty. Thank you, sir. It's a pleasure to be here, Mr. President.

The President. Glad you're here. Age?

Mr. Dougherty. Twenty-three.

The President. See, he's nervous, and should be. Not about sitting up here—[laughter].

Mr. Dougherty. I'm 23 years old. I live in Hoboken, New Jersey, now. I'm a sales

manager at the Hilton Short Hills around the corner.

The President. Business all right?

Mr. Dougherty. Business is good.

The President. You deserve a promotion, then, what the heck. [Laughter]

Mr. Dougherty. Well, thank you. Maybe if we can get you to stay in the Presidential suite, which is calling your name.

The President. Very good.

Mr. Dougherty. Your next overnight trip, sir.

The President. That's called turning the tide on the old boy, you know. That's good. [Laughter]

[Mr. Dougherty made further remarks.]

The President. It's interesting, isn't it? Listen to this 23-year-old guy. He's saying, "I've analyzed it. I started to pay attention to it. And when I looked at the math, I realized I'm going to be on the short end of the stick." In other words, you can put all the money in you want, but because of the demographics and the math, there's not going to be anything left. You're just paying for me, and I—and I appreciate it. [Laughter] We're happy you are. The question is, will you be paying for anything for yourself? And the answer is, not unless we reform this system. That's what the message is here today.

Keep going, you're on a roll. Keep going.

Mr. Dougherty. The other thing, Mr. President—we had an opportunity to speak backstage, and I appreciate your listening. I'm here to ask that Congress listens. You don't see many 23-year-olds on the MSNBC circuit or anything like that at nighttime, but we have something to say, and we're concerned about the issue.

The President. Yes. You sure do have something to say. See, here's the thing about this issue. I actually ran on it. I said, "Vote for me, and I'm going to do something about Social Security, and I'm going to try to put out some innovative ideas to fix it." And in the past, people would say, "Don't campaign on Social Security; you'll get beat." It used to be politically that if you just said something about it, they would run ads saying, "Well, Bush is going to take away your check." And they actually did that in 2000, I was told. And fortunately, when I ran the

next time, I was able to say, “Well, we didn’t take away your check.”

But I’m still talking about it because I think it’s an issue we need to talk about. I think it’s an important issue. And the dynamics have changed. Young people are beginning to say, “What about my check? What’s going to be around for me?”

This is a generational issue. People born from 1950 and before have nothing to worry about; the promise is going to be made. The fundamental question is, will the Congress have the will and the desire to work with the administration so that we can say to people like Brian and Carlos and everybody else up here that are born after 1950, “We hear your voice, too. We know you’ve got a concern, and we want to make sure this very important system, the retirement system, is modernized and reformed so you’ll have the safety net when you retire as well.”

Listen, I want to thank you all for giving us a chance to discuss this. I want to thank our panelists. God bless. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:56 a.m. at the Westfield Armory. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Gregory S. McDermott of Westfield, NJ; Maureen Ferguson, wife of Representative Mike Ferguson; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; President Jacques Chirac of France; and Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President’s public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

February 26

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

February 28

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing and met with the National

Security Council. Later, he met with Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Cardinal Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir, the Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, to the White House on March 16.

March 1

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President met with congressional leaders to discuss his recent visit to Europe and foreign policy initiatives.

March 2

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Arnold, MD.

Later in the morning, the President returned to Washington, DC.

In the afternoon, in the Residence, the President met with Republican Members of the House of Representatives to discuss Social Security reform.

The President made additional disaster assistance available to Alabama by authorizing an increase in the level of Federal funding for Public Assistance projects undertaken as a result of Hurricane Ivan.

March 3

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government to discuss the political and security situation in Iraq. He then had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had lunch with Vice President Dick Cheney. Later, he traveled to Langley, VA, where he had a briefing at the Central Intelligence Agency. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

Later in the afternoon, the President participated in an interview with the Editorial Board of the New York Post. Later, he met with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. He then participated in a photo opportunity with U.S. Senate Youth Program students.

The White House announced that the President will host President Vicente Fox of

Mexico and Prime Minister Paul Martin of Canada in Texas on March 23.

March 4

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister-designate Jose Socrates of Portugal to congratulate him on his party's February 20 election victory. He then had an intelligence briefing.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Newark, NJ, where, upon arrival at Newark Liberty International Airport, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer John Herrmann. He then traveled to Westfield, NJ.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to South Bend, IN, where, upon arrival at South Bend Regional Airport, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Lucy Kuminecz. He then traveled to Notre Dame, IN.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland to the White House on March 17.

The President announced his intention to nominate David Garman to be Under Secretary of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christopher R. Hill to be Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

The President announced his intention to nominate Anthony J. Principi to be a member of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission and, upon confirmation, to designate him as Chairman.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rudolph E. Boschwitz for the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as U.S. Representative on the Human Rights Commission of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

The President announced his intention to designate E. Timothy Oppelt as Acting Assistant Administrator for Research and Development at the Environmental Protection Agency.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted February 28

William Cobey,
of North Carolina, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority for a term expiring May 30, 2010, vice John Paul Hammerschmidt, term expired.

Linda Morrison Combs,
of North Carolina, to be Controller, Office of Federal Financial Management, Office of Management and Budget, vice Linda M. Springer.

John C. Dugan,
of Maryland, to be Comptroller of the Currency for a term of 5 years, vice John D. Hawke, Jr., resigned.

Christopher J. Hanley,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation for a term expiring December 17, 2006, vice George J. Kourpias, term expired.

Nancy Ann Nord,
of the District of Columbia, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for the remainder of the term expiring October 26, 2005, vice Mary Sheila Gall, resigned.

Nancy Ann Nord,
of the District of Columbia, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for a term of 7 years from October 27, 2005 (reappointment).

Jeffrey Clay Sell,
of Texas, to be Deputy Secretary of Energy, vice Kyle E. McSlarrow, resigned.

Submitted March 1

Brian Edward Sandoval,
of Nevada, to be U.S. District Judge for the
District of Nevada, vice Howard D.
McKibben, retired.

Submitted March 4

Rudolph E. Boschwitz,
of Minnesota, for the rank of Ambassador
during his tenure of service as Representa-
tive of the United States of America on the
Human Rights Commission of the Economic
and Social Council of the United Nations.

David Garman,
of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Energy,
vice Robert Gordon Card, resigned.

Christopher R. Hill,
of Rhode Island, to be an Assistant Secretary
of State (East Asian and Pacific Affairs), vice
James Andrew Kelly, resigned.

Anthony Joseph Principi,
of California, to be a member of the Defense
Base Closure and Realignment Commission
(new position).

**Checklist
of White House Press Releases**

The following list contains releases of the Office
of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as
items nor covered by entries in the Digest of
Other White House Announcements.

Released February 26

Statement by the Press Secretary on the ter-
rorist attack in Tel Aviv, Israel

Released February 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Sec-
retary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary on the up-
coming visit of Cardinal Nasrallah Boutros
Sfeir, the Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and
all the East

Released March 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Sec-
retary Scott McClellan

Transcript of a press briefing by Office of
Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Di-
rector Jim Towey on the President's an-
nouncements regarding the Faith-Based and
Community Initiatives

Fact sheet: Compassion in Action: Producing
Real Results for Americans Most in Need

Released March 2

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Sec-
retary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster
assistance to Alabama

Fact sheet: Better Training for Better Jobs

Released March 3

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Sec-
retary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary on the up-
coming visit of Mexican President Vicente
Fox and Canadian Prime Minister Paul Mar-
tin

Released March 4

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Sec-
retary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of
Taoiseach Bertie Ahern

Announcement of nomination for Adminis-
trator of the Environmental Protection Agen-
cy

**Acts Approved
by the President**

NOTE: No acts approved by the President were
received by the Office of the Federal Register
during the period covered by this issue.