

working on the vote, “ or, “Thanks for helping on tax relief.” That may be—if you consider that a meeting, the answer is, yes, I’m sure I have, in a roomful of people, as we either thank people for success in policy or thank people for going out of their way to get a piece of legislation passed on the Hill.

Listen, thank you all very much. Looking forward to Tuesday evening. I hope you are as well. Thank you.

NOTE: The President’s news conference began at 10:15 a.m. in the James S. Brady Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; James D. Wolfensohn, Quartet Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement; Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and Deputy Assistant to the President for Homeland Security Kenneth Rapuano. Reporters referred to Donald E. Powell, Chairman, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, who is coordinating Federal gulf coast relief efforts; and Mike Brown, former Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Remarks Following Discussions With Parliament Member Saad Hariri of Lebanon

January 27, 2006

It’s my honor to welcome a Member of the Lebanese Parliament, Saad Hariri, here to the Oval Office. We’ve just had a very interesting and important discussion about our mutual desire for Lebanon to be free—free of foreign influence, free of Syrian intimidation, free to chart its own course.

The American people mourn the loss of life. I know it’s been hard on you and your mom, who we had the honor of meeting in Paris, and your family to think about your dad, a man who cared about Lebanon a lot. It’s very important for the investigation into your dad’s death to go forward. We expect there to be a full and firm investigation, and the people who are responsible for your dad’s death need to be held to account.

I want to thank you for your passion for the people of Lebanon. I was telling him I was raised in west Texas, and I can remember Lebanese-American Texans being such

great citizens of our State and our country. Many people of Lebanese extraction want Lebanon to flourish and thrive, and so do I. It will be very important for the region for Lebanon’s democracy to be able to reach its full potential. And there’s no doubt in my mind, with the focused effort of the free world reminding Syria to uphold to U.N. resolution 1559, we will be able to achieve the objective.

So I talked about a donors conference—he’s going to work the world community to try to help organize a conference to help the Lebanese people get going. And we appreciate very much your suggestions and your advice. In the meantime, welcome to the Oval Office. Thank you for your courage. I appreciate it very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at noon in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Nazek Hariri, widow of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri of Lebanon, who was assassinated on February 14, 2005, in Beirut. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Proclamation 7976—National African American History Month, 2006

January 27, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

As we celebrate National African American History Month, we recognize the many contributions of African Americans to our country and reinforce our commitment to be a Nation of opportunity and hope for every citizen.

Throughout our history, African Americans have courageously worn our Nation’s uniform while defending peace and liberty around the globe. Patriots like Thurgood Marshall and Rosa Parks broke down racial barriers and inspired our Nation to make good on the promise of equal justice under law. Educators like Mary McLeod Bethune and Dr. Frederick Patterson transformed the academic world, with the goal of ensuring

that every child has access to a good education. Athletes such as Jesse Owens and Wilma Rudolph and entertainers such as Ossie Davis and Ray Charles have brought pride and joy to generations of Americans. Today, the accomplishments of African Americans in every aspect of our society continue to encourage people to reach as far as their vision and dreams may take them.

African-American organizations have played a vital role in achieving justice and equal rights, and they have helped make communities across our country stronger and better. This year's theme of African American History Month, "Celebrating Community: A Tribute to Black Fraternal, Social, and Civic Institutions," recognizes the African-American groups that have worked to confront injustices and expand opportunities. These organizations believe in the potential and worth of every person, and they have worked to help all Americans receive a quality education, to feed the hungry and house the homeless, to encourage youth to make healthy choices, and to reach out to others in need. By answering the call to love a neighbor as we would like to be loved ourselves, these groups have set a positive example, and we continue to be inspired by their compassion and service to others.

Working together, Federal, State, and local government, community organizations, and individual citizens will continue to foster hope and build a better tomorrow for all our children and grandchildren.

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 February 2006 as National African American History Month. I call upon public officials, educators, and all the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities that honor the significant contributions African Americans have made to our Nation.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-seventh day of January, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United

States of America the two hundred and thirtieth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., January 31, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on February 1.

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.

January 21

In the morning, at Camp David, MD, the President had an intelligence briefing.

January 22

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

January 23

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Topeka, KS, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Janet Dunn. He then traveled to Manhattan, KS.

In the afternoon, the President met with family members of a soldier killed in Afghanistan. He then returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a photo opportunity with members of the U.S. Walker Cup team.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a retirement dinner for Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan.

January 24

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he met with Senator Norm Coleman of Minnesota and Senator Mark Pryor of Arkansas, cochairs of the National Prayer Breakfast, to discuss preparations for the breakfast.

In the afternoon, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President had a working lunch