

hard; they get somebody coming in from country X; the person says, "Check back in with us in 30 days"—they don't.

In other words, they end up in society. That has created some despondency—not despondency—it's got to discourage people who are working hard to do their job down there and realize the fruits of their labor is being undermined by a policy that, on the one hand, releases people, kind of, into society, and on the other, doesn't have enough beds to hold people so that we can repatriate them back to their countries. Chertoff has announced the fact that we're getting rid of this catch-and-release program.

Thirdly, there has to be enforcement—employer enforcement of rules and regulations. The problem there, of course, is that people are showing up with forged documents. I mentioned this onion picker that I met yesterday—onion grower—who is worried about having labor to pick his onions. But he's not—I don't think he's in a position to be able to determine whether or not what looks like a valid Social Security card, or whatever they show, is valid or not—which leads to the fact there's a whole industry that has sprung up around moving laborers to jobs that Americans won't do.

It's kind of—when you make something illegal that people want, there's a way around it, around the rules and regulations. And so you've got people, *coyotes* stuffing people in the back of 18-wheelers or smuggling them across 105-degree desert heat. You've got forgers and tunnel-diggers. You've got a whole industry aimed at using people as a commodity. And it's wrong, and it needs to be—we need to do something about it. And the best way to do something about it is to say that if you're—if an American won't do a job and you can find somebody who will do the job, they ought to be allowed to do it legally, on a temporary basis.

One of the issues I did talk about—the man asked me the question about—don't let people get ahead of the line. So I made that clear. But one of the issues is going to be to deal with somebody whose family has been here for a while, raised a family. And that will be an interesting—interesting debate. My answer is, that person shouldn't get automatic citizenship.

Listen, thank you for your time. I've got lunch with the President of Liberia right now. I'm looking forward to greeting this—the first woman elected on the continent of Africa. Appreciate the opportunity to visit with you all. Look forward to future occasions.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:01 a.m. in the James S. Brady Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; former President Jalal Talabani of the Iraqi Transitional Government; Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Iraqi Shiite leader; and President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia

March 21, 2006

President Bush. It has been such an honor to welcome you, Madam President, to the Oval Office. I find that one of the interesting parts of my job is to be able to talk to pioneers, and Madam President, you're a pioneer. You're the first woman elected President to any country on the continent of Africa. And that requires courage and vision and the desire to improve the lives of your people. And I congratulate you on that.

You know, I can remember, it wasn't all that long ago that Laura—that would be Laura Bush—and Condi Rice came back from the Inauguration of this good person. I said, "Okay, tell me, what kind of person am I going to be dealing with," and they said: "Capable, smart, a person who is a doer, a person committed to a bright future for Liberia." And we welcome you.

The President and I have had a good discussion. We discussed ways that the United States Government can help this country get on its feet toward a democracy. We talked about education. We talked about security. We talked about—we also talked about the neighborhood. I asked the President her advice on a variety of issues. I told her that part of a friendship is one in which we can

speak directly with each other about how best to deal with keeping the peace and making sure that health care initiatives are robust and effective. I also shared with her some of my thoughts about the world beyond the continent of Africa. And so I—we really had a good discussion.

And so, Madam President, thank you. I want to thank your delegation. Laura and I look forward to having you for lunch here in a little bit. But all in all, I think it was a very good first visit.

President Johnson Sirleaf. Mr. President, as I mentioned to you, on behalf of the Liberian people, I would like to thank you—thank you, thank your administration, thank the American people, thank the U.S. Congress, for all the support that our country has received in making this important transition from war to peace.

Our people have new hope. They have new promise in the future as a result of the strong position you took that enabled us to get this opportunity for national renewal. We have taken the necessary first steps to restoring dignity to our people, starting to fix our economy, to get our international credibility and reputation back. And we're confident that Liberian people are ready to do what it takes. They're back at work; our country is open for business. We're beginning to put in all the processes that will enable us to manage our resources that God has been so good to us in giving us, for the good of our people.

We want you to know that Liberia is going to do all it can to justify the confidence that you have given to us. Liberia, we think, has the potential to become the U.S. success story in Africa. We'll be working within our own borders; we'll be working with our neighboring states to bring peace, stability, and development to our subregion. We'll be working with our African leaders to ensure that the example we set on this transition will be one that can fuse many of our—many of other countries and other people in Africa.

As the first democratic-elected woman, I represent the expectations and aspirations of women in Liberia, in Africa, and I dare say, the world. And I must be able to deliver for them. My performance must justify.

Again, we just want to thank you for the encouragement and the support that you have given us to enable us to meet these enormous challenges of development.

President Bush. Thank you, Madam President. Thank you. Good job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Iraq and Afghanistan Nongovernmental Organizations March 21, 2006

I want to thank you all for coming. Laura and I have really enjoyed our visit.

We're talking today to people who have decided to try to help improve the lives of folks in Afghanistan and Iraq. And I just marvel at the fact that Americans from around our country have heard a call to help somebody realize the benefits of freedom. And you know, governments can help, and we will help. And obviously, we've got a brave military trying to secure freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. But one of the real powerful parts of developing civil societies in these two countries is the fact that fellow citizens are willing to interface with citizens in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We've heard stories about Afghan women education programs and Iraqi Fulbright programs and programs to help hospitals and programs to welcome intellectuals—all aimed at helping these societies that were once brutalized by tyrants realize the great benefits and blessings of liberty. And we've got—I'm sure a lot of our citizens don't realize this, but there are thousands of—I would call them social entrepreneurs, who are figuring out ways to help improve the human condition in these two liberated countries.

And I want to thank you all very much. It's heartening to hear your stories, and it makes me—give me—once again gives me great reason to be proud of our country and the people who live here. So thank you all for coming. God bless your work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:56 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.