

He understands, like I understand, that the press is vital to our democracy. As a professional journalist, Tony Snow understands the importance of the relationship between Government and those whose job it is to cover the Government. He's going to work hard to provide you with timely information about my philosophy, my priorities, and the actions we're taking to implement our agenda.

He brings a long record of accomplishment to this position. He has spent a quarter of a century in the news business. He's worked in all three major media—print, radio, and television. He started his career in 1979 as an editorial writer for the Greensboro Record in North Carolina. He's going to—went on to write editorials for the Virginian-Pilot in Norfolk. He ran the editorial pages in both the Daily Press of Newport News and the Washington Times. He's written nationally syndicated columns for both the Detroit News and USA Today.

During his career in print journalism, he's been cited for his work by the Society of Professional Journalists, the Associated Press, and Gannett. For 7 years, he served as the host of "FOX News Sunday." Most recently, he reached Americans all across our country as the host of "The Tony Snow Show" on FOX News Radio and "Weekend Live with Tony Snow" on the FOX News Channel.

He's not afraid to express his own opinions. For those of you who have read his columns and listened to his radio show, he sometimes has disagreed with me. I asked him about those comments, and he said, "You should have heard what I said about the other guy." I like his perspective; I like the perspective he brings to this job; and I think you're going to like it too.

Tony knows what it's like to work inside the White House. In 1991, he took a break from journalism to serve as Director of Speechwriting and Deputy Assistant to the President for Media Affairs. He's taught children in Kenya. He belongs to a rock band called Beats Workin'. He's a man of courage; he's a man of integrity; he loves his family a lot. He is the loving husband of a fine wife and the father of three beautiful children.

He succeeds a decent and talented man in Scott McClellan. I've known Scott since

he worked for me in Texas. We traveled our State together; we traveled our country together; and we have traveled the world together. We have also made history together. Scott should be enormously proud of his service to our Nation in an incredibly difficult job. I've always—I will always be grateful to him. I will always be proud to call him friend.

I appreciate Scott's offer to help Tony Snow prepare for his new job, and I'm proud to welcome Tony as part of our team.

Tony Snow. Well, Mr. President, I want to thank you for the honor of serving as Press Secretary. And just a couple of quick notes—I'm delighted to be here. One of the things I want to do is just make it clear that I—one of the reasons I took the job is not only because I believe in the President, because believe it or not, I want to work with you. These are times that are going to be very challenging. We've got a lot of big issues ahead, and we've got a lot of important things that all of us are going to be covering together.

And I am very excited, and I can't wait. And I want to thank you, Mr. President, for the honor, and thank all you guys for your forbearance. And I look forward to working with you.

Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:10 a.m. in the James S. Brady Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jill Snow, wife of Tony Snow.

Remarks Honoring the 2006 National and State Teachers of the Year

April 26, 2006

I was going to say, thank you, Laura, for those kind remarks. [*Laughter*] Please be seated. Thank you all. Welcome.

This is one of the great afternoons for Laura and me. We love to recognize our teachers. We really appreciate you coming. Actually, this is an annual event started by Harry Truman. And I'm glad to be a part of a tradition here at the White House, saying thanks to our teachers.

I admire teachers and like teachers so much, I married one. [*Laughter*] Laura is a

great advocate for literacy and a strong supporter for America's teachers, and I'm really proud to have her by my side during these unbelievable times and this great experience of serving our country—other than being a fine introducer. *[Laughter]*

The thing I like about teaching is, teaching is such an optimistic profession. I know when teachers look out at their classrooms, you see more than a child at play or at study. You're able to see a child with big dreams and big hopes. You see future doctors and scientists and entrepreneurs and inventors, and I hope you see even a teacher or two.

You dedicated your lives to the formation of young minds. You're giving our children the skills they need to succeed in life and equally important, the courage and the drive to realize those dreams. Our Nation is grateful for your hard work. We appreciate what you do, and we are honored you're here at the White House.

I want to thank our Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings. She's been a long-time friend. She believes strongly in the classroom teacher, and she believes in the potential of every child.

I'm pleased to recognize Senator Sam Brownback, for the State of Kansas. Welcome. I'm glad you're here—and his wife, Mary; thank you for coming. As well as Congressman Dennis Moore from Kansas and Stephene, thank you all for taking time to honor the teachers who are here.

I appreciate the National Teacher of the Year Finalists: Sam Bennett from Florida—say hello to the Governor—*[laughter]*—Ron Poplau of Kansas—no wonder you all are here—and Susan Barnard of Washington State. We're really glad you're here. Congratulations on setting such a fine example.

Everybody here has been introduced to Kim Oliver, but you haven't met her parents, Vincent and Veronica. Thank you all very much—brothers, cousins, and significant other. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank all the Teachers of the Year from around our country who are here. I really—Laura and I really enjoyed having our picture with you. It's just a brief moment to say thanks. But nevertheless, it's thanks from the bottom of our hearts. And it really means a lot you're here.

I thank Dr. Tom Houlihan, who is the executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers. That's one of the sponsoring organizations. Thank you for your service, Tom.

Margery Mayer, of the Scholastic Education—Scholastic Inc. I want to thank Margery for being here. That's also a sponsoring organization of this event.

Kathleen Murphy is the president of ING, is here with us, as well as Tom Waldron, who is the executive vice president. These are the sponsoring groups of this important occasion.

I also want to thank the chief state school officers who are with us. Good to see you all. Nice going. Hiring and promoting good teachers is a really important part of your job. I want you to know that we know that being a teacher is difficult work. It's a hard job. It's a job that requires compassion and determination and extraordinary patience. And as Laura hinted, or maybe didn't hint, I was probably one of those kind that tested your patience. *[Laughter]*

You're helping young people to learn the basics of reading and writing and adding and subtracting. You're serving as mentors and, probably most importantly, as role models. You help kindle young imaginations, and you inspire a love of learning. It's a pretty significant job description, when you think about it. And the teachers we honor here today are excelling at that job.

Your daily efforts help young Americans grow into successful adults. In other words, you're building the future for the country. We ask a lot of our teachers, and we owe you a lot in return. Education is my top domestic priority. And when I first came to office, I worked with members of both political parties—believe it or not, it's possible here in Washington to occasionally do that—to increase funding from the Federal level but also to pass the No Child Left Behind Act. The spirit of the No Child Left Behind Act basically says, society has a deep obligation to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations, that we believe every child can learn, and therefore, we believe it makes sense to determine whether or not every child is learning. And if not, there ought to be extra help so that no child in our society is left behind.

We're beginning to see good results, thanks to our Nation's teachers. The 2005 Nation's Report Card showed America's fourth graders are posting the best scores in reading and math in the history of the test. African American and Hispanic fourth graders set records in reading and math last year. America's eighth graders earned the best math scores ever recorded. Eighth grade Hispanic and African American students achieved their highest math scores ever. We're making really important strides toward closing an achievement gap in America, and I want to thank our teachers for your hard work.

There's more work to be done, obviously. I've recently launched the American Competitiveness Initiative, which will help our students do better in math and science. We need to train 70,000 high school teachers to lead AP courses in math and science. I know we've got some AP teachers here, and I want to thank you for that.

We need to bring 30,000 math and science professionals into our classrooms to send a message to our children: It's okay to be a mathematician or a scientist—as a matter of fact, it's cool. We want to make sure that we help students who struggle with math get extra help to make sure that—to make sure they have a chance to be able to earn the high-wage jobs of the 21st century. If we ensure that America's children have the skills they need to succeed in life, we will make sure America succeeds in the world.

Improving the quality of education for young Americans requires good laws and good policies, but ultimately it depends on good teachers. And that is why we're here on the South Lawn, to honor really good teachers.

The Teacher of the Year, Kim Oliver, teaches kindergarten at Broad Acres Elementary School in Silver Spring, Maryland. Broad Acres is Montgomery County's highest poverty school, a place where 90 percent of the children qualify for federally-subsidized meals and about 75 percent have parents who do not speak English at home.

It's a school filled with the kind of students that inspired Kim Oliver to become a teacher. Kim decided to become a teacher at a young age. It's really interesting for teachers

to hear what she said. She said, "As a young child, I loved and admired my day care teacher, Mrs. Chandler. I wanted to be just like her. Mrs. Chandler made me feel special, as if I were the only child in her class."

Kim Oliver had many friends growing up who came from unstable and impoverished homes. She says, "I watched so many of my friends live up to the low expectations that were set for them. To this day, I find myself wondering, what if my disadvantaged friends had 12 years worth of Mrs. Chandlers in their lives?" Kim went on to say, "I chose to become a teacher to motivate and inspire the neediest students, who many have written off, and let them know they can achieve and succeed in life regardless of what the statistics may show."

I love that attitude. I think you're beginning to get the drift of why she's the Teacher of the Year. When Kim Oliver arrived at Broad Acres in 2000, the school was threatened with forced restructuring by the State as a result of poor academic performance. Ms. Oliver took a leadership role at the school. That's what good teachers do; they take the lead. She became a teacher-leader and helped lead a collaborative effort to improve the curriculum, instruction, and assessment. She helped establish instructional planning sessions and formal procedures to examine student work and improve student performance.

She noticed that many parents at the school lacked the language skills to be able to read to their children and to be able to help with their school work. And so she and her colleagues purchased cassette players and recorded books on tape for the students to take home and share with their families, which made it a lot easier for parents who struggle with English to help their children.

Kim Oliver also organized a regular "Books and Supper Night," where families could check out books from the library and read together before sharing a dinner, which fostered learning and family involvement in their children's education. She knows what good teachers know: If you can get the parents involved in the child's education, you have a much better chance of succeeding. She set high expectations. Good teachers set

high expectations. She provided needed assistance. She involved families, and she helped turn that school around.

Within 2 years of her arrival, kindergarten students at Broad Acres were mastering early reading skills at higher rates than other schools in the district. After 3 years, Broad Acres students were meeting or exceeding all requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. There were dramatic increases in reading and math scores for the school's second graders.

The Superintendent of Schools in Montgomery County says this about the impact Kim Oliver has had: "She has a rare gift for touching hearts and minds, inspiring in her students to aim high and believe in their potential." A Broad Acres parent says, "She knows how to talk to the children so they will listen." And all her students know that she cares about them. She made them all feel like they were smart and could learn anything. One of her colleagues says, "When you walk into Ms. Oliver's classroom, one cannot help but notice that this is a special place." She is dedicated to her school community and committed to excellence, and she has been an instrumental force in improving student achievement at her school.

Kim says the reason her students are achieving is simple: "I have high expectations for each of them. I teach them that they can accomplish anything with hard work and persistence."

Kim Oliver understands that the key to helping children succeed is fighting the soft bigotry of low expectations. When a teacher believes that a child can learn, it's amazing what happens—a student believes that he or she can learn.

America is blessed to have teachers like Kim Oliver. We're blessed to have teachers like all those who are gathered here at the White House. We thank you for the love and devotion you've shown our children each day.

May God continue to bless your work, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 1:46 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Stephen Moore, wife of Congressman Dennis Moore; Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Margaret Mayer, executive vice presi-

dent and president, Scholastic Education; and Jerry D. Weast, superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President.

Proclamation 8007—National Charter Schools Week, 2006

April 26, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Education is the gateway to a brighter future for our children and our Nation. During National Charter Schools Week, we celebrate charter schools' commitment to academic achievement, accountability, and innovation. We recognize the vital role charter schools play in fostering an America where children have the knowledge and skills they need to grow, succeed, and achieve their dreams.

As a publicly funded alternative to traditional public schools, charter schools have expanded our understanding of public education by embracing the spirit of discovery and providing innovative avenues for success. Almost 15 years after the founding of the first charter school, more than 3,600 charter schools in 40 states and the District of Columbia are teaching more than one million students. These institutions reflect our belief in the promise of America's youth and help fulfill our moral obligation to make sure that every child has a quality education.

This year marks the fourth anniversary of the signing of the No Child Left Behind Act, which is helping schools close the achievement gap among America's youth. Using the same principles that guide No Child Left Behind, we are achieving educational excellence through charter schools by providing greater flexibility with Federal dollars and curriculum control at the local level. We are also providing parents with more information about school performance and school options and insisting on results through assessment and accountability.

In the aftermath of the devastating hurricanes that struck our Nation's Gulf Coast last