

Somebody asked me about him. I said, look, I think he'd be a great President. But it's—he said he's not going to run in 2008, and I think you've got to take him for his word. He's been in public life now for 8 years, and I think he wants a breather.

But thank you for your kind words. You go back and write him a letter, you know. He's a good man. Look, my—here's the thing about Washington that—the rhetoric needs, in my judgment, toned down up there so that we're able to attract good people, both Republican and Democrat, to run for public office. You know, it's one thing to disagree, but it's another thing to disparage people. And we just—we don't need that kind of language, in my judgment—in order to attract good people to public service.

And there's too much politics in Washington these days. There really is. And so my worry is, not so much about Jeb, but when people take a look at Washington and say, "Why mess with it? Why do I want to put my family through it all?" And my advice to them is, one, it's worth it. But my advice, also, to all of us in public office is not to demean somebody because you don't agree with them. At least, in the debate, be considerate of the other person's point of view.

And the immigration debate is one where America needs to start, in my judgment. I'm very worried about the tone of this debate. We are a land of immigrants. One of the great things about America is, we've been able to assimilate people from all around the world into becoming Americans. And that debate—if that debate tends to divide this country or cause people to wonder about their worth as an individual, it will be a debate of—it will be a debate that will be harmful.

Now, I understand the emotions of this issue. It's a tough issue for Members to vote on. I happen to believe my comprehensive plan is the way to go. But if somebody doesn't agree with me, I'm not going to debase them in the public arena. And so whether the debate is immigration or tax or Iraq, it's really important, in my judgment, for us to conduct this debate with dignity. And that will help answer your question as to whether or not

people are going to be wanting to run for office.

You know, my buddies in Texas take a look at Washington and say, "Why are you even up there, man? Come on home." [Laughter] "What are you doing that for?" My answer is, I love my country. Public service is noble and necessary. I'm glad I ran for President. And I'll try to do my part to elevate the tone and hold people—and treat people with respect whether they agree with me or not.

I've got to go back to Washington. God bless. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:37 a.m. at the Arie Crown Theater at Lakeside Center—McCormick Place. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago, IL; Edward R. Tinsley III, chairman of the board of directors, National Restaurant Association, and his wife, Meredith; Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, former President Saddam Hussein, President Jalal Talabani, and Speaker of the Council of Representatives Mahmoud al-Mashhadani of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Prime Minister Stephen J. Harper of Canada; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida. Participants referred to President Hugo Chavez Frias of Venezuela; Ted Koppel, former anchor, ABC News; and former Vice President Al Gore.

Statement on the Death of Lee Jong-wook

May 22, 2006

Laura and I were saddened to learn of the death of Dr. Lee Jong-wook. As the world's top health official, Dr. Lee worked tirelessly to improve the health of millions of people, from combating tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS to his aggressive efforts to eradicate polio. He provided tremendous leadership to the international community as it confronted the challenges of the 21st century, including the threat of an influenza pandemic. Dr. Lee's outreach to world leaders and entities increased awareness of potentially devastating public health dangers. We send our deepest condolences to his family.

News Conference With Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel

May 23, 2006

President Bush. Thank you. Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. I'm particularly pleased to welcome Mrs. Olmert to the White House as well. Thanks for coming.

The Prime Minister and I have known each other since 1998, when he was the mayor of Jerusalem, and I was the Governor of Texas. And I remember you greeting me in your office there, and you probably thought you were going to be the Prime Minister—I wasn't sure if I was going to be the President. [*Laughter*]

We've just had a really productive meeting. We reaffirmed the deep and abiding ties between Israel and the United States. And those ties include our commitment to democracy and our strong belief that everybody has the right to worship freely. The ties include growing trade and economic relationships. The ties include important educational exchange programs that allow Israeli students to study at American colleges and universities, and American students to travel and study in Israel.

In our meeting, the Prime Minister and I recalled the great contributions to peace made by Ariel Sharon. I asked the Prime Minister to convey my very best wishes to Ariel Sharon's sons.

Prime Minister Olmert and I discussed peace and security in the Middle East, which the people of Israel seek and the American people support. In 2002, I outlined my vision of two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Prime Minister Olmert told me that he and his Government share this vision. The international community seeks to realize this goal to the roadmap, which calls for a comprehensive settlement that resolves all outstanding issues between Israelis and Palestinians. I believe, and Prime Minister Olmert agrees, that a negotiated final status agreement best serves both the Israelis and the Palestinians and the cause of peace.

Palestinian Authority President Abbas favors and speaks out for peace and negotiations. Yet the Hamas-led Palestinian Government does not. Hamas needs to make a stra-

tegic choice for peace. The United States and the international community have made clear that Hamas must recognize Israel's right to exist, must abandon terror, and must accept all previous agreements between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. No country can be expected to make peace with those who deny its right to exist and who use terror to attack its population.

Today Prime Minister Olmert shared with me some of his ideas; I would call them bold ideas. These ideas could lead to a two-state solution if a pathway to progress on the roadmap is not open in the period ahead. His ideas include the removal of most Israeli settlements, except for the major Israeli population centers in the West Bank. This idea would follow Prime Minister Sharon's decision to remove all settlements in Gaza and several in the West Bank.

I look forward to learning more about the Prime Minister's ideas. While any final status agreement will be only achieved on the basis of mutually agreed changes, and no party should prejudice the outcome of negotiations on a final status agreement, the Prime Minister's ideas could be an important step toward the peace we both support. I'm encouraged by his constructive efforts to find ways to move the peace process forward.

And finally, the Prime Minister and I shared our concerns about the Iranian regime's nuclear weapons ambitions. The United States and the international community have made our common position clear: We're determined that the Iranian regime must not gain nuclear weapons.

I told the Prime Minister what I've stated publicly before: Israel is a close friend and ally of the United States, and in the event of any attack on Israel, the United States will come to Israel's aid. The United States is strongly committed, and I'm strongly committed, to the security of Israel as a vibrant Jewish state.

I look forward to our continuing discussions after this press conference. I'm not sure the delegations realize this yet, but we're going to shed ourselves of our delegations and the Prime Minister and I are going to go up to the Residence and sit down and have a continued dialog. And if we decide to brief our delegations on what we discuss,