AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

Week Ending Friday, December 29, 2006

The President's Radio Address

December 23, 2006

Good morning. As families across our Nation gather to celebrate Christmas, Laura and I send our best wishes for the holidays. We hope that your Christmas will be blessed with family and fellowship.

At this special time of year, we give thanks for Christ's message of love and hope. Christmas reminds us that we have a duty to others, and we see that sense of duty fulfilled in the men and women who wear our Nation's uniform. America is blessed to have fine citizens who volunteer to defend us in distant lands. For many of them, this Christmas will be spent far from home, and on Christmas our Nation honors their sacrifice and thanks them for all they do to defend our freedom.

At Christmas, we also recognize the sacrifice of our Nation's military families. Staying behind when a family member goes to war is a heavy burden, and it is particularly hard during the holidays. To all our military families listening today, Laura and I thank you, and we ask the Almighty to bestow His protection and care on your loved ones as they protect our Nation.

This Christmas season comes at a time of change here in our Nation's Capital—with a new Congress set to arrive, a review of our Iraq strategy underway, and a new Secretary of Defense taking office. If you're serving on the frontlines halfway across the world, it is natural to wonder what all this means for you. I want our troops to know that while the coming year will bring change, one thing will not change, and that is our Nation's support for you and the vital work you do to achieve a victory in Iraq. The American people are keeping you in our thoughts and prayers, and we will make sure you have the resources you need to accomplish your mission.

This Christmas, millions of Americans are coming together to show our deployed forces and wounded warriors love and support. Patriotic groups and charities all across America are sending gifts and care packages to our service men and women, visiting our troops recovering at military hospitals, reaching out to children whose moms and dads are serving abroad, and going to airports to welcome our troops home and to let them know they are appreciated by a grateful nation.

One man who's making a difference this holiday season is Jim Wareing. Jim is the founder of New England Caring for Our Military. This year, Jim helped organize a gift drive by thousands of students from Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Students from kindergarten to high school collected more than 20,000 gifts for our troops abroad. The gifts are being sent to troops stationed in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Korea, Japan, and Africa. The care packages include books and puzzles, board games, phone cards, fresh socks, and T-shirts, and about 7,000 handmade holiday greeting cards and posters. Jim says, quote, "It's probably always hard for troops to be far away from home, but especially hard on the holidays. I use this as an opportunity to try to pay them back for my freedom."

Citizens like Jim Wareing represent the true strength of our country, and they make America proud. I urge every American to find some way to thank our military this Christmas season. If you see a soldier, sailor, airman, marine, or a member of the Coast Guard, take a moment to stop and say, "Thanks for your service." And if you want to reach out to our troops or help out the military family down the street, the Department of Defense has set up a web site to help. It is americasupportsyou.mil. This web site lists more than 150 compassionate organizations that can use your help. In this season of giving, let us stand with the men and women who stand up for America.

At this special time of year, we reflect on the miraculous life that began in a humble manger 2,000 years ago. That single life

changed the world and continues to change hearts today. To everyone celebrating Christmas, Laura and I wish you a day of glad tidings.

Thank you for listening, and Merry Christmas.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:35 a.m. on December 22 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 23. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 22 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Death of James Brown

December 25, 2006

Laura and I are saddened by the death of James Brown. For half a century, the innovative talent of the "Godfather of Soul" enriched our culture and influenced generations of musicians. An American original, his fans came from all walks of life and backgrounds. James Brown's family and friends are in our thoughts and prayers this Christmas.

Statement on the Death of Former President Gerald R. Ford

December 26, 2006

Laura and I are greatly saddened by the passing of former President Gerald R. Ford.

President Ford was a great American who gave many years of dedicated service to our country. On August 9, 1974, after a long career in the House of Representatives and service as Vice President, he assumed the Presidency in an hour of national turmoil and division. With his quiet integrity, common sense, and kind instincts, President Ford helped heal our land and restore public confidence in the Presidency.

The American people will always admire Gerald Ford's devotion to duty, his personal character, and the honorable conduct of his administration. We mourn the loss of such a leader, and our 38th President will always have a special place in our Nation's memory. On behalf of all Americans, Laura and I offer our deepest sympathies to Betty Ford and all of President Ford's family. Our thoughts and prayers will be with them in the hours and days ahead.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

Proclamation 8092—National Mentoring Month, 2007

December 22, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

During National Mentoring Month, we honor the caring individuals across our Nation who are committed to helping the next generation of Americans reach their full potential.

Mentors help teach important skills that are necessary for a healthy, successful life and help shape the character of our young people. They instill compassion and responsibility in our children and help motivate them to do their best in school. By providing leadership and guidance, mentors can inspire young people to set high goals and help them achieve a bright future.

My Administration is committed to helping the next generation realize the promise of our Nation. Through the USA Freedom Corps, we are providing opportunities for mentors to connect with children in schools, after-school programs, and community groups. The Helping America's Youth initiative, led by First Lady Laura Bush, raises awareness about the challenges facing our youth and encourages adults to connect with youth in three key areas: family, school, and community. The initiative also supports community partnerships that develop opportunities for mentoring and positive youth development.

I appreciate the contributions of all those who serve as mentors, and I encourage all Americans to get involved in mentoring programs. To learn about mentoring opportunities, citizens can visit the USA Freedom Corps website at volunteer.gov. By joining teachers, coaches, religious leaders, relatives, and other mentors, individuals can use their