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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