

of Celebration of Greek and American Democracy. I call upon all Americans to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-first.

George W. Bush

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on March 23.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Leaders of Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq *March 22, 2007*

I just had a remarkable visit with some remarkable citizens. I want to thank them—Secretary Rice and Secretary England and other members of my administration—for being here to listen to State Department folks, USAID folks, and military folks talk about why they volunteered to go help Iraq succeed.

We have a remarkable country, and we have people from different walks of life, different levels of experience make the decision to serve America by helping a young democracy survive. They understand what I understand, and that is, success in Iraq is important for the security of the United States. And my first mission was to thank them and their families. The country owes you a debt of gratitude.

And the Congress owes you the money you need to do the job, without any strings attached. In the recent—in the bill that's now being debated, there is money to help you do your jobs, in that bill. And Congress needs to get that bill out as quickly as possible, without a lot of extra spending and without a lot of strings to it.

There is money in that bill to make sure our military is funded. And I believe it's important for our commanders on the ground to have the flexibility necessary to make deci-

sions to succeed. We don't want you to go into Iraq and then have unnecessary strings placed upon the money so you can't do your job. Congress needs to get their business done quickly, get the monies we requested funded, and let our folks on the ground do the job.

Secondly, Secretary Rice is headed to the Middle East. Peace in the Middle East is a priority for this administration. She's going to continue our efforts to involve all parties—the Palestinians, the Israelis, Arabs—to work for a solution that will lead to peace, and that is a Palestinian state living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

I have been on the phone to some of my counterparts in the Middle East, reminding them that I have a strong commitment to this vision, as does the Secretary. This will be hard work. It's not easy to get all parties headed in the right direction, but it's necessary work for this country. And it's necessary for our Secretary of State, with my strong approval, to be moving the process forward. And that's what she'll be doing.

Madam Secretary, I wish you all the best on your trip, and I thank you very much for your service.

In the meantime, thank you all. Please give your families all the thanks in the world. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

Remarks on House of Representatives Passage of Emergency Supplemental Appropriations *March 23, 2007*

Today I'm joined here at the White House by veterans, family members of people serving in combat, family members of those who have sacrificed. I am honored that they have joined me here today.

Here in Washington, members of both parties recognize that our most solemn responsibility is to support our troops in the war on terror. Yet today a narrow majority in the House of Representatives abdicated its responsibility by passing a war spending

bill that has no chance of becoming law and brings us no closer to getting our troops the resources they need to do their job.

The purpose of the emergency war spending bill I requested was to provide our troops with vital funding. Instead, Democrats in the House, in an act of political theater, voted to substitute their judgment for that of our military commanders on the ground in Iraq. They set rigid restrictions that will require an army of lawyers to interpret. They set an arbitrary date for withdrawal without regard for conditions on the ground. And they tacked on billions for pet projects that have nothing to do with winning the war on terror. This bill has too much pork, too many conditions, and an artificial timetable for withdrawal.

As I have made clear for weeks, I will veto it if it comes to my desk. And because the vote in the House was so close, it is clear that my veto would be sustained. Today's action in the House does only one thing: It delays the delivery of vital resources for our troops. A narrow majority has decided to take this course, just as General Petraeus and his troops are carrying out a new strategy to help the Iraqis secure their capital city.

Amid the real challenges in Iraq, we're beginning to see some signs of progress. Yet, to score political points, the Democratic majority in the House has shown it is willing to undermine the gains our troops are making on the ground.

Democrats want to make clear that they oppose the war in Iraq. They have made their point. For some, that is not enough. These Democrats believe that the longer they can delay funding for our troops, the more likely they are to force me to accept restrictions on our commanders, an artificial timetable for withdrawal, and their pet spending projects. This is not going to happen. Our men and women in uniform need these emergency war funds. The Secretary of Defense has warned that if Congress does not approve the emergency funding for our troops by April the 15th, our men and women in uniform will face significant disruptions, and so would their families.

The Democrats have sent their message; now it's time to send their money. This is an important moment—a decision for the

new leaders in Congress. Our men in women in uniform should not have to worry that politicians in Washington will deny them the funds and the flexibility they need to win. Congress needs to send me a clean bill that I can sign without delay. I expect Congress to do its duty and to fund our troops, and so do the American people, and so do the good men and women standing with me here today.

Thank you for your time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates. He also referred to H.R. 1591.

Remarks at a Celebration of Greek Independence Day

March 23, 2007

The President. Your Eminence, thanks. It's great to have you back at the White House. One of the joys about being the President is, you get to meet some pretty interesting people. And I will tell Your Eminence, I value our friendship. You're such a gentle soul, and it gives me great—it soothes my spirit to be with you. I appreciate your prayers, and I appreciate your leadership, and I am proud to join you in celebrating the 186th anniversary of Greek independence. And we're glad you're here. Thanks for coming.

As you can tell, there is going to be a series of orations, and then you get to go have some refreshments. [*Laughter*] I appreciate the leaders of the Greek American community who are here with us today. Our country is home to 1.2 million Greek Americans—actually, more than that. And, Your Eminence, Greek Americans have really enriched our culture and enriched our Nation's heritage. They're a lively bunch, as you know—[*laughter*]—

Archbishop Demetrios. Absolutely.

The President. —but an important group of people in our country, and that's really what we celebrate here. We celebrate our friendship with the nation of Greece.