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Remarks on the Shootings at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia

April 16, 2007

Our Nation is shocked and saddened by the news of the shootings at Virginia Tech today. The exact total has not yet been confirmed, but it appears that more than 30 people were killed and many more were wounded.

I've spoken with Governor Tim Kaine and Virginia Tech President Charles Steger. I told them that Laura and I and many across our Nation are praying for the victims and their families and all the members of the university community who have been devastated by this terrible tragedy. I told them that my administration would do everything possible to assist with the investigation, and that I pledged that we would stand ready to help local law enforcement and the local community in any way we can during this time of sorrow.

Schools should be places of safety and sanctuary and learning. When that sanctuary is violated, the impact is felt in every American classroom and every American community.

Today our Nation grieves with those who have lost loved ones at Virginia Tech. We hold the victims in our hearts; we lift them up in our prayers; and we ask a loving God to comfort those who are suffering today.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:01 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Charles W. Steger, president, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks During a Memorial Convocation at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia

April 17, 2007

Governor, thank you. President Steger, thank you very much. Students and faculty and staff and grieving family members and members of this really extraordinary place: Laura and I have come to Blacksburg today with hearts full of sorrow. This is a day of mourning for the Virginia Tech community, and it is a day of sadness for our entire Nation. We've come to express our sympathy. In this time of anguish, I hope you know that people all over this country are thinking about you and asking God to provide comfort for all who have been affected.

Yesterday began like any other day. Students woke up, and they grabbed their backpacks, and they headed for class. And soon the day took a dark turn, with students and faculty barricading themselves in classrooms and dormitories, confused, terrified, and deeply worried. By the end of the morning, it was the worst day of violence on a college campus in American history, and for many of you here today, it was the worst day of your lives.

It's impossible to make sense of such violence and suffering. Those whose lives were taken did nothing to deserve their fate. They were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. Now they're gone, and they leave behind grieving families and grieving classmates and a grieving nation.

In such times as this, we look for sources of strength to sustain us. And in this moment of loss, you're finding these sources everywhere around you. These sources of strength are in this community, this college community. You have a compassionate and resilient community here at Virginia Tech. Even as yesterday's events were still unfolding, members of this community found each other; you came together in dorm rooms and dining halls and on blogs. One recent graduate wrote this: "I don't know most of you guys, but we're all Hokies, which means we're family. To all of you who are okay, I'm happy for that. For those of you who are in pain or have lost someone close to you, I'm sure you can call on anyone of us and have help any time you need it."

These sources of strength are with your loved ones. For many of you, your first instinct was to call home and let your moms and dads know that you were okay. Others took on the terrible duty of calling the relatives of a classmate or a colleague who had been wounded or lost. I know many of you feel awfully far away from people you lean on, people you count on during difficult