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Corps to improve and standardize the training of junior officers. ROTC starts by identifying men and women of leadership and ability. It then prepares them morally, mentally, and physically for their responsibilities as officers in the finest Armed Forces in the world.

As part of this preparation, you have been taught a way of life that elevates service above self. You have learned that honor is not just a word; it is a sacred inheritance to be preserved and handed down. You have learned that courage is not the absence of fear; it is the ability to do the right thing in spite of your fears. And you have learned that much is expected of our military officers.

For most of you, a ROTC scholarship helped pay for your college education. The American people provide these funds willingly. And in return they ask one thing: When their sons and daughters are put in harm's way, they will be led by officers of character and integrity.

The path you have taken to this day is not an easy one. When your roommates slept in—[*laughter*]—you got up at dawn for a 3-mile run. While others spread out on the grass on a sunny day, you marched in formation. And when your friends called it a night and headed out to the town, you stayed back to shine your shoes and iron your uniform in preparation for the next day's inspection.

All of you have made many sacrifices to receive your commission. Yet some of you have had to endure even greater hardships because your universities do not allow ROTC on campus. For those of you in this position, this can require long commutes several times a week to another campus that does offer ROTC, so you can attend a military class, participate in a drill. Most of all, it means living a split existence, where your life as a cadet or midshipmen is invisible to most of your fellow students.

Every American citizen is entitled to his or her opinion about our military, but surely the concept of diversity is large enough to embrace one of the most diverse institutions in American life. It should not be hard for our great schools of learning to find room to honor the service of men and women who are standing up to defend the freedoms that make the work of our universities possible. To the cadets and midshipmen who are graduating from a college or university that believes ROTC is not worthy of a place on campus, here is my message: Your university may not honor your military service, but the United States of America does. And in this, the people's house, we will always make a place for those who wear the uniform of our country.

In a few minutes, you will raise your right hands and swear an oath to defend our Constitution from all enemies foreign and domestic, knowing that these enemies are real. You will receive your commissions as officers, knowing that you will soon have the lives of other men and women in your own hands. You will leave this room with heads held high, knowing that you take your place in one of the greatest forces of freedom in the history of mankind.

So I ask you today: Bring honor to the uniform; set high standards for yourself; do not ask of those under your command anything that you would not ask of yourselves. If you do all these things, your career will take care of itself, your service will be a source of pride, and you will help build a safer and more hopeful world for our fellow citizens.

So congratulations to our new lieutenants and ensigns. And may Almighty God keep you close as you keep the American people safe.

And now I ask the Secretary of Defense to administer the oath.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:12 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

Remarks on Immigration Reform

May 17, 2007

Secretary Gutierrez and Secretary Chertoff have just briefed me about the negotiations on the comprehensive immigration bill that just concluded in the Senate. I want to thank, first of all, my Secretaries for being involved in the process, being engaged in this important issue, and helping move the process forward. I congratulate Members of the Senate, both political parties, who decided it was time to work together to come up with

a comprehensive immigration bill that addresses a major problem facing our country. After weeks of long work, these negotiations came to a successful conclusion.

I want to thank the Members of the Senate who worked hard. I appreciate the leadership shown on both sides of the aisle. As I reflect upon this important accomplishment, important first step toward a comprehensive immigration bill, it reminds me of how much the Americans appreciate the fact that we can work together—when we work together, that they see positive things.

Immigration is a tough issue for a lot of Americans. The agreement reached today is one that will help enforce our borders, but equally importantly, it will treat people with respect. This is a bill where people who live here in our country will be treated without amnesty, but without animosity.

And so I want to thank you all very much for representing the White House. I thank the Senators for working hard. I look forward to a good vote out of the United States Senate as quickly as Leader Reid can get the bill moving. And then of course we look forward to working with the House of Representatives to take this first step and convert it into a successful second step. I really am anxious to sign a comprehensive immigration bill as soon as I possibly can. Today we took a good step toward that direction.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:25 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to S. 1348. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Senate Action on Immigration Reform

May 17, 2007

Today Republicans and Democrats in the United States Senate came together and agreed upon a proposal that offers a much needed solution to the problem of illegal immigration in this country. This proposal delivers an immigration system that is secure, productive, orderly, and fair. I applaud the Senators who worked in the spirit of bipartisanship over the past months to address this issue, which is critically important to the American people.

Our immigration system is badly in need of reform. The bipartisan solution the Senators agreed to today requires us to meet important goals in addressing border security and enhancing interior and worksite enforcement. Once those goals are met, the plan would create a temporary-worker program to address the needs of our growing economy and take pressure off the border by allowing workers to come to this country for a short period of time and fill jobs Americans are not doing. For immigrants wishing to come to our country permanently in the future, it would also establish a new merit-based system, which takes into account job skills, education, English proficiency, and family ties.

The plan would bring undocumented workers already in this country out of the shadows without amnesty and without animosity. It would require workers to pay a meaningful penalty, learn English, pay their taxes, and pass a background check before they can be considered for legalized status. If they achieve this legalized status and decide they want to apply for a green card, they must return home to file an application in order to get in line behind all of those who have played by the rules and followed the law.

Finally, our country has been a melting pot for over 200 years, and that has given us much strength. We must continue to help immigrants assimilate into our society. This proposal would further that effort by affirming that English is the language of the United States and would help immigrants learn our language by directing the Department of Education to make English instruction freely available over the Internet.

Convictions run deep on the matter of immigration, but with this bipartisan agreement, I am confident leaders in Washington can have a serious, civil, and conclusive debate so I can sign comprehensive reform into law this year. I urge all Members to support this bipartisan immigration reform proposal.

NOTE: The statement referred to S. 1348.