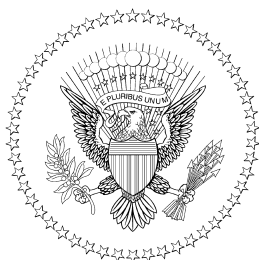


Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



Monday, October 22, 2007
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WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, October 19, 2007

Statement on Representative Ralph S. Regula's Decision Not To Seek Reelection

October 12, 2007

Ralph Regula is a distinguished public servant who has dedicated his life to helping the citizens of Ohio's 16th Congressional District and our Nation. As a sailor, teacher, and legislator, he has worked tirelessly to make America stronger.

While serving for over three decades in Congress, Ralph has returned weekly to his family farm and never lost sight of the issues that matter most to the people of Ohio. He has long had a commitment to creating jobs, strengthening schools, supporting small businesses, and protecting Ohio's natural treasures. As the longest continuously serving U.S. Representative in his State's history, Ralph will retire with the respect of his peers and the appreciation of his constituents.

Laura and I are grateful for his service and appreciate his friendship. We wish Ralph, Mary, and the entire Regula family all the best.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

October 13, 2007

Good morning. This is an historic time for our Nation's economy. Last week, we learned that September was America's 49th consecutive month of job creation—the longest uninterrupted period of job growth on record. And on Thursday, we learned that the American economy set a new record for exports in a single month. Millions of American jobs depend on exports. More exports support better and higher paying jobs, and to keep our economy expanding, we need to keep expanding trade.

This week, I traveled to Miami to discuss the importance of trade and to call on Congress to pass new free trade agreements. In January of 2001, America had trade agreements in force with three countries. Now we have agreements in force with 14 countries, including 7 in Latin America. And Congress now has an opportunity to increase America's access to markets in our hemisphere by passing three more free trade agreements in Latin America with Peru, Colombia, and Panama.

These three agreements will expand America's access to 75 million customers. These 75 million customers are the equivalent of the populations of California, Colorado, Ohio, Michigan, Tennessee, and Massachusetts combined.

The first of the new Latin American trade agreements that my administration negotiated is with Peru. This agreement would level the playing field for American businesses and workers and farmers. While almost all Peruvian exports to the United States now enter duty-free, most American exports to Peru face significant tariffs. The free trade agreement would immediately eliminate most of Peru's industrial tariffs, as well as many of its barriers to U.S. agriculture exports, and make American products more affordable and more competitive in that country.

The second of the new Latin American trade agreements that my administration negotiated is with Colombia. Colombia is now our fifth largest trading partner in Latin America and the largest market for U.S. agricultural exports in South America. The free trade agreement with Colombia would immediately eliminate tariffs on more than 80 percent of American industrial and consumer exports. It would provide significant new duty-free access for American crops, and for the first time in history, U.S. companies would be able to compete on a level playing field.

The third of the new Latin American trade agreements that my administration negotiated is with Panama. This agreement will immediately eliminate tariffs on 88 percent of our industrial and consumer goods exports to Panama. It will increase access for American farmers and ranchers, and it will open opportunities for American businesses to participate in the multibillion dollar project to expand the Panama Canal.

As we work to pass these trade agreements with nations in Latin America, we'll also work to pass a landmark free trade agreement with an ally in the Far East, South Korea. This agreement would open up one of the world's most powerful economies to more American goods and services exports. This agreement is projected to add more than \$10 billion to America's economy. And like our agreements in Latin America, this agreement would strengthen our relationship with a democratic partner in a critical part of the world.

I know many Americans feel uneasy about new competition and worry that trade will cost jobs. So the Federal Government is providing substantial funding for trade adjustment assistance that helps Americans make the transition from one job to the next. We are working to improve Federal job-training programs, and we are providing strong support for America's community colleges, where people of any age can go to learn new skills for a better, high-paying career.

Expanding trade will help our economy grow. By passing these trade agreements, we will also serve America's security and moral interests. We will strengthen our ties with our friends. We will help counter the false populism promoted by hostile nations. And we will help young democracies show their people that freedom, openness, and the rule of law are the surest path to a better life. So I call on Congress to act quickly and get these agreements to my desk.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on October 12 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on October 13. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 12 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at Stribling Packaging, Inc., in Rogers, Arkansas

October 15, 2007

The President. One of the reasons I've stopped by this facility here in Arkansas is to remind people that small business is the backbone of our economy. These good folks are making a living; more importantly, they're providing labor for people here in this facility. And that's what we want. We want people working in America. We've gone through now 49 consecutive months of uninterrupted job growth—that's a record for the United States.

And one of the reasons why is, our small-business owners are working hard. And another reason why is, we've got people in the United States Congress who understand the role of government, and that is not to get in the way of business, but it's to create an environment where businesses flourish. And when people are buying this man's boxes, it also means they're buying product at the retail level.

And so I want to thank you for giving me a chance to come by.

Bill Stribling. Absolutely.

The President. Appreciate the opportunity to meet your workers. As I was walking around, I was shaking the workers' hands. He said, "That's good that you're meeting them. After all, they're the reason this business is growing." And I appreciate a man who understands that. Thanks for your hospitality.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:44 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Bill Stribling, president, Stribling Packaging, Inc.

Remarks on the Federal Budget and a Question-and-Answer Session in Rogers

October 15, 2007

The President. Thank you all. Thank you very much. Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. I may just take off my jacket, if that's all right. [Laughter] I hope I didn't spill any sauce on my shirt after I had barbecue at the Whole Hog. [Laughter] Thanks for coming. Thanks for giving me a chance

to share some thoughts with you about what's going on in Washington, and then I'll be glad to answer some questions, if you have any.

First I do want to say thank you to John Paul Hammerschmidt for a lot of things—one, being a good friend of my dad's, but more importantly, setting such a fine example for what public service should be about, which is honesty, integrity, and the willingness to serve something greater than himself. John Paul, I'm honored you're here, and thanks for—[*applause*].

And you got followed by a pretty good fellow, there, in John Boozman. I'm proud to call him friend. I hope you're proud to call him Congressman, because he's doing a fine job. And I—[*applause*].

I want to thank the mayor of Rogers, Steve Womack. Thanks for your service to your community; thanks for being in the United States military. I appreciate you joining me for lunch and enjoyed our conversation, Mr. Mayor. Thanks for what you're doing.

I want to thank members of the statehouse who are here and local government who's here. I want to thank Raymond Burns, the president and CEO of the chamber of commerce, for hosting this event. I hope you find it to be informative. One of the things the President has to do is travel around the country explaining the situation and why things are happening, at least from my perspective. I'm looking forward to explaining it.

I do appreciate very much the members of the chamber of commerce who've enabled me to come by to visit with you. I want to thank the chancellor of the mighty University of Arkansas, John White, for being here today. He hosted—the guy keeps pointing to his Razorback—I understand. Look, I'm just a simple Texas guy who—[*laughter*—who knows full well that it was a lot of times an unpleasant experience for the Longhorns to come up here and play. [*Laughter*] But we're not going to talk about those old games, are we? We're talking about the future.

I appreciate Bill Stribling. He's the president of Stribling Packaging. I went by earlier today to his business, and I had a chance to say hello to his employees. I did so because I wanted to remind America that in order for this economy to remain strong, we got to be mindful of the needs of small-business

owners. He's expanding his job base, and he's like thousands of other entrepreneurs around the country who are wondering whether or not the Government is going to put policy in place that could affect his capacity to grow. And I want to spend a little time talking about that.

We've actually had an historic couple of days. We're now in our 49th consecutive month of uninterrupted job growth. That's the longest—[*applause*]. That's a record. That's the longest number of months in a row where new jobs have been created. And that's because our small businesses are doing well. And then the fundamental question is, are we wise enough to keep policy in place to keep the small-business sector strong?

The worst thing we could do is run up taxes as this economy is growing. It's the worst thing we could do to the small-business owner, is to change the depreciation schedules or raise individual rates, particularly if you're a subchapter S or a limited partnership. And yet when you listen carefully to the budget debate, that's what you're fixing to get stuck with, a tax raise. Unless, of course, I prevent them from raising your taxes, which I fully intend to do.

The other historic fact was that our deficit as a percent of GDP is at 1.2 percent. Those are just numbers, but to put it in perspective, that's lower than the 40-year average. In other words, we're beginning to get control of that deficit. And the reason why is, is that a growing economy yields additional tax revenues, and then when you work with Congress to set priorities on how we spend your money—in other words, we're fiscally sound on the expense side—you can reduce your deficit without raising taxes. And that's what we proved is possible. The deficit is 163 billion. That's about 60-some-odd-billion lower than we anticipated in February of this year, because we're growing the economy.

And we've also set priorities. One of the hardest things in Washington, DC, to do that small businesses have to do all the time is to set priorities. Every program sounds like a great program, but without setting priorities, the temptation is to overspend. The job of the President is to make sure that we don't overspend, and at the same time, keep taxes low. That's why I submitted a budget that

will balance the Federal budget by 2012 without raising taxes.

Now, that's not what the leadership in the Congress wants me to do. They want the executive branch to accept an increase in spending over the next 5 years to \$205 billion. To put that in perspective, that's \$1,300 in new spending every second of every minute of every hour of every day of every year for the next 5 years. That's about \$13,000, as long as it took me to say that—[*laughter*]*—*\$205 billion of additional spending will mean they're going to have to raise taxes to pay for it. I think that would be bad for the economy. I don't think it makes sense to be taking money out of the pockets of the individuals in America or money out of the pockets of small businesses—particularly if we set priorities, we can fund that which we need to fund.

And so you're fixing to see what they call a fiscal showdown in Washington. One of the reasons why they—[*applause*]*—*the Congress gets to propose, and if it doesn't meet needs, as far I'm concerned, I get to veto. And that's precisely what I intend to do.

I wish Congress would get me some appropriations bills. I don't know if the people in Rogers understand our calendar, but the fiscal year ended on September the 30th. And yet I hadn't seen one appropriations bill. I think we're, like, 15 days into the fiscal year, and not one appropriations bill has made it to my desk.

Congress needs to be responsible with your money, and they need to pass these appropriations bills, one at a time. And then we can work together to see whether or not they make fiscal sense for the United States. I don't think it makes sense, though, for a new Congress to come in and make promises about how they're going to be wise about what they're going to do with your money and get bills to my desk and not being able to perform.

So I'm looking forward to getting back to Washington and remind people in the United States Congress that they said they were going to do a better job with getting these bills to my desk, and I'm going to remind them they hadn't got one yet. Not one bill has come out of United States Congress that appropriates your taxpayers' money.

Recently, I did make a decision to veto a piece of legislation. I want to spend a little time talking about why, and then I'll be glad to answer some questions. There's a—what's called SCHIP—it's a Children's Health Insurance Program—made it to my desk, and I vetoed it. And I'm going to tell you why I—[*applause*]*—*let me tell you why.

First of all, it's important for our citizens to understand that we spend \$35 billion a year for poor children's health care through Medicaid—\$35 billion. So if you hear rhetoric out of Washington saying we're not taking care of poor children in America, they're just not reminding you of the fact that because of your generosity, we're spending 35 billion a year.

Secondly, a program was created to help poorer children with struggling families. When I was the Governor of Texas, I supported it, and as President, I support it. But the piece of legislation I got doesn't focus on the poorer children. Many Americans don't understand, there are a half a million kids eligible for this program that aren't getting help under the program.

The bill sent to me didn't say, we're going to focus on those half-million that are eligible; the bill sent to me said, we can expand eligibility for the program up to \$83,000. Now, I want you to think about that. If you're making up to 83,000 in certain States, you're eligible for the program, and yet half a million poorer children aren't being helped. My attitude is, let's help the poorer children; let's make sure the program does what it's supposed to do.

Now, there's some in Washington, DC, who genuinely believe that the best health care policy is to expand the role of the Federal Government. I don't subscribe to that. I think the best health care policy is to encourage private medicine, is to make sure the decisions are between doctors and patients. And yet if you're saying you can make up to \$83,000 and be a part of this program, it sounds like, to me, somebody wants to extend the reach of the Federal Government into medicine. That's what it sounds like to me.

Another factor that came into my thinking was not only a half a million children not being taken care of under the program and

not only is the eligibility requirements being expanded way beyond the scope of the program—which sounds like there’s a nationalization of medicine going on here—but in six or seven States, more money is spent on adults than children. In other words, these States have taken that money and hadn’t used it for its initial purpose.

So I vetoed the bill. The House is going to decide whether or not they’re going to sustain my veto, and if they should sustain my veto, I call upon the leadership in the Congress to come to the table and let us make sure we get money to those families that are—that the program was intended to help first and foremost.

And so that’s what I wanted to report to you. I thank you for giving me a chance to come and say hello. I’ll be glad to answer some questions if you have any. And if not, I can keep talking, believe me. *[Laughter]*

You got one? Good. Thank you. Yes, sir. Yell it. If I don’t like it, I’ll just interpret it. *[Laughter]* Yes.

President’s Personal Values

Q. First of all, thank you for being here. And I’ve got two children. I was talking with my 15-year-old son about what would be a great question to ask the President had I—if I had the opportunity, and we settled on this. In this day of information that’s so accessible to all of us, if you’re a 15-year-old looking for the truth—which is often hard to get—an adult looking for the truth in election time or nonelection time, where would you recommend someone that’s hungry for the truth to go to get the truth about potential elected officials, programs to support, that kind of information?

The President. Yes, it’s a great question. I guess if I was advising a 15-year-old child where to seek the truth, I would say, go to your mother and father, is where I would ask them to seek the truth. And that’s really one of the questions our society faces: Will a mom and dad be available for a child? Now, we all have different views of the truth. That’s fine; I understand that. But the most important responsibility for a mom and dad is to really love that child with all their heart and all their soul and all their might.

And so as far as you finding the truth, hopefully you’re wise enough and old enough and experienced enough to be able to discern that which is true and not true. I’m sure you are. You wouldn’t have come here to listen had you not been interested in coming up—getting enough data points so you could come to your own conclusions.

That’s the great thing about our society, is that we expect our individual citizens to be involved, and you can reach your own conclusion you want to reach. And it’s up to people like me to explain it as simply as possible so that, hopefully, you can understand. If I were advising somebody running for my job, or any job, I’d explain the philosophy behind my beliefs. See, I think what the American people really need to know is, what do you believe in, in order for you to be able to make the wise kind of judgment on who to listen to.

I’d be glad to share some of my beliefs. I believe in the universality of freedom. So when you hear me talking about foreign policy, I want you to keep in mind the principle that I believe is true, and that I believe there’s an Almighty, and I believe a gift of the Almighty to each man, woman, and child on the face of the Earth, regardless of their religion or the color of their skin, is liberty. That’s what I believe.

And a second belief I have is that you can spend your money better than the Government can. We have needs in Washington. I mean, we’ve got to fund a military; we got to fund help for the poor. But I do believe that the Government has got to understand that the more money you have in your pocket, the better off our economy can be, and that the more money you have in your pocket, the more likely it is that you’ll be able to realize hopes and dreams for your family because you set the priorities with your money. And there’s just a fundamental difference of opinion.

So to answer your question, I’d be asking people, what’s your value system like? And then, hopefully, you’re wise enough to discern.

Okay. Yes, sir.

Transportation

Q. I have a transportation question for you—Raymond Burns with the Rogers-Lowell Chamber. For business to continue to grow in northwest Arkansas, we're going to have to have some help with our transportation infrastructure. Apparently, that's our number-one issue. Given that we collect taxes on gasoline by the gallon and fuel efficiency means there will be less taxes collected, going forward, what will the priority for transportation help be, sir?

The President. The—step one, in order to make sure that that which we collect gets spent equitably, is to make sure that the committees in the House and Senate that appropriate the monies don't take a lot of the money as special projects. In other words, what happens is, is that the Public Works Committee is the largest committee in the House—are you on the Public Works, Boozman? Yes. [*Laughter*] It sounds like I better be diplomatic in the answer. [*Laughter*] So what happens is, these members say, "Okay, I want this for my district; I want this for my district; I want this for my district," so they get a unanimous vote out of the committee—was it unanimous last time? Yes, that's what I thought. [*Laughter*] And then—so the money isn't equitably distributed. So step one is to make sure that the committees do their jobs the right way.

Step two is to give States flexibility so that if they so choose—which I think exists today—that if you decide to have a highway for truckers paid for by fees, that you're encouraged to do so.

I mean, you're right; fuel efficiency is going to make it harder to collect gasoline taxes. Therefore, the next question is, what's the next best user fee? In other words, gasoline tax is a user fee. Is there a better way to collect money, a better user-fee system? And one thing, I think, is that if you've got a freeway, you ought to be able to parallel that freeway with a way to collect user fees, a toll way. And so people have a choice. You know, a trucker, if he's interested in moving through northwest Arkansas in expedition fashion, will pay a little extra money to be able to do so.

My attitude is, so long as the taxpayer has got a free alternative, I don't see why it

makes—why it's a problem to have the paying option available as a way to collect user fees to modernize the highway system. And so that's an idea for you right there.

Yes, sir.

No Child Left Behind Act

Q. Mr. President, first of all, I'd like to commend you on your steadfastness in your faith and not letting anybody waver you on your faith with key political issues and key principles.

The President. Thank you.

Q. I think that's very, very commendable. Second of all, as a private preschool administrator, with your No Child Left Behind initiative, is there any possibility of funds for grants or stipends or something to utilize for private institutions as well as private preschools?

The President. Probably not. Anyway—[*laughter*]. Let me explain No Child Left Behind. We're spending money at the Federal level in public schools. And it seems like it makes sense that we ask the question whether or not the money is being spent wisely. In other words, if you're spending money trying to help a child get the fundamentals necessary to advance in life, I strongly believe that it makes sense, on your behalf, that we say, "Why don't you show us whether a child can read and write and add and subtract."

I think it's important to set goals with high expectations. I don't think it's too much to ask the school systems of America to teach a child to read by third grade and keep him at grade level. I don't think it's too much to ask—unless you don't believe every child can read, has the capacity to learn to read, I mean. In other words, if you believe certain children can't learn, then I can understand why you support a system that just shuffles them through. But that's unacceptable to me, to have a system that said—doesn't demand accountability.

And so the No Child Left Behind Act says, you bet there will be Federal expenditures—not nearly as much as the State; after all, it's a local responsibility. But in return for whatever money we spend, we want to know whether or not a child can read at grade level by the third grade, and if not, we expect there to be remedial help.

And that's where the private sector can come in, in terms of supplemental services. That means we're going to use the accountability system. In other words, we're going to measure. You bet we are. We're going to find out whether a child can read, write, and add and subtract. And if they're coming up short on standards, then there's money available for extra help early, before it's too late. And that's the place where private providers can compete with the public school system, in order to help after-school—in after-school programs, tutorial programs.

There's a lot of objections to No Child Left Behind; I understand that. People say, "How dare you measure." My attitude is, you got to measure. To solve a problem, you got to understand whether or not we have a problem in the first place. People say, "Well, they're just teaching the test." Uh-uh, we're teaching a child to read so they can pass a reading test.

I happen to believe this piece of legislation is an important piece of civil rights legislation. If you're interested in making sure our society provides hope for everybody, then you want to make sure every single child in America has the capacity to read, write, and add and subtract at grade level. That's what you want if you're interested in having an America that holds out its promise for every single citizen.

And that's the basis of No Child Left Behind. I believe in local control of schools. That's up to you to chart the path to excellence, but it's up to us to make sure your money is spent wisely.

You know, we have an achievement gap in America, and that means our—the white kids are reading at a certain level here at—in the fourth grade, and African Americans or Latino kids are reading down here. That's not good enough for our country. And that achievement gap is beginning to grow. It's amazing what happens when you raise standards and hold people to account.

And so my—any effort to weaken No Child Left Behind Act will get a Presidential veto. I believe this piece of legislation is important, and I believe it's hopeful, and I believe it's necessary to make sure we got a educated group of students who can compete in the global economy when they get older.

Yes, sir.

Alternative Fuel Sources/Border Security/Immigration Reform

Q. Mr. President, I'm a third-generation dairy farmer. We milk 300 cows out west of town. And we're very concerned with immigration and the ag jobs and also the economic impact that the ethanol—the Government subsidy on ethanol production has had on feed costs. And agriculture is still number one in Arkansas, even with all this fantastic economic growth that we've got in this area.

The President. Thank you, sir.

Q. Could you please comment, sir?

The President. I will. First of all, I'm guilty on promoting ethanol. And the reason why is, is because I think it's in our interests to diversify away from oil. And the reason why it's—I know that's hard for a Texan to say. But the reason why we've got to diversify away from oil is that we end up with dependency on oil from certain parts of the world where people don't particularly like us. And secondly, given the globalization of the world today—and disruption of oil, you know, in one part of the world is going to cause the price of your gasoline to go up. And so I promoted ethanol and still believe it's important for the future.

I'm also promoting research that will enable us to make ethanol out of something other than corn because I fully understand the constraints on corn. I mean, I hear it everywhere I go, that the people like yourself who rely upon reasonable feed prices know full well that demand for corn as a result of the demand for ethanol going up is costing your—making it harder for you to make a living. And one of these days we're going to be able to make ethanol out of wood chips or switch grass. It's called cellulosic ethanol. And we're spending a lot of money to develop the technologies that will enable us to use something other than corn.

The first part of the question was immigrant—immigration. As you know, I'm a person who believes strongly in comprehensive immigration reform. I agree with our citizens who say that we've got to do a better job of enforcing the laws of the country. And the laws of the country is, you know, you can't employ somebody who is here illegally—

knowingly employ somebody who is here illegally—and that you’ve got a border for a reason, a Border Patrol for a reason, to enforce the border. And I’m for that, and I supported congressional efforts to modernize our border, and we are. It’s a long, hard border to enforce, but we’ve doubled the Border Patrol; we’re using technologies to find people sneaking in here.

But I also recognize this, that in order to truly, effectively work the border in a way that most Americans want, you’ve got to have a program that will enable somebody to come here and legally work on a temporary basis, because if you’re somebody who’s got a starving family at home and you’re interested in putting food on the table, you’ll go to great lengths to come to America to do jobs Americans aren’t doing. And so therefore, in order for us to have good border policy, it makes sense to have a worker policy, a temporary-worker plan with verifiable, tamper-proof cards to allow somebody to come here to do a job Americans aren’t willing to do.

You got a lot of people up here that are working jobs Americans aren’t willing to do. There are not a lot of Americans who want to pluck chickens. I don’t know what they’re doing on your place, but I’m sure it’s hard work, and it’s hard to find workers. But if you find somebody who’s got a hungry family, it’s amazing how hard they’ll work. And so it seems like to me that in order to have good border policy, we got to have a tamper-proof card available for temporary workers to come.

And then the big issue is, what are we going to do with the 11 million people already here? Well, you can’t kick them out. Some people say, you can kick them out. I don’t think you can kick them out. I don’t think it’s realistic policy. On the other hand, I think it’s a mistake to have instant citizenship. The reason I don’t believe you should have instant citizenship is because it will cause the next 11 million to want to come. And we’re trying to make sure they have an orderly immigration policy.

And so I supported the plan in the Senate that gave people an opportunity over time to prove their worth as a citizen, to show that they pay taxes and were—they had the ability to be a constructive citizen. Give them

a chance to get at the back at the line. That’s what I thought we ought to do. But it didn’t pass, and it was a mistake that the Congress didn’t pass comprehensive immigration reform. That’s why it’s still an issue. That’s why the President comes to speak in Rogers, and he stands up and says, “What are you going to do about the problem?” Congress, by passing on the problem, obviously means this is going to be around for awhile.

This debate needs to be constructed in a way that upholds the proud traditions of America. We are a land of immigrants. Whether or not some of us want to admit it, this is a country that was founded by immigrants. And many in this hall’s parents or grandparents were immigrants to the United States. And when people come to our country to work hard and realize dreams, it renews our soul, it makes us a better place. And so however this debate is played out here in Rogers or anywhere else, it needs to be conducted by treating people with dignity and people with honor.

Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. Proud member of the VFW.

Presidential Election

Q. Yes, sir. I was sitting—I had the honor of sitting up front when you addressed the national convention of VFW in Kansas City.

The President. Yes, sir.

Q. After all—

The President. Were you the guy that was sound asleep? *[Laughter]*

Q. No, sir. I’m not the guy.

The President. Okay, good. *[Laughter]*

Q. After all of the Presidential hopefuls had paraded through for 3 days before you got there and you gave your wonderful speech, the straw poll throughout the entire room, sir, was that we wish you could run for another 4 years.

The President. Thank you. Yes. Well, I can’t, and it’s time for new blood. After 18—15 more months, I’m going to sprint to the finish; you don’t have to worry about that. I’m going to give it my all. And there’s nothing better for a democracy than to renew itself by elections and new leadership. So, anyway, thanks for saying it. Plus, I’d be single. *[Laughter]*

President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors

Q. Mr. President, we all thank you for your Wounded Warriors Commission on a national basis. The final report in July—31 July to you from that wonderful Commission headed by Senator Bob Dole was absolutely the future bible for Veterans Affairs and veterans' handling throughout the United States. Sir, thank you again for being a veterans advocate number one.

The President. Thank you, sir. Yes, thanks. You're kind to say that. Senator Dole and Secretary Shalala are going to be at the White House tomorrow. And as the person who have asked these brave young men and women to go into combat, I feel a special obligation to make sure that our veterans, particularly those who've served under my watch, get the absolute best care. I'm—I marvel—isn't it interesting, by the way, it's the first military question—just an observation point—[laughter]—I marvel at our military, and I marvel at the kids who are in the military. Not only kids, but—at 62 you can call them “kids”—61 you can call them “kids.”

We've got a military of highly trained, highly skilled people who understand the stakes of the struggle between ideologues who murder to achieve their objectives and those of us who want there to be long-term peace. The reenlistment rates are remarkable. The number of people willing to say, “I want to go back in to serve my country and to the theater in this global struggle,” it's just amazing.

And therefore, we as a government have a solemn duty to, one, support their families, and two, when they come out as veterans, is to give them what they need—get them what they need, to make sure if they're wounded they can get back on their feet. Give them what they need, if they've got posttraumatic stress syndrome, the help, the mental help.

These are remarkable citizens, and my commitment is very strong to our veterans. And I thank you for bringing it up. And I asked Bob Dole and Donna Shalala to make sure that if there was any bureaucratic obstacles between somebody going from DOD to the Veterans Affairs, that we identified them

and came up—come up with solutions to make sure our kids, our troops have what they need. And that's what we're going to do.

So thanks for bringing it up, and thanks for serving. Appreciate the example you set.

Veterans Administration

Q. —Rogers. I'm a Vietnam veteran, and here comes your second question—

The President. Did they name this city after you? [Laughter]

Q. Did they, Mayor? [Laughter]

The President. I don't think so.

Q. Here's your second question about the military.

The President. Okay.

Q. As a wounded Vietnam veteran, come back, I go over to the VA hospital, and I've seen it in Fayetteville, the remarkable money that's been placed on the veterans of building that hospital up to take care of us. And I love it. But I had a time period there where after the war was over with, the conflict was over with—of which we're going to come through too—it seemed like we were forgotten. Is the administration or the Government not going to forget these people that's over in Iraq that has stood over there for many times and went back—if you could answer that.

But I also want to say, thank you very much for being my President for the last 7 years.

The President. Thank you, sir. Yes. There's a fundamental attitudinal difference, it seems like to me, now than when you served. One of the main reasons why is because we have a volunteer army. And the fundamental question facing policymakers is, how do you make sure that that Volunteer Army is robust and well-trained? And the answer is, pay people well, but also remember that the spouse makes a big decision as to whether or not people are willing to serve or at least stay in that Volunteer Army or serve in the first place.

And that's why we've improved housing. And that's why we've made sure that a spouse can communicate with his or her loved one

on a real-time basis if they're in Iraq or Afghanistan. In other words, there's a lot of effort that goes into making sure that this Government takes care of the family members.

And part of making sure that we remain a volunteer army is to make sure that the Veterans Administration is well-organized and treats people with respect and the programs address the veterans' needs. And that's exactly what we're going to do.

And that's precisely what this man was talking about. He said, we put together a Commission to make sure that we addressed any shortfalls in the Veterans Administration. It's the six—they've got six points in there that make a lot of sense. For example, you don't want your people having to argue against your own Government about whether or not they receive a certain level of disability. You might have had to do that. Well, we're going to try to make sure the process is not adversarial for our veterans. After all, they serve; they volunteer to serve.

And so you're giving me a chance to say what I really tried to say for this fellow over here, and that is, you bet we'll support our veterans. One, we owe it to them. But two, in order to make sure this Volunteer Army is robust and can continue to be active in this global war against these ideologues and strong enough to be able to do it, we got to say to somebody who's going in, when you come out, you're going to get the respect and the support you need.

Thank you.

Yes, sir.

Federal Aviation Legislation

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, I want to say, thank you very much for taking your time to come to northwest Arkansas. The people in this room really appreciate it. It means a lot to us, and we're very honored and privileged by your presence. I want to tell you that, first of all.

The President. Thank you. Glad to be here.

Q. Second of all, I wanted to talk to you about House bill 1125, on the House side—the Senate bill is Senate bill 65. I have a brother; his name is Robert Barnett. He lives in Siloam Springs, Arkansas. He's fixing to lose his job—

The President. I don't want to interrupt you, but I have no earthly idea what those numbers mean. [Laughter]

Q. Okay. It has to do with the pilots losing their jobs at turning age 60, the—

The President. The what?

Q. The commercial airline pilots—they're losing their jobs—that are turning age 60. And those bills reflect the policy. And I know Mary Peters and Marion Blakey have endorsed the age change, but we're losing over 200 pilots a month in this country. And they can go to foreign airline carriers and fly in the United States. We let people of 65—these pilots have lost their pensions. They're—most of them are military trained; we've spent over \$2 million each. They're in good physical shape, and they want to keep their jobs. They've got kids in college; they need the incomes. Just wanted to get your response on that, sir.

The President. Well, I'm glad you told me Mary Peters is for it. If she's for it, I'm probably going to be for it too, since I named her as head of the Transportation Department. I'll be frank with you—this may come as an admission that you probably never heard a President hear—it hadn't made it to my desk yet. I'm really not sure about the issue, but I'll look into it. I have all the respect for Mary Peters, and if she said she supports raising the age—is that what you told me she said—I bet it's going to happen. At least I bet you she'll have my support.

One of the things in a complex environment like the Presidency is, you got to surround your people—surround the President, or surround myself, with people whose judgment you trust. And I listen to my Cabinet Secretaries, and I bring them into the Oval Office. They've got access to me. They've got to be able to come in and say, "Here's what I believe." The temptation of politics is for somebody to walk in when you're not looking so good, and walk in the Oval Office and say, "Man, you're looking beautiful," when you're not. You got to have Cabinet Secretaries who can walk in and say, "Here's what's on my mind." And I bet you if I ask Mary and she gives me the reason why she's for it, I bet you I support it.

And so thanks for bringing that up.

Yes, ma'am. Let's get a little diversity here. Yes, get up there.

U.S. National Guard and Reserve Deployments/War on Terror

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Yes.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. No.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. I don't think the National Guard is close to being the Regular Army. A matter of fact, they have been a integral part of working alongside the Army.

There will be no chance for a draft under my watch. I'm against a draft. I don't think we need a draft. I'm a strong supporter of the Volunteer Army. I am for making sure that our Guard ends up with rotations that are known. In other words, we got to make sure that when we make a promise to somebody in the Guard, that if you're in for a year, you're out for a certain set period of time. I am for that.

The Regular Army is carrying the bulk of this fight, and the Guard is being a very important part of helping. A couple of things about the Guard—one is that if you're an employer here giving a Guard member or a Reserve member a chance to go to help this country secure itself, I thank you. You're making a vital contribution to the security of the United States of America. And I do appreciate our Guard a lot. I appreciate what they've done. I appreciate the sacrifices they and their families have made.

And those sacrifices are necessary because we face an enemy that would like to harm us again. And we've got a two-prong strategy to protect you. You got to just understand that after September the 11th, I made up my mind I would do everything in my power to protect the American people. Secondly—[applause]. And on the one hand, that means finding these people before they come and hurt us. In other words, defeat them overseas so they can't come here to hurt us. That means—and so I just want to explain some of the policies. That means we've got to have good intelligence sharing to find out where they are hiding and have the flexibility and the desire to go rout them out of their hiding

places, to bring them to justice before they come and hurt us again.

Believe me, they want to. It's one of the lessons of September the 11th, is that while we grew up thinking everything was fine, that we could be protected by oceans, the enemy came and killed 3,000 of our people and others from other nations on our soil. So I think a lot about how to protect you. And that's why I think it's very important that we have techniques that protect your civil liberties, but at the same time, listen to known Al Qaida folks and try to get to figure out what they're doing.

People have got to understand that the programs we'll put in place will protect your right as an American citizen, but if you're talking to Al Qaida, we want to know why, in order to protect the American people. It makes sense for us, when we capture one of these folks on the battlefield, one of these extremists, a person who murders to advance an ideology that is so foreign to America that sometimes we just dismiss it as implausible, that we ought to have techniques available to find out what they know—without torture. See, what I'm talking about is a lot of what you're reading in the newspapers. But what we're doing is all aimed to protect you, to get information, actionable intelligence so we can move.

This is a war that we're not used to in America. We're not fighting a nation-state. We're fighting a movement of people who have a set of beliefs and are willing to murder the innocent to achieve their objectives and can do so with weapons that hardly cost anything. They know full well that when they destroy innocent life, it gets on our TV screens. And we are a nation that believes in life. We're compassionate people, and it horrifies our fellow citizens to see the violence. And they're trying to shake—not only shake our will, but shake the will of the people in Afghanistan or the people of Iraq. And yet the only way to defeat them is to find them and bring them to justice. That's the short-term strategy.

The long-term strategy is to defeat their ideology with a more hopeful ideology, and that's an ideology based upon liberty. I told you—I was setting it up, setting his answer up when I said, I believe in the universality

of freedom. I wasn't surprised when 12 million Iraqis went to the polls. If given a chance to be free after a brutal tyranny, people will say, "I want to be free." The question is, how fast can they get their Government working? And that's what we're trying to help them do.

I will remind you, the Articles of Confederation in our own history is indicative of how hard democracy can be. But success in Iraq and success in Afghanistan are vital for the struggle against extremists because ultimately, it's going to be liberty that provides us the peace we want.

I was telling some folks at lunch today about the relationship I had had with Prime Minister of Japan Koizumi. He's a—you might remember, he's the fellow that asked Laura and me to take him to Elvis's place in Memphis. [*Laughter*] It's a pretty interesting request. [*Laughter*] And we went. I sit at the table with the man, and we were talking about how liberty can transform enemies to allies. My dad fought the Japanese. Sixty years later, his son is talking peace with the Prime Minister of the former enemy. Something happened. Freedom has got the capacity to bring the peace we want.

And the same thing is going to happen in the Middle East unless we lose our will and our vision. People want to live in a free society. And one of the lessons of history is, liberty is transformative. In other words, liberty can help an enemy become an ally. Liberty can take a region of hopelessness and convert it to a region of hope. And the enemy preys upon hopelessness. And so it—whether it be the brutality of tyranny or the scourge of disease and hunger, it's in the interest of the United States to help the world deal with that for our own peace, for our own security.

It's one thing if the enemy couldn't hit us here at home; we could just let them—let the world run its course; just let everything happen that's meant—that it may be meant to happen, you know, just let it go. But what matters—what happens overseas matters here in the homeland. That's one of the lessons of September the 11th.

I also happen to believe it's in our moral interest to help people dying of HIV/AIDS live. I believe it's in our moral interest to do that as well as our security interest. I be-

lieve it's in the interest of our soul. To whom much is given, much is required. We've been given a lot, and when we find hungry children, it's in our interest—it's in our security interest, but it's also in the interest of the very, kind of, moral fabric of America.

One of the things Laura is working on is to help people deal with malaria. We could solve the malaria issue. The solution is right at hand. It just takes will and determination. There's no reason for little babies to be dying of mosquito bites around the world. There's just no reason. So the United States has taken the lead—and Laura has taken the lead in our house—to get us to focus on solving problems. It's in the Nation's interest to do that.

A couple of more, then I got to go. Yes, sir.

Situation in Burma

Q. Mr. President, you mentioned freedom. What do you think are the right next steps for democracy and freedom in Burma?

The President. Yes, great question. Enormous international pressure to make it clear to the generals that they will be completely isolated and not accepted into the international community of nations. It's—Aung San Suu Kyi is a great woman who gets a huge vote and yet is now under house arrest. And so she serves as a classic example of why the world needs to work together to help save societies. Her example is one of bravery being confined by unelected military junta.

And by the way, those examples exist. I met with a woman in the Oval Office the other day whose husband was a doctor, plastic surgeon, in Cuba. And he wrote some—I guess wrote some stuff on freedom, and he's now in a prison. He now weighs 106 pounds. She, by the way, brought her four children to the United States of America to be able to raise them in freedom. And she's wondering whether or not we have that same passion toward Cuba that we have with Burma. And the answer—I told her, absolutely. As a matter of fact, America must have passion for political prisoners wherever they exist, for the human condition is important to the future of this country.

And so, sir, to answer your question, whether it be the people in Burma who are

being brutalized by the military junta or the people in Cuba or the people in other tyrannical societies, it's in our interest to rally the world and to pressure and to keep the focus and use our respective bully pulpits—those of us in free societies—use our respective bully pulpits to remind people of the condition, the human condition in these societies that are being deeply affected by tyrannical regimes.

And so I talk about Burma all the time to leaders. I spend a lot of time rallying the world—at least rallying my fellow leaders on issues such as Burma and Cuba and Sudan and Iran. And so thanks for bringing up the question. I just hope we get good results. Sometimes international bodies are nonconsequential. In other words, they're good talking, but there's not a consequence. At some point, there has to be consequences.

So, along the lines in Burma, we have sanctioned individuals within Burma and are considering additional sanctions. But sanctions don't mean anything if we're the only sanctioner. They just find safe haven somewhere else—in trade, for example.

And so it's a tough question, a tough issue, and the United States must always confront these tyrannical situations. It's in our interest that we do so.

Yes, sir.

The Environment/Alternative Fuel Sources/Energy

Q. [*Inaudible*]*—welcome to northwest Arkansas. We have a little local mom-and-pop retailer by the name of Wal-Mart that's leading the charge—*

The President. Now you're bragging. [*Laughter*]

Q. *—leading the charge on sustainability in the environment. And local governments all across the country are trying to do the same thing. What can the Federal Government do to step up and bring the United States back into a role of leadership in sustainability and in environmental protection?*

The President. Yes. The fundamental question is whether or not we will be able to grow our economy and be good stewards of the environment at the same time. I'm interested in good policy. Kyoto, I thought, was bad policy because Kyoto would have

basically said—[*applause*]*—basically would have said that we would have had to ground our economy down in order to achieve—maybe achieve some positive changes in greenhouse gases.*

And so I came with a different approach, sir, and that is, I asked a question: How best to develop new technologies that will enable us to meet our responsibilities as stewards of the environment—of being responsible stewards of the environment? That's why—here, the way I'll do this is, there's three basic aspects to the environment: One is how we generate electricity; two is how we drive our cars; and three is how we build our buildings. We've got good conservation policies available for building construction.

Two, I've just explained to the man who's trying to raise dairy cows, and he's now not so happy with the cost of corn, that we've taken a very aggressive approach on how—on providing alternatives to gasoline. So in other words, dependency on oil is a national security issue, it's an economic security issue, but it's also an environmental issue. The less oil we use, the better stewards of the environment we will be. So that's why I'm a big promoter of ethanol, and I've set a mandatory goal for the country of reducing our gasoline usage by 20 percent over the next 10 years.

Finally, electricity—and that's the interesting issue because, one, we got a lot of coal. And it seems like to me that we want to make sure that if we're going to have economic—you can't, by the way, be good stewards of the environment if you're broke. You just can't. This is an expensive proposition, to make sure that we've got enough cashflow in our society to develop new technologies. So we've got a lot of coal, and it's a plentiful supply. That's why we're spending about \$2 billion of your money for clean coal technologies. In other words, we want to be able to power our economy and be good stewards of the environment, so why don't we work for zero-emission coal-fired plants, which is precisely what we're doing.

Secondly, we've got a strong nuclear power initiative going. If you're truly—if you're truly an environmentalist, you'll support nuclear power because it will enable you to generate the electricity necessary to generate the wealth necessary to invest in technologies

and, at the same time, have zero greenhouse gases. And so we've got a comprehensive approach.

I will tell you this: Unless all economies, major economies are at the table, it's a—this is a venture that will not work. So that's why I called together the leaders of the major economies, including China, and said, okay, why don't we sit down at the table and come up with a goal, a reduction of greenhouse gases over a period of time? See, if you can get somebody to agree on a goal, you can begin to get them to agree on a solution. But if certain nations aren't at the table, they're not going to participate.

Secondly, I think each nation is going to have to develop its own strategy. We're different from other countries in the world. We have shown, however, that you can grow your economy and reduce greenhouse gases. You ask what the Federal Government is doing. Whatever we're doing is working because last year, we grew our economy, and the gross amount of greenhouse gases we put in the environment actually went down. And so it's a—you know, this is an important issue.

My principle is, I want to make sure that whatever we do doesn't hamper our capacity to grow. I want our people working. I want people realizing their dreams. I want people to be able to put food on the table. And I believe you can have economic growth and good economic—environmental stewardship through technologies. And that's exactly what we're doing right now. And thanks for bring up the question.

Yes, ma'am.

Health Care

Q. My question is, Mr. President, do you invest money in health care buses to go around the world and give health insurance to people without it?

The President. Here's what I'm going to try to do. First of all, if you're poor, the Government is going to help you. If you're old, the Government has an obligation—elderly, excuse me—the Government—[*laughter*—I'm old; you're elderly—[*laughter*—I should have listened to my mother, shouldn't I have, yes—is to make sure a Medicare system fulfills its promise. But I firmly believe that private medicine is the best health care. And

the reason I do is because health care needs innovation and it needs professionalism. And our system is—private medicine does encourage innovation and does encourage professionalism.

I know—I'm sure you've—everybody has got a complaint about health care in America, but it's a great health care system. Is there a need for improvement? You bet, but the quality of health care in America is fabulous compared to the rest of the world. It really is.

Secondly, I believe government ought to incent people to go—to be able to have available—ought to incent—ought to change the system to make sure an individual can get into the marketplace and be able to better afford private insurance. Rather than help people through public policy—government programs, is to encourage people through private insurance.

One of my problems with SCHIP, by the way, is that expanding eligibility meant one-third of all families that would sign up on to it would go from private care into the public. That's the exact opposite direction we ought to be moving people, it seems like to me. We ought to be encouraging private medicine and private care.

So I—look, this is a long answer for you, sorry. It's a complex subject, though. We ought to change the Tax Code. Right now, if you're working for corporate Wal-Mart, you're—you benefit, rather than somebody who's trying to buy insurance in the private market. That health care—the taxes in health care says, if you're working for a big company, you do fine; if you're working for a small company or you're unemployed or you're individual sole proprietorship, you're paying health care with after-tax dollars. So the Tax Code needs to be changed.

One option is to say, you deduct the first \$15,000 for a family of two—I mean, for a married couple—deduct \$15,000 off your expense, \$15,000 of your income—on your income. Or another option some are considering in Congress is a tax credit. Either way, it's all intended to get people into the private markets. In other words, the incentive has got to be not to be part of government. The incentive has got to be to have the private sector work.

One of the problems we face is, many people pay your bills for you. This is a third-party payer system. And therefore, you don't really have much to say—if somebody is going to pay it, you don't ask what's the price or what's the quality. There's very little consumerism in health care. And yet consumerism can help with price and quality. And so the question is, can government help consumerism become a part of health care? And one way we do—we buy a lot of health care, and so we then insist upon transparency. We say, if you're going to take government money as a hospital, we expect you to put your prices up there for everybody to see, and then encourage programs like HSAs to put the consumer in charge of the purchasing.

It's a long answer to a simple question; I apologize. But it's a complex subject. And the truth of the matter is, the debate is whether or not the Federal Government is going to run your health care, or whether or not we're wise enough to not let that happen. And for the next 16 months, I can assure you we're wise enough to not let that happen, and that's—[*applause*].

Last question.

Presidential Election/President's Decisionmaking

Q. Mr. President, when do you think there will be a girl President for the Republican Party?

The President. Well—[*laughter*—I do think—yes, you took my line. [*Laughter*] I think a lady will be President, yes, and she'll be a Republican. [*Laughter*] Look, I—yes, I do. I believe—I absolutely believe it. Look, I—one of the things I benefited from is the advice of strong women, not only in my own house—[*laughter*—but at the Cabinet table. And I've seen women who are plenty capable of being President of the United States and capable of making the hard decisions and capable of making sure they stick to principle.

See, one of the hardest things about making good, solid decisions is—one of the worst things you can do is to try to chase a poll or a focus group. In order to make decisions that will yield the peace, you got to make them based upon certain fundamental principles and certain values.

And I hope you got a sense of the values and principles by which I'm making decisions today. I'm honored you let me come by. I'm heading to Memphis, believe it or not, and I thank you for the chance to share my thoughts with you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:55 p.m. at the John Q. Hammons Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to former Representative John P. Hammerschmidt of Arkansas; former Senator Bob Dole and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala, Cochairs, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors; former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma; and Yamile Llanes Labrada, wife of Cuban political prisoner Jose Luis Garcia Paneque, who was arrested in Cuba on March 18, 2003. A participant referred to former Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Marion C. Blakey; and H.R. 1125 and S. 65.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors

October 16, 2007

Good afternoon. Thanks for coming. Welcome to the Rose Garden. I appreciate Senator Dole and Secretary Shalala and other members of their Commission for joining me today. Welcome.

I just finished an inspiring meeting with Secretary Gates and Acting Secretary Mansfield, with service members who were rebuilding their lives after being severely wounded in the service of our country. I wish all Americans could hear the service members talk about their strong desire to not only rehabilitate but to enter—be productive citizens here in America. I was most impressed by your spirit and your courage, and I—welcome here to the White House.

I appreciate the fact that they are helping to find a—to define a culture that says, we're going to judge people by their potential, not their disabilities. I appreciate the fact that they are demonstrating the great breakthroughs in technologies that are now available for the wounded. I don't know if you noticed, two of them came in on a Segway.

Medical advances have enabled battlefield medics and hospitals to provide our wounded warriors with care that would have been unimaginable just a decade ago. Yet our system for managing this care has fallen behind. It's an old system; it's an antiquated system; it's an outdated system that needs to be changed.

You know, that's what happened at Walter Reed Army Medical Center earlier this year. First of all, the care that's provided there is magnificent. Our doctors and nurses at Walter Reed are great healers and caregivers, and they've saved a lot of lives. But there were serious problems caused by bureaucratic delays and administrative failures, and we're not going to let those problems continue.

We took immediate steps to address the problems at Walter Reed. The building where outpatients were living that was substandard was shut down. They were moved to high-quality housing, and those responsible were held to account. And to ensure wounded troops at Walter Reed and other facilities across America get the care they deserve, I asked Senator Dole and Secretary Shalala to chair a bipartisan Presidential commission. The Commission conducted a comprehensive review of the care provided to service members returning from the global war on terror from the time they leave the battlefield through their return to civilian life.

At the end of this review, the Commission submitted specific recommendations for modernizing and improving our system of care. My administration strongly supports the Commission's recommendations. We've taken steps to implement them where we can through administrative action. And today we're sending Congress legislation to implement the recommendations that require legislative action.

The legislation will help us achieve three important goals. First, this legislation will modernize and improve the way we evaluate disabilities and award compensation for injured service members. Right now the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs both have their own systems for making these determinations. The Commission found that this process is difficult to navigate and con-

fusing for service members and their families. We need to streamline the system.

So this legislation will assign both Departments clear and separate roles. The Defense Department will determine whether wounded warriors are still fit for service. Those unable to serve will receive a pension from the Defense Department based on their rank and length of service. Then they will move directly into the Veterans Affairs system, where they will receive compensation for their disabilities. This compensation will take into account both loss of earnings and the overall impact on the quality of life resulting from a service member's injury or disability.

This new system will also emphasize rehabilitation and retraining. It will provide new support and financial incentives for therapy and education. It will help our wounded warriors rejoin their communities. Look, these men and women want to be productive, and they want to be active members of our society, and this legislation will help them achieve that goal.

Secondly, this legislation will strengthen support for families during the recovery process. When our service members suffer wounds, their families suffer with them. They pray beside hospital beds; they discuss the options with the doctors; and they help injured loved ones readjust to everyday life. These commitments often require family members to take long leaves of absence from work, yet many family members cannot get this time off without losing their jobs.

Our military families deserve better. So this legislation will give many parents and spouses the opportunity to take up to 6 months of unpaid leave when their loved ones are seriously wounded in combat. It provides severely wounded service members with aid and attended care services—for instance, up to 40 hours per week of in-home help from an assistant—so their families do not have to shoulder the responsibilities of caring alone.

Third, this legislation will improve treatment for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. The Commission found that many service members still worry about the stigma associated with this serious condition. We need to end this stigma by encouraging those suffering to get help. This legislation will make it easier

for our troops to receive care for this disorder, and it will help affected service members to move forward with their lives.

The need to enact these reforms into law is urgent, and I call on both Republicans and Democrats in Congress to come together and pass a good bill that I can sign into law. We also need to complete the Veterans Affairs appropriations bills that funds veterans' benefits and other ongoing programs. I fully recognize Congress and I have our differences on other appropriations bills, but the Veterans Affairs bill is one where we agree. I ask the House and Senate to work together to pass a bill that I can sign, and send it to my desk by Veterans Day.

As we work with Congress on this legislation, my administration will continue to institute the recommendations of the Dole-Shalala Commission that do not require congressional approval. We're acting on the Commission's recommendations to form a new corps of well-trained recovery coordinators. These coordinators will work with families to establish recovery plans and monitor the healing process, facilitate the transition to civilian life, and ensure wounded service members do not get lost in the system.

We're also acting on the Commission's recommendations to ensure health professionals working at the Defense Department and Veterans Affairs facilities can easily share patient information. This will allow us to provide patients with better care as they move through the system. We're also developing a new secure web portal, where service members will be able to access all their medical files and benefit information in one place.

We're acting on the Commission's recommendation to create incentives for medical professionals and administrators to work at Walter Reed. One out of every five wounded service members passes through this hospital. And while Walter Reed is set to close at 2011, we will ensure it remains a state-of-the-art facility until the last day of operation.

By taking these steps, we'll honor a shared commitment to care for those who defend our freedom. One of those people is Ryan Groves. While serving with the Marines in Iraq in 2004, he lost his left leg and severely injured his right leg in a rocket attack. Today,

he refuses to allow his disability to stop him from living his life. He's going to Georgetown. He wants to be a lawyer. He travels using the Segway. He's an amazing fellow. He's an inspiration for all Americans. And we need to build a system of care that is worthy of the sacrifice that he and others have made.

I look forward to working with Congress to achieve this goal. Together we can give our wounded warriors the best possible care and help them build their lives of hope and promise.

And now it's my honor to introduce Secretary Donna Shalala.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:25 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Senator Bob Dole and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala, Cochairs, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Cochairs Dole and Shalala.

Memorandum on Provision of United States Drug Interdiction Assistance to the Government of Brazil

October 16, 2007

Presidential Determination No. 2008-03

Memorandum for the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense

Subject: Provision of U.S. Drug Interdiction Assistance to the Government of Brazil

Pursuant to the authority vested in me by section 1012 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1995, as amended (22 U.S.C. 2291-4), I hereby certify, with respect to Brazil, that (1) interdiction of aircraft reasonably suspected to be primarily engaged in illicit drug trafficking in that country's airspace is necessary because of the extraordinary threat posed by illicit drug trafficking to the national security of that country; and (2) that country has appropriate procedures in place to protect against innocent loss of life in the air and on the ground in connection with such interdiction, which shall at a minimum include

effective means to identify and warn an aircraft before the use of force is directed against the aircraft.

The Secretary of State is authorized and directed to publish this determination in the *Federal Register* and to notify the Congress of this determination.

George W. Bush

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 17.

The President's News Conference

October 17, 2007

The President. Good morning. We're now more than halfway through October, and the new leaders in Congress have had more than 9 months to get things done for the American people. Unfortunately, they haven't managed to pass many important bills. Now the clock is winding down, and in some key areas, Congress is just getting started.

Congress has work to do on health care. Tomorrow Congress will hold a vote attempting to override my veto of the SCHIP bill. It's unlikely that that override vote will succeed, which Congress knew when they sent me the bill. Now it's time to put politics aside and seek common ground to reauthorize this important program. I've asked Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt, National Economic Council Director Al Hubbard, and OMB Director Jim Nussle to lead my administration's discussions with the Congress. I made clear that if putting poor children first requires more than the 20-percent increase in funding I proposed, we'll work with Congress to find the money we need. I'm confident we can work out our differences and reauthorize SCHIP.

Congress has work to do to keep our people safe. One of the things Congress did manage to get done this year is pass legislation that began modernizing the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. FISA is a law that our intelligence professionals use to monitor the communications of terrorists who want to do harm to our people. The problem is that Congress arranged for the measure they

passed to expire this coming February. In addition, the House is now considering another FISA bill that would weaken the reforms they approved just 2 months ago. When it comes to improving FISA, Congress needs to move forward, not backward, so we can ensure our intelligence professionals have the tools they need to protect us.

Congress has work to do on the budget. One of Congress's basic duties is to fund the day-to-day operations of the Federal Government. Yet Congress has not sent me a single appropriations bill. Time is running short, so I urge the Speaker and the leader of the Senate to name conferees for six of the annual appropriations bills that have already passed the House and the Senate. The two Houses need to work out their differences on these bills and get them to my desk as soon as possible. They also need to pass the remaining spending bills, one at a time and in a fiscally responsible way.

Congress has work to do on education. As we saw from the recent Nation's Report Card, the No Child Left Behind Act is getting results for America's children. Test scores are rising. The achievement gap is beginning to close. And Congress should send me a bipartisan bill that reauthorizes and strengthens this effective piece of legislation.

Congress has work to do on housing. Back in August, I proposed a series of reforms to help homeowners struggling with their mortgage payments. More than 6 weeks later, Congress has yet to finish work on any of these measures. These are sensible reforms that would help American families stay in their homes, and Congress needs to act quickly on these proposals.

Congress has work to do on trade. Earlier this year, my administration reached out to the Congress, and we forged a bipartisan agreement to advance trade legislation. Now Congress needs to begin moving on trade agreements with Peru, Colombia, Panama, and South Korea. These agreements expand access to overseas markets; they strengthen democratic allies; and they level the playing field for American workers, farmers, and small businesses.

Congress has work to do for our military veterans. Yesterday I sent Congress legislation to implement the Dole-Shalala Commission's recommendations that would modernize and improve our system of care for wounded warriors. Congress should consider this legislation promptly so that those injured while defending our freedom can get the quality care they deserve.

Congress also needs to complete the Veterans Affairs appropriations bill that funds veterans' benefits and other ongoing programs. Look, we have our differences on appropriations bills, but the veterans' bill is where we agree. So I ask Congress to send me a clean bill that will fund our veterans, a bill without unnecessary spending in it. And they need to get this work done, and I hope they can get it done by Veterans Day. It seems like a reasonable request on behalf of our Nation's veterans.

Congress has work to do for law enforcement and the judiciary. I want to thank the Senate Judiciary Committee for beginning hearings today on Judge Mukasey's nomination to serve as the Attorney General. I urge the committee to vote on that nomination this week and send it to the full Senate for a vote next week. The Senate also needs to act on the many judicial nominations that are pending and give those nominees an up-or-down vote. Confirming Federal judges is one of the most important responsibilities of the Senate, and the Senate owes it to the American people to meet that responsibility in a timely way.

With all these pressing responsibilities, one thing Congress should not be doing is sorting out the historical record of the Ottoman Empire. The resolution on the mass killings of Armenians beginning in 1915 is counterproductive. Both Republicans and Democrats, including every living former Secretary of State, have spoken out against this resolution. Congress has more important work to do than antagonizing a democratically in the Muslim world, especially one that is providing vital support for our military every day.

It's little time left in the year, and Congress has little to show for all the time that has gone by. Now is the time for them to act. And I look forward to working with

members of both parties on important goals that I've outlined this morning.

And now I look forward to taking some of your questions, believe it or not. [*Laughter*]

Turkey/Situation in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, Turkey's Parliament is debating sending military forces into Iraq to pursue Kurdish rebels. Do you think that Turkey has the legitimate right to stage a cross-country offensive—cross-border offensive?

The President. I've talked to Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus about this issue this morning. We are making it very clear to Turkey that we don't think it is in their interests to send troops into Iraq. Actually, they have troops already stationed in Iraq, and they've had troops stationed there for quite awhile. We don't think it's in their interests to send more troops in.

I appreciate very much the fact that the Iraqi Government understands that this is a sensitive issue with the Turks, and that's why Vice President Hashimi is in Istanbul today talking with the Turkish leaders to assure them that Iraq shares their concerns about terrorist activities, but that there's a better way to deal with the issue than having the Turks send massive troops into the country—massive additional troops into the country.

What I'm telling you is, is that there's a lot of dialog going on, and that's positive. We are actively involved with the Turks and the Iraqis through a tripartite arrangement, and we'll continue to—dialoging with the Turks.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Matt [Matt Spetalnick, Reuters].

Dalai Lama's Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony

Q. Thanks. Why are you going to attend the congressional award ceremony for the Dalai Lama today when China—

The President. Why am I—when am I, or why am I?

Q. Why are you going to, when China has expressed outrage about it? And what, if any, potential damage do you see to U.S.-China relations, considering that you need their

support on dealing with Iran and North Korean nuclear issues?

The President. One, I admire the Dalai Lama a lot. Two, I support religious freedom; he supports religious freedom. Thirdly, I like going to the gold medal ceremonies. I think it's a good thing for the President to do, to recognize those who the Congress has honored. And I'm looking forward to going.

I told the Chinese President, President Hu, that I was going to go to the ceremony. In other words, I brought it up. And I said, I'm going because I want to honor this man. I have consistently told the Chinese that religious freedom is in their nation's interest. I've also told them that I think it's in their interest to meet with the Dalai Lama—and will say so at the ceremony today in Congress. If they were to sit down with the Dalai Lama, they would find him to be a man of peace and reconciliation. And I think it's in the country's interest to allow him to come to China and meet with him.

So my visit today is not new to the Chinese leadership. As I told you, I brought it up with him. I wanted to make sure he understood exactly why I was going. And they didn't like it, of course, but I don't think it's going to damage—severely damage relations. A matter of fact, I don't think it ever damages relations when the American President talks about religious tolerance and religious freedom is good for a nation. I do this every time I meet with him.

David [David Gregory, NBC News]. Welcome back.

Israel and Syria

Q. Mr. President, last time you used that line and we were here—[laughter]—

The President. But you know something, the interesting thing about it is, it works every time because—[laughter]—

Q. I know.

The President. —because there's a grain of truth. [Laughter] I won't use it again, though. [Laughter]

Q. There's a report today from Israel Army Radio indicating that the Syrians have confirmed that the Israelis struck a nuclear site in their country. You wouldn't comment on that before, and I'm wondering if now, on the general question, you think it's appro-

priate for Israel to take such action if it feels that there is mortal danger being posed to the state?

The President. David, my position hadn't changed.

Q. Can I ask you whether you—

The President. You can ask me another question.

Q. Did you support Israel's strike in 1981 on the Iraqi reactor outside Baghdad?

The President. You know, Dave, I don't remember what I was doing in 1980. Let's see, I was living in Midland, Texas; I don't remember my reaction that far back.

Q. Well, but as you look at it as President now—

The President. —private citizen back there in 1981 in Midland, Texas, trying to make a living for my family and—

Q. But you're a careful—someone who studies history—

The President. Student of history? I do, yes. No, I don't remember my reaction, to be frank with you.

Q. But I'm asking you now, as you look back at it, do you think it was the right action for Israel to take?

The President. David, I'm not going to comment on the subject that you're trying to get me to comment on.

Q. Why won't you? But isn't it a fair question to say, is it—given all the talk about Iran and the potential threat—whether it would be appropriate for Israel to act—

The President. Hey, Dave—Dave—

Q. —in self-defense—

The President. I understand—

Q. —if Iran were to—

The President. I understand where you're trying to take—

Q. —develop nuclear weapons?

The President. I understand where you're trying to take. It's a clever ruse to get me to comment on it, but I'm not going to. Thank you.

Q. Well, I'm just wondering why you think it's not appropriate to make that judgment when it's a—it is a real-world scenario, as we know, since they apparently took this action against Syria—

The President. Dave, welcome back. [Laughter]

Iran-Russia Meeting

Q. Good morning, Mr. President. Thank you. I don't know if you saw the picture on the front page of one of the papers this morning of Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad and Vladimir Putin.

The President. I did.

Q. It looked like they were getting along pretty well. And they are among five leaders—

The President. Surprised they weren't, kind of, fighting each other on the front page of the paper? No, man, come on. *[Laughter]*

Q. They looked like they were enjoying each other's company. And I'm wondering, since there were leaders of five Caspian Sea region nations that have now declared each country will not be used as a base to attack the other, A, what do you make of their growing relationship; B, does it complicate what the United States can do in the region; and C, would you characterize that arrangement as some sort of "Caspian Sea Truman Doctrine" or something like that?

The President. You know, I think it's hard to judge how their conversations went from a picture. Generally leaders don't like to be photographed scowling at each other or making bad gestures at each other. So I'm not surprised that there was a nice picture of them walking along. I try to make sure that when I'm with foreign leaders, there's a pretty picture of the two of us walking down the colonnades, or something like that, to send a good message. And so—

Q. Are you saying it's not so warm?

The President. Well, I don't know yet. What I'm about to tell you is, is that I'm looking forward to getting President Putin's readout from the meeting. I think one of the—the thing I'm interested in is whether or not he continues to harbor the same concerns that I do. And I say "continues" because when we were in Australia, he reconfirmed to me that it is—he recognized it's not in the world's interest for Iran to have the capacity to make a nuclear weapon. And they have been very supportive in the United Nations, and we're working with them on a potential third resolution.

So that's where my concerns—I don't worry about the pictures. I understand why they meet. I am—will continue to work with

Russia, as well as other nations, to keep a focused effort on sending Iran a message that—"You will remain isolated if you continue your nuclear weapons ambitions."

Q. But this declaration doesn't speak to that, Mr. President. This declaration doesn't suggest isolation for Iran; just the opposite, that Russia and Iran are going to do business.

The President. Well, we'll find out. See, that—you're trying to get me to interpret the meeting based upon a news story or a picture. I'd rather spend some time with Vladimir Putin finding out exactly what went on. Thank you.

Six-Party Talks

Q. Let's stay with the nuclear thing here. When North Korea tested a nuclear device, you said that any proliferation would be a grave threat to the U.S., and North Korea would be responsible for the consequences. Are you denying that North Korea has any role in the suspected nuclear facilities in Syria?

The President. See, you're trying to pull a Gregory.

Q. Yes, I am.

The President. Okay, well, I'm not going to fall for it. But I'd like to talk about—

Q. Don't Americans have a right to know about who is proliferating, especially when you're negotiating with North Korea?

The President. No, you have a right to know this, that when it comes to the six-party talks, proliferation—the issue of proliferation has equal importance with the issue of weaponry, and that North Korea has said that they will stop proliferating, just like they have said they will fully disclose and disable any weapons programs.

Step one of that has been dealing with shuttering Pyongyang. Step two will be full declaration of any plutonium that has been manufactured and/or the construction of bombs, along with a full declaration of any proliferation activities. And in my judgment, the best way to solve this issue with North Korea peacefully is to put it in the—keep it in the context of the six-party talks. And the reason why is that diplomacy only works if there are consequences when diplomacy breaks down. And it makes sense for there to be other people at the table so that if

North Korea were to have said to all of us, "We're going to do x, y, or z," and they don't, that we have other—people other than the United States being consequential.

There's a lot of aid that goes on with—between North Korea and China, or North Korea and South Korea, and therefore, if they renege on their promises—and they have said—they have declared that they will show us weapons and get rid of the weapons programs as well as stop proliferation—if they don't fulfill that which they've said, we are now in a position to make sure that they understand that there will be consequences.

And I'm pleased with the progress we're making. There's still work to be done? You bet there's work to be done. Do I go into this thing saying, well, you know, gosh, the process is more important than results? I don't. What matters most to me are whether or not we can achieve the results that I've said we're hoping to achieve. And if not, there will be consequences to the North Koreans.

Q. Was Syria part of those talks? Is Syria part of the talks?

The President. Proliferation is a part of the talks.

Q. Including Syria?

The President. Elaine [Elaine Quijano, Cable News Network].

Look, in all due respect to you and Gregory, this is not my first rodeo. [Laughter] And I know where you're trying to get me to comment. I'm not going to comment on it, one way or the other.

Elaine.

Q. But, Mr. President, your administration has talked about mushroom clouds in the—

The President. Thank you, Martha [Martha Raddatz, ABC News]. Martha, thank you. Elaine.

War on Terror in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, on Iraq, you've talked repeatedly about the threat of Al Qaida in Iraq. And we've also heard a lot about the military progress that's been made against that group. Can you tell Americans how close the United States is to declaring victory against that group? And if you're not able to do so, does that suggest that your critics

are correct that this war cannot be won militarily?

The President. The Iraq situation cannot be won by military means alone. There has to be political reconciliation to go with it. There has to be an emergence of a democracy. That's been my position ever since it started.

Al Qaida is still dangerous. They're dangerous in Iraq; they're dangerous elsewhere. Al Qaida is not going to go away anytime soon. That's why it's important for us to be finding out what their intentions are and what are their plans, so we can respond to them. This is a—this war against Al Qaida requires actionable intelligence. That's why this FISA bill is important. And they still want to do us harm, Elaine, and they're still active. Yes, we've hurt them bad in Iraq, and we've hurt them bad elsewhere. If you're the number-three person in Al Qaida, you've had some rough goes—you've been captured or killed. And we're keeping the pressure on them, all the time.

And so, yes, we're making progress. But, no, I fully understand those who say you can't win this thing militarily.

Q. Sir, does that suggest—

The President. That's exactly what the United States military says, that you can't win this military. That's why it's very important that we continue to work with the Iraqis on economic progress as well as political progress.

And what's happened is—in Iraq—is, there's been a lot of political reconciliation at the grassroots level. In other words, people that hadn't been talking to each other are now talking to each other. They're beginning to realize there's a better future than one of—that one—with a country with deep sectarian divide. And what's going to end up happening is, is that the local reconciliation will affect the national Government. In the meantime, we're pressing hard to get the national Government to complete the strategic partnership with the United States as well as pass meaningful legislation, like the de-Ba'ath law or the Provincial government law or the oil revenue sharing law.

Bret [Bret Baier, FOX News].

Troop Levels in Iraq

Q. Sir, given that—what you just laid out, should the American people be prepared for a large number of U.S. forces to remain in Iraq after you are finished with your Presidency?

The President. The troop levels in Iraq will be determined by our commanders on the ground and the progress being made. Thank you.

Iran-Russia Meeting

Q. Mr. President, I'd like to follow on Mr.—on President Putin's visit to Tehran, not about the image of President Putin and President Ahmadi-nejad, but about the words that Vladimir Putin said there. He issued a stern warning against potential U.S. military action against Tehran—

The President. Did he say "U.S."?

Q. Yes.

The President. Oh, he did?

Q. And he said—well, at least the quote said that. And he also said, quote, he "sees no evidence to suggest Iran wants to build a nuclear bomb." Were you disappointed with that message? And does that indicate possibly that international pressure is not as great as you once thought against Iran abandoning its nuclear program?

The President. I—as I say, I look forward to—if those are, in fact, his comments, I look forward to having him clarify those, because when I visited with him, he understands that it's in the world's interest to make sure that Iran does not have the capacity to make a nuclear weapon. And that's why on—in the first round at the U.N., he joined us, and second round, we joined together to send a message. I mean, if he wasn't concerned about it, Bret, then why did we have such good progress at the United Nations in round one and round two?

And so I will visit with him about it. I have not yet been briefed yet by Condi or Bob Gates about, you know, their visit with Vladimir Putin.

Iran

Q. But you definitively believe Iran wants to build a nuclear weapon?

The President. I think so long—until they suspend and/or make it clear that they—that

their statements aren't real, yes, I believe they want to have the capacity, the knowledge, in order to make a nuclear weapon. And I know it's in the world's interest to prevent them from doing so. I believe that the Iranian—if Iran had a nuclear weapon, it would be a dangerous threat to world peace.

But this is—we got a leader in Iran who has announced that he wants to destroy Israel. So I've told people that if you're interested in avoiding world war III, it seems like you ought to be interested in preventing them from have the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon. I take the threat of Iran with a nuclear weapon very seriously, and we'll continue to work with all nations about the seriousness of this threat. Plus, we'll continue working the financial measures that we're in the process of doing. In other words, I think—the whole strategy is, is that at some point in time, leaders or responsible folks inside of Iran may get tired of isolation and say, "This isn't worth it." And to me, it's worth the effort to keep the pressure on this Government.

And secondly, it's important for the Iranian people to know we harbor no resentment to them. We're disappointed in the Iranian Government's actions, as should they be. Inflation is way too high; isolation is causing economic pain. This is a country that has got a much better future; people have got a much better—should have better hope inside Iran than this current Government is providing them.

So it's a—look, it's a complex issue, no question about it. But my intent is to continue to rally the world to send a focused signal to the Iranian Government that we will continue to work to isolate you, in the hopes that at some point in time, somebody else shows up and says, it's not worth the isolation.

Yes, ma'am.

Middle East Peace Process/Iran

Q. Mr. President, you are sponsoring the international peace conference. President Abbas said he is not going to come unless there is a timetable.

The President. Who said that?

Q. President Abbas.

The President. Oh, yes.

Q. Secretary Rice said that failure is not an option. You talked about substantial issues need to be discussed. What is the minimum expectation from you that you will call this conference a success? And what you're offering the Arab nations to encourage them to participate?

The President. Right. Well, that's why Condi is making the trip she's making, is to explain to people in private, as well as in public, that, one, we're for comprehensive peace; two, that there is a—the meeting, the international meeting will be serious and substantive. In other words—as she said the other day, this isn't going to be just a photo opportunity. This is going to be a serious and substantive meeting.

We believe that now is the time to push ahead with a meeting at which the Israelis and Palestinians will lay out a vision of what a state could look like. And the reason why there needs to be a vision of what a state could look like is because the Palestinians, that have been made promises all these years, need to see there's a serious, focused effort to step up a state. And that's important so that the people who want to reject extremism have something to be for.

So this is a serious attempt. And I'm pleased with the progress. And the reason I'm pleased is because it appears to me that President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert are, one, talking—I know they're talking a lot—but they're making progress. And in order for there to be lasting peace, the deal has to be good for the Palestinians as well as the Israelis. Our job is to facilitate the process.

Another reason I have an international meeting is to get Arab buy-in for a state. In other words, part of the issue in the past has been that the Arab nations stood on the sidelines, and when a state was in reach, they weren't a part of the process encouraging the parties to move forward. And so this is a—that's what I mean by comprehensive. It's comprehensive not only for what the state will look like; it's comprehensive in getting people in the region to be a part of the process. And so I'm feeling pretty optimistic about it.

Q. [*Inaudible*—would discuss refugees and Jerusalem and security and other issues that are—

The President. They are—the important issue—the important thing—I have discussed those publicly, as you know, early on in my Presidency, when I articulated a two-state solution. The important thing is for the Israelis and the Palestinians to be discussing them. That's the important issue. The United States can't impose peace. We can encourage the development of a state. That's precisely what I have been doing since the early stages of my Presidency. In order for there to be a Palestinian state, it's going to require the Israelis and the Palestinians coming to an accord. We can facilitate that, but we can't force people to make hard decisions. They're going to have to do that themselves.

And I'm encouraged; I'm encouraged from what Condi tells me is going on in the Middle East, that there is a—the attitude is, let's work together to see if we can't lay out that vision for the sake of peace between Israel and the Palestinians. And it's possible. I believe that we will see a democratic state, and I understand how hard it is. And the reason it's hard, by the way, is because there are extremists who don't want there to be a democracy in the Middle East, whether it be in Iraq or Lebanon or in the Palestinian Territories. That's the struggle, that when you see people trying to blow up the opportunity for a state to exist, you just got to understand, it's broader than just the Palestinian Territory. It's a part of this struggle, this ideological struggle in which we're engaged. We've got to ask ourselves, why don't they want there to be a democracy? And the answer is, because it doesn't fit into their ideological vision—"they" being the extremists.

Another issue with Iran, by the way, that is of great concern to us is their willingness to fund groups that try to either destabilize or prevent the rise of a democracy. Anyway, I'm optimistic this can be achieved, and we'll continue working to that end.

Yes, Ed [Ed Chen, Bloomberg News].

National Economy/Housing Market/Tax Reform

Q. Mr. President, could I ask you about a domestic matter?

The President. Sure.

Q. The Commerce Department reported today that the housing starts last month fell to the lowest level since 1993. How concerned are you that this housing recession will spill over into the broader economy, and what more can be done to prevent that from happening?

The President. Ed, I'm encouraged by the rate of inflation, the job growth. We've had 49 consecutive months of uninterrupted job growth, which is a record here in America. I'm pleased with the fact that our deficit is shrinking. But like our Secretary of the Treasury, I recognize there's softness in the housing market. By the way, we had growth in the GDP because of exports. In other words, there's positive elements of our economy. But no question, the housing is soft.

And the fundamental question is, what do we do to help homeowners? I don't think we ought to be providing bailouts for lenders, but I do think we ought to put policy in place that help people stay in their home. And that's why this FHA modernization bill is really important, because it'll extend the reach of the FHA and to help more people be able to refinance their homes.

Part of the issue in the housing market has been that as a result of asset bundling, that it's hard sometimes for people to find somebody to talk to, to help them refinance. In other words, in the old days, you go into your savings and loan, your local savings and loan, and sit down and negotiate a house deal, and the person with whom you negotiated would be around if you had financial difficulties, to say, can't you help me restructure? Today, the originator of the note no longer owns the note in many cases.

And the securitization of mortgages actually provided a lot of liquidity in the market, and that's a good thing. But it also creates a issue here in America, and that is, how do we get people to understand the nature of the mortgages they bought, and how do you help people refinance to stay in home—stay in their home? And so that's what Secretary Paulson, Secretary Jackson have been working on, particularly with the private sector, to facilitate the ability to people to refinance.

And finally, we need to change the tax laws. You're disadvantaged if you refinance

your home. It creates a tax liability. And if we want people staying in their homes, then it seems like to me, we got to change the Tax Code. That's why I talked to Senator Stabenow the other day and thanked her for her sponsorship of an important piece of tax legislation that will enable people to more likely stay in their homes.

So there's some things we can do, Ed. In the meantime, you just got to understand, it's going to have to work out—when you got more houses than you got buyers, the price tends to go down. And we're just going to have to work through the issue. I'm not a forecaster, but I can tell people that I feel good about many of the economic indicators here in the United States.

Peter [Peter Baker, Washington Post].

U.S.-Russia Relations/Democracy in Russia

Q. Mr. President, following up on Vladimir Putin for a moment. He said recently that next year, when he has to step down—according to the Constitution—as President, he may become Prime Minister, in effect keeping power and dashing any hopes for a genuine democratic transition there. Senator McCain said——

The President. I've been planning that myself. [*Laughter*]

Q. Senator McCain said yesterday, sir, that when he looks into Putin's eyes, he sees a K, a G, and a B, and he would never have invited——

The President. Pretty good line.

Q. ——and he would never have invited him to Kennebunkport. And he said it's time we got a little tough with Vladimir Putin. I'm wondering if you think—is Senator McCain right? And what would it mean for Russian democracy if, when you leave power, assuming you do, in January 2009—[*laughter*]—if Vladimir Putin is still in power?

The President. Yes. You know, one of the interesting—well, my leadership style has been to try to be in a position where I actually can influence people. And one way to do that is to have personal relationships that enable me to sit down and tell people what's on my mind without fear of rupturing relations. And that's how I've tried to conduct my business with Vladimir Putin. We don't

agree on a lot of issues; we do agree on some. Iran is one; nuclear proliferation is another. Reducing our nuclear warheads was an issue that we agreed on early.

But I believe good diplomacy requires good relations at the leadership level. That's why, in Slovakia, I was in a position to tell him that we didn't understand why he was altering the relationship between the Russian Government and a free press—in other words, why the free press was becoming less free. And I was able to do—he didn't like it. Nobody likes to be talked to in a way that may point up different flaws in their strategy. But I was able to do so in a way that didn't rupture relations. He was able to tell me going into Iraq wasn't the right thing. And to me that's good diplomacy. And so I'm—and I'll continue to practice that diplomacy.

Now, in terms of whether or not it's possible to reprogram the kind of basic Russian DNA, which is a centralized authority, that's hard to do. We've worked hard to make it appear in their interests—or we made it clear to them that it is in their interests to have good relations with the West. And the best way to have good long-term relations with the West is to recognize that checks and balances in government are important or to recognize there are certain freedoms that are inviolate. So Russia's a complex relationship, but it's an important relationship to maintain.

Q. Will you be disappointed if he stays in power after you're gone?

The President. I have no idea what he's going to do. He—I asked him when I saw him in Australia. I tried to get it out of him, who's going to be his successor, what he intends to do, and he was wily. He wouldn't tip his hand. I'll tip mine: I'm going to finish—I'm going to work hard to the finish. I'm going to sprint to the finish line, and then you'll find me in Crawford.

Sheryl [Sheryl Gay Stolberg, New York Times].

Cooperation With Congress/Legislative Agenda

Q. Mr. President, I'd like to turn your attention back to Capitol Hill. A year ago, after Republicans lost control of Congress, you said you wanted to find common ground. This morning you gave us a pretty scathing

report card on Democrats. But I'm wondering, how have you assessed yourself in dealing with Democrats this past year? How effective have you been in dealing with them on various issues, and do you think you've done a good job in finding common ground?

The President. We're finding common ground on Iraq. We're—I recognize there are people in Congress that say we shouldn't have been there in the first place. But it sounds to me as if the debate has shifted, that David Petraeus and Ryan Crocker's testimony made a difference to a lot of Members. I hope we continue to find ground by making sure our troops get funded.

We found common ground on FISA. My only question is, why change a good law? The way that law was written works for the security of the country. That's what the American people want to know, by the way. Are we passing laws that are beneficial to the American people? This law is beneficial because it enables our intelligence experts to—and professionals to find out the intentions of Al Qaida. Now, the law needs to be changed, enhanced by providing the phone companies that allegedly helped us with liability protection. So we found common ground there.

Hopefully we can find common ground as the Congress begins to move pieces of legislation. The reason I said what I said today is, there's a lot to be done. As you recognize, I'm not a member of the legislative branch; probably wouldn't be a very good legislator. But as the head of the executive branch, it makes sense to call upon Congress to show progress and get results. It's hard to find common ground unless important bills are moving. They're not even moving. And not one appropriations bill has made it to my desk. How can you find common ground when there's no appropriations process?

We found common ground on a trade bill—trade bills, really important pieces of legislation, as far as I'm concerned. One of the reasons why is, exports helped us overcome the weakness in the housing market last quarter. If that's the case, it seems like it makes sense to continue and open up markets to U.S. goods and services. And yet there hadn't been one—there haven't been any bills moving when it comes to trade.

Veterans Affairs is an area where we can find common ground. I've called in—I asked Bob Dole and Donna Shalala to lead an important Commission, a Commission to make sure our veterans get the benefits they deserve. I was concerned about bureaucratic delay and concerned about a system that had been in place for years, but this didn't recognize this different nature—a different kind of war that we're fighting.

I don't like it when I meet wives who are sitting by—beside their husbands' bed in Walter Reed and not being supported by its Government, not being helped to provide care. I'm concerned about PTSD, and I want people to focus on PTSD. And so we sent up a bill, and I hope they move on it quickly. There's a place where we can find common ground, Sheryl.

**Cooperation With Congress/State
Children's Health Insurance Program**

Q. Is it all their fault that these bills aren't moving, that you've got these veto threats out?

The President. I think it is their fault that bills aren't moving, yes. As I said, I'm not a part of the legislative branch. All I can do is ask them to move bills. It's up to the leaders to move the bills. And you bet I'm going to put veto threats out. Of course, I want to remind you, I put a lot of veto threats out when the Republicans were in control of Congress. I said, now, if you overspend, I'm going to veto your bills, and they listened, and we worked together. Whether or not that's the case, we'll find out.

And by the way, on the SCHIP bill, we weren't dialed in in the beginning. The leaders said, okay, let's see if we can get something moving. And I'm surprised I hadn't been asked about SCHIP. It's an issue that hadn't been—

Q. How far are you willing to go?

The President. I'm surprised I hadn't been asked about SCHIP yet. It's a—I made it abundantly clear why I have vetoed the bills. I find it interesting that when Americans begin to hear the facts, they understand the rationale behind the veto. First of all, there are 500,000 children who are eligible for the current program who aren't covered. And so, to answer your question on how far

I'm willing to go, I want to provide enough money to make sure those 500,000 do get covered. That ought to be the focus of our efforts.

Six or seven—in six or seven States, they spend more money on adults than children. And finally, the eligibility has been increased up to \$83,000. And that doesn't sound like it's a program for poor children to me. And I look forward to working with the Congress, if my veto is upheld, to focus on those who are supposed to be covered. That's what we need to get done.

Mark [Mark Knoller, CBS Radio].

**Lieutenant General Ricardo S. Sanchez,
USA (Ret.)**

Q. Sir—

The President. Yes.

Q. —I wonder if you felt blindsided by the very blistering criticism recently from retired General Ricardo Sanchez, who was one of your top commanders in Iraq. He told a news conference last week that there's been glaring, unfortunate display of incompetent strategic leadership within our national leaders on Iraq.

The President. Right.

Q. Seems like quite a lack of common ground there, sir.

The President. You know, look, I admire General Sanchez's service to the country. I appreciate his service to the country. The situation on the ground has changed quite dramatically since he left Iraq. The security situation is changing dramatically. The reconciliation that's taking place is changing. The economy is getting better. And so I—I'm pleased with the progress we're making. And I admire the fact that he served. I appreciate his service.

Q. Should the American people feel disturbed that a former top general says that?

The President. Massimo [Massimo Calabresi, Time].

Military Contractors in Iraq

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. As Commander in Chief, are you in control of and responsible for military contractors in Iraq? And if not, who is?

The President. Yes, I'm responsible, in that the State Department has hired those military contractors.

Q. Are you satisfied with their performance? And if not, what are you doing to satisfy yourself that——

The President. I will be anxious to see the analysis of their performance. There's a lot of studying going on, both inside Iraq and out, as to whether or not people violated rules of engagement. I will tell you, though, that a firm like Blackwater provides a valuable service. They protect people's lives. And I appreciate the sacrifice and the service that the Blackwater employees have made. And they too want to make sure that if there's any inconsistencies or behavior that shouldn't—that ought to be modified, that we do that. And so we're analyzing it fully.

Ann [Ann Compton, ABC News].

State Children's Health Insurance Program

Q. Well, I wanted to ask you about SCHIP and why you even let that get to a situation where it had to be a veto. Isn't there a responsibility by both the President and congressional leadership to work on this common ground before it gets to a veto?

The President. Right. As I said, we weren't dialed in. And I don't know why. But they just ran the bill, and I made it clear we weren't going to accept it. That happens sometimes. In the past, when I—I said, look, make sure we're a part of the process, and we were. In this case, this bill started heading our way—and I recognize Republicans in the Senate supported it. We made it clear we didn't agree, and they passed it anyway. And so now, hopefully, we'll be in the process. That's why the President has a veto. Sometimes the legislative branch wants to go on without the President, pass pieces of legislation, and the President then can use the veto to make sure he's a part of the process. And that's—as you know, I fully intend to do. I want to make sure—and that's why, when I tell you I'm going to sprint to the finish and finish this job strong, that's one way to ensure that I am relevant; that's one way to sure that I am in the process. And I intend to use the veto.

Wolffe [Richard Wolffe, Newsweek].

U.S. Policy on Detainees in the War on Terror/Congress

Q. Thank you, sir. A simple question.

The President. Yes. It may require a simple answer.

Q. What's your definition of the word "torture"?

The President. Of what?

Q. The word "torture." What's your definition?

The President. That's defined in U.S. law, and we don't torture.

Q. Can you give me your version of it, sir?

The President. Yes. Whatever the law says.

Q. You talked about sprinting to the finish, and then you also, just a moment ago, sounded a bit resigned to the fact that if legislators don't move bills there's not much you can do to it. So are you——

The President. Well, I'm doing it right now. See, that's—not to interrupt you—but it's called the bully pulpit. And I hope to get your—I was trying to get your attention focused on the fact that major pieces of legislation aren't moving, and those that are, are at a snail's pace. And I hope I did that. I hope I was able to accomplish that.

Q. One more on veterans, sir?

The President. Go ahead—he hasn't asked his question yet. I rudely interrupted him.

The Presidency/Cooperation With Congress/State Children's Health Insurance Program

Q. Do you feel as if you're losing leverage and that you're becoming increasingly irrelevant? And what can you do about that to keep——

The President. Quite the contrary. I've never felt more engaged and more capable of helping people recognize—American people recognize that there's a lot of unfinished business. And I'm really looking forward to the next 15 months. I'm looking forward to getting some things done for the American people. And if it doesn't get done, I'm looking forward to reminding people as to why it's not getting done.

But I'm confident we can get positive things done. I mean, you shouldn't view this as somebody who says, well, this is impossible

for Congress and the President to work together. Quite the contrary. I just named some areas where we have worked together. And we're going to have to work together. We're going to have to make sure our troops get the money they need. We're going to have to make sure America is protected.

Having said that, I'm not going to accept a lousy bill, and the American people don't want there to be a lousy bill on this issue. The American people want to know that our professionals have the tools necessary to defend them. See, they understand Al Qaida and terrorism is still a threat to the security of this country. In other words, they're still out there, and they're still plotting and planning. And it's in our interest to have the tools necessary to protect the American people. It's our most solemn duty.

So there's a lot of areas where we can work together. This just happens to be a period of time when not much is happening. And my job is to see if I can't get some of that movement in the right direction and, at the same time, make sure that we're part of the process. And one way the executive branch stays a part of the process is to issue veto threats and then follow through with them. And so that's what you're going to see tomorrow, as to whether or not the Congress will sustain my veto on a bill that I said I would veto and explained why I'm vetoing it.

And again, I want to repeat it so the American people clearly understand: One, there are half a million children who are eligible under this program but aren't being covered today; two, States are spending—some States are spending more money on adults than children. That doesn't make any sense if you're trying to help poor children.

By the way, in Medicaid, we spend about 35 billion a year on poor children. So if somebody is listening out there saying, well, they don't care about poor children, they ought to look at the size—the amount of money we're spending under Medicaid for poor children.

And finally, to increase eligibility up to 83,000, in my judgment, is an attempt by some in Congress to expand the reach of the Federal Government in medicine. And I believe strongly in private medicine. Now, I think the Federal Government ought to help

those who are poor, and it's one of the reasons why I worked so hard on Medicare reform, was to make sure that we fulfilled our promise to the elderly. But I don't like plans that move people from—encourage people to move from private medicine to the public, and that's what's happening under this bill. And so I'm looking forward to working with the Congress to make sure the bill does what it's supposed to do.

Listen, thank you all for your time. I enjoyed it.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:45 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Senator Bob Dole and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala, Cochairs, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this news conference.

Remarks on Presenting the Congressional Gold Medal to the Dalai Lama

October 17, 2007

Madam Speaker and Senator Byrd; Mr. Leader; members of the congressional delegation, particularly Senators Feinstein and Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen; Senator Thomas—God rest his soul; distinguished guests, particularly our friend Elie Wiesel; and Your Holiness: Over the years, Congress has conferred the gold medal on many great figures in history—usually at a time when their struggles were over and won. Today Congress has chosen to do something different. It has conferred this honor on a figure whose work continues and whose outcome remains uncertain.

In doing so, America raises its voice in the call for religious liberty and basic human rights. These values forged our Republic. They sustained us through many trials, and they draw us by conviction and conscience

to the people of Tibet and the man we honor today.

Nearly two decades have passed since the Dalai Lama was welcomed to the White House for the very first time. Members of both of our political parties and world leaders have seen His Holiness as a man of faith and sincerity and peace. He's won the respect and affection of the American people, and America has earned his respect and affection as well.

As a nation, we are humbled to know that a young boy in Tibet—as a young boy in Tibet, His Holiness kept a model of the Statue of Liberty at his bedside. Years later, on his first visit to America, he went to Battery Park in New York City so he could see the real thing up close. On his first trip to Washington, he walked through the Jefferson Memorial, a monument to the man whose words launched a revolution that still inspires men and women across the world. Jefferson counted as one of America's greatest blessings the freedom of worship. It was, he said, “a liberty deemed in other countries incompatible with good government and yet proved by our experience to be its best support.”

The freedom of belief is a yearning of the human spirit, a blessing offered to the world, and a cherished value of our Nation. It's the very first protection offered in the American Bill of Rights. It inspired many of the leaders that this rotunda honors in portraits and in marble. And it still defines our way of life.

Consider where we gather today. This great symbol of democracy sits quietly near a Catholic parish, a Jewish synagogue, a Muslim community center, a Greek Orthodox cathedral, and a Buddhist temple—each with faithful followers who practice their deeply held beliefs and live side by side in peace. This diversity is not a source of instability; it's a source of strength. This freedom does not belong to one nation; it belongs to the world.

One of the tragic anomalies of the past century is that in an era that has seen an unprecedented number of nations embrace individual freedom has also witnessed the stubborn endurance of religious repression. Americans cannot look to the plight of the religiously oppressed and close our eyes or turn away. And that is why I will continue

to urge the leaders of China to welcome the Dalai Lama to China. They will find this good man to be a man of peace and reconciliation.

Throughout our history, we have stood proudly with those who offer a message of hope and freedom to the world's down-trodden and oppressed. This is why all of us are drawn to a noble and spiritual leader who lives a world away. Today we honor him as a universal symbol of peace and tolerance, a shepherd for the faithful, and a keeper of the flame for his people.

I congratulate His Holiness on this recognition. I'm so honored to be here with you, sir. Laura and I join all Americans in offering the people of Tibet our fervent prayer that they may find days of prosperity and peace.

And now I ask the Speaker and Senator Byrd to join me for the gold medal presentation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:51 p.m. in the Rotunda at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Nobel Prize winner and author Elie Wiesel.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia

October 18, 2007

President Bush. It is such an honor to welcome back to the Oval Office the President of our friend and ally Liberia. Madam President, thanks for coming. Thanks for your very strong spirit and your deep desire to enhance democracy and improve the lives of your people in Liberia.

We had a good discussion. I want to emphasize a couple of points that we discussed. First of all, we are committed to helping you relieve your debt. This weekend, IMF will be meeting in Washington, DC, and it's very important for our friends in the IMF to recognize that debt relief is—for Liberia is a part of our agenda, and I would hope that they would help you—help you with debt relief. I think it's important. And so Secretary Paulson will be taking that message to the IMF.

Secondly, I want to thank you very much for your dedication and focus on helping the children of Liberia get a good education.

You've worked extremely hard to encourage parents to send their children to school, and we want to help you to the extent that you ask for help. The United States believes it's important that young boys and girls get a good education not only here in America but around the world. And the President is committed to universal education in Liberia and have made great strides since the days of your civil strife.

I also am very dedicated to helping you on malaria. Laura and I care deeply about the fact that young babies die on the continent of Africa and elsewhere needlessly. They die simply because of a mosquito bite. And so the President and I talked about our desire to put in place a malaria initiative that will save lives in Liberia. And we're going to—we'll be sending a person on the ground there pretty soon to help implement the malaria initiative, and that initiative will mean spreading nets and insecticides throughout the country so that we can see a reduction in death of young children that—a death that we can cure.

And finally, the Peace Corps has been gone from Liberia, and we talked about the fact that now we'll be able to—we're going to move the Peace Corps back in. And the Peace Corps has been in touch with our State Department and the Liberia folks, and it looks like we're going to start moving some teams pretty quickly back into Liberia. And the reason why we feel comfortable doing that is because of the leadership of this strong person right here.

And so, Madam President, proud to call you friend and proud to welcome you back to the Oval Office.

President Johnson Sirleaf. Mr. President, thank you. We're so pleased to be back here.

Liberia continues to make progress, despite the many challenges we face, and this progress we owe a lot to you and to Mrs. Bush for the support we've received. The State Department, National Security Council, Treasury have all just been there for us. Whether we're working on debt relief, or whether we're trying to improve our edu-

cational system or get our infrastructure fixed, we've always had a willing hand. The Ambassador has been supportive and been a real partner on the ground with us.

We were very pleased, Mr. President, that you granted the delayed enforced departure for some of our citizens who couldn't go back home because we weren't prepared to receive them——

The President. Right.

President Johnson Sirleaf. ——with the jobs and the homes and the basic services they needed. So the 18-month reprieve you've given them gives them time to prepare themselves and enable us to prepare to receive them at some point.

Liberia was included among three other African countries in the special education initiative, and we're very pleased about that. And we've just discussed today that you'll be behind us as we try to fight malaria. Malaria is one of the greatest killers in our country, particular among our young children. And so we'll be working to make sure that we get a program where we can have some measurable actions so we can reduce this scourge that afflicts our children.

Overall, we're just so pleased with the relationship. Liberians are very proud that you were one of the first ones that set us on this road to peace and a road that's enabled us to get the progress we have today. We are committed to make Liberia a post-conflict success story. We want it to be part of your legacy. We want you to be able to look back and say, when I was there I helped Liberia to be a success, to come out of the ashes of war and to be a successful economy responding to the needs of its people. Thank you for being there for us.

President Bush. Madam President, thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:34 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Johnson Sirleaf referred to U.S. Ambassador to Liberia Donald E. Booth.

Directive on Public Health and Medical Preparedness

October 18, 2007

Homeland Security Presidential Directive/
HSPD-21

Subject: Public Health and Medical Preparedness

Purpose

(1) This directive establishes a National Strategy for Public Health and Medical Preparedness (Strategy), which builds upon principles set forth in *Biodefense for the 21st Century* (April 2004) and will transform our national approach to protecting the health of the American people against all disasters.

Definitions

(2) In this directive:

(a) The term “biosurveillance” means the process of active data-gathering with appropriate analysis and interpretation of biosphere data that might relate to disease activity and threats to human or animal health—whether infectious, toxic, metabolic, or otherwise, and regardless of intentional or natural origin—in order to achieve early warning of health threats, early detection of health events, and overall situational awareness of disease activity;

(b) The term “catastrophic health event” means any natural or manmade incident, including terrorism, that results in a number of ill or injured persons sufficient to overwhelm the capabilities of immediate local and regional emergency response and health care systems;

(c) The term “epidemiologic surveillance” means the process of actively gathering and analyzing data related to human health and disease in a population in order to obtain early warning of human health events, rapid characterization of human disease events, and overall situational awareness of disease activity in the human population;

(d) The term “medical” means the science and practice of maintenance of health and prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and alleviation of disease or injury and the provision of those services to individuals;

(e) The term “public health” means the science and practice of protecting and improving the overall health of the community through disease prevention and early diagnosis, control of communicable diseases, health education, injury prevention, sanitation, and protection from environmental hazards;

(f) The term “public health and medical preparedness” means the existence of plans, procedures, policies, training, and equipment necessary to maximize the ability to prevent, respond to, and recover from major events, including efforts that result in the capability to render an appropriate public health and medical response that will mitigate the effects of illness and injury, limit morbidity and mortality to the maximum extent possible, and sustain societal, economic, and political infrastructure; and

(g) The terms “State” and “local government,” when used in a geographical sense, have the meanings ascribed to such terms respectively in section 2 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101).

Background

(3) A catastrophic health event, such as a terrorist attack with a weapon of mass destruction (WMD), a naturally-occurring pandemic, or a calamitous meteorological or geological event, could cause tens or hundreds of thousands of casualties or more, weaken our economy, damage public morale and confidence, and threaten our national security. It is therefore critical that we establish a strategic vision that will enable a level of public health and medical preparedness sufficient to address a range of possible disasters.

(4) The United States has made significant progress in public health and medical preparedness since 2001, but we remain vulnerable to events that threaten the health of large populations. The attacks of September 11 and Hurricane Katrina were the most significant recent disasters faced by the United States, yet casualty numbers were small in comparison to the 1995 Kobe earthquake; the 2003 Bam, Iran, earthquake; the 2004 Sumatra tsunami; and what we would expect from a 1918-like influenza pandemic or large-scale WMD attack. Such events could

immediately overwhelm our public health and medical systems.

(5) This Strategy draws key principles from the *National Strategy for Homeland Security* (October 2007), the *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction* (December 2002), and *Biodefense for the 21st Century* (April 2004) that can be generally applied to public health and medical preparedness. Those key principles are the following: (1) preparedness for all potential catastrophic health events; (2) vertical and horizontal coordination across levels of government, jurisdictions, and disciplines; (3) a regional approach to health preparedness; (4) engagement of the private sector, academia, and other nongovernmental entities in preparedness and response efforts; and (5) the important roles of individuals, families, and communities.

(6) Present public health and medical preparedness plans incorporate the concept of “surging” existing medical and public health capabilities in response to an event that threatens a large number of lives. The assumption that conventional public health and medical systems can function effectively in catastrophic health events has, however, proved to be incorrect in real-world situations. Therefore, it is necessary to transform the national approach to health care in the context of a catastrophic health event in order to enable U.S. public health and medical systems to respond effectively to a broad range of incidents.

(7) The most effective complex service delivery systems result from rigorous end-to-end system design. A critical and formal process by which the functions of public health and medical preparedness and response are designed to integrate all vertical (through all levels of government) and horizontal (across all sectors in communities) components can achieve a much greater capability than we currently have.

(8) The United States has tremendous resources in both public and private sectors that could be used to prepare for and respond to a catastrophic health event. To exploit those resources fully, they must be organized in a rationally designed system that is incorporated into pre-event planning, deployed in a coordinated manner in response

to an event, and guided by a constant and timely flow of relevant information during an event. This Strategy establishes principles and objectives to improve our ability to respond comprehensively to catastrophic health events. It also identifies critical antecedent components of this capability and directs the development of an implementation plan that will delineate further specific actions and guide the process to fruition.

(9) This Strategy focuses on human public health and medical systems; it does not address other areas critical to overall public health and medical preparedness, such as animal health systems, food and agriculture defense, global partnerships in public health, health threat intelligence activities, domestic and international biosecurity, and basic and applied research in threat diseases and countermeasures. Efforts in those areas are addressed in other policy documents.

(10) It is not possible to prevent all casualties in catastrophic events, but strategic improvements in our Federal, State, and local planning can prepare our Nation to deliver appropriate care to the largest possible number of people, lessen the impact on limited health care resources, and support the continuity of society and government.

Policy

(11) It is the policy of the United States to plan and enable provision for the public health and medical needs of the American people in the case of a catastrophic health event through continual and timely flow of information during such an event and rapid public health and medical response that marshals all available national capabilities and capacities in a rapid and coordinated manner.

Implementation Actions

(12) *Biodefense for the 21st Century* provides a foundation for the transformation of our catastrophic health event response and preparedness efforts. Although the four pillars of that framework—Threat Awareness, Prevention and Protection, Surveillance and Detection, and Response and Recovery—were developed to guide our efforts to defend against a bioterrorist attack, they are applicable to a broad array of natural and man-made public health and medical challenges

and are appropriate to serve as the core functions of the Strategy for Public Health and Medical Preparedness.

(13) To accomplish our objectives, we must create a firm foundation for community medical preparedness. We will increase our efforts to inform citizens and empower communities, buttress our public health infrastructure, and explore options to relieve current pressures on our emergency departments and emergency medical systems so that they retain the flexibility to prepare for and respond to events.

(14) Ultimately, the Nation must collectively support and facilitate the establishment of a discipline of disaster health. The specialty of emergency medicine evolved as a result of the recognition of the special considerations in emergency patient care, and similarly the recognition of the unique principles in disaster-related public health and medicine merit the establishment of their own formal discipline. Such a discipline will provide a foundation for doctrine, education, training, and research and will integrate preparedness into the public health and medical communities.

Critical Components of Public Health and Medical Preparedness

(15) Currently, the four most critical components of public health and medical preparedness are biosurveillance, countermeasure distribution, mass casualty care, and community resilience. Although those capabilities do not address all public health and medical preparedness requirements, they currently hold the greatest potential for mitigating illness and death and therefore will receive the highest priority in our public health and medical preparedness efforts. Those capabilities constitute the focus and major objectives of this Strategy.

(16) *Biosurveillance:* The United States must develop a nationwide, robust, and integrated biosurveillance capability, with connections to international disease surveillance systems, in order to provide early warning and ongoing characterization of disease outbreaks in near real-time. Surveillance must use multiple modalities and an in-depth architecture. We must enhance clinician awareness and participation and strengthen

laboratory diagnostic capabilities and capacity in order to recognize potential threats as early as possible. Integration of biosurveillance elements and other data (including human health, animal health, agricultural, meteorological, environmental, intelligence, and other data) will provide a comprehensive picture of the health of communities and the associated threat environment for incorporation into the national "common operating picture." A central element of biosurveillance must be an epidemiologic surveillance system to monitor human disease activity across populations. That system must be sufficiently enabled to identify specific disease incidence and prevalence in heterogeneous populations and environments and must possess sufficient flexibility to tailor analyses to new syndromes and emerging diseases. State and local government health officials, public and private sector health care institutions, and practicing clinicians must be involved in system design, and the overall system must be constructed with the principal objective of establishing or enhancing the capabilities of State and local government entities.

(17) *Countermeasure Stockpiling and Distribution:* In the context of a catastrophic health event, rapid distribution of medical countermeasures (vaccines, drugs, and therapeutics) to a large population requires significant resources within individual communities. Few if any cities are presently able to meet the objective of dispensing countermeasures to their entire population within 48 hours after the decision to do so. Recognizing that State and local government authorities have the primary responsibility to protect their citizens, the Federal Government will create the appropriate framework and policies for sharing information on best practices and mechanisms to address the logistical challenges associated with this requirement. The Federal Government must work with nonfederal stakeholders to create effective templates for countermeasure distribution and dispensing that State and local government authorities can use to build their own capabilities.

(18) *Mass Casualty Care:* The structure and operating principles of our day-to-day public health and medical systems cannot meet the needs created by a catastrophic

health event. Collectively, our Nation must develop a disaster medical capability that can immediately re-orient and coordinate existing resources within all sectors to satisfy the needs of the population during a catastrophic health event. Mass casualty care response must be (1) rapid, (2) flexible, (3) scalable, (4) sustainable, (5) exhaustive (drawing upon all national resources), (6) comprehensive (addressing needs from acute to chronic care and including mental health and special needs populations), (7) integrated and coordinated, and (8) appropriate (delivering the correct treatment in the most ethical manner with available capabilities). We must enhance our capability to protect the physical and mental health of survivors; protect responders and health care providers; properly and respectfully dispose of the deceased; ensure continuity of society, economy, and government; and facilitate long-term recovery of affected citizens.

(19) The establishment of a robust disaster health capability requires us to develop an operational concept for the medical response to catastrophic health events that is substantively distinct from and broader than that which guides day-to-day operations. In order to achieve that transformation, the Federal Government will facilitate and provide leadership for key stakeholders to establish the following four foundational elements: Doctrine, System Design, Capacity, and Education and Training. The establishment of those foundational elements must result from efforts within the relevant professional communities and will require many years, but the Federal Government can serve as an important catalyst for this process.

(20) *Community Resilience*: The above components address the supply side of the preparedness function, ultimately providing enhanced services to our citizens. The demand side is of equal importance. Where local civic leaders, citizens, and families are educated regarding threats and are empowered to mitigate their own risk, where they are practiced in responding to events, where they have social networks to fall back upon, and where they have familiarity with local public health and medical systems, there will be community resilience that will significantly attenuate the requirement for addi-

tional assistance. The Federal Government must formulate a comprehensive plan for promoting community public health and medical preparedness to assist State and local authorities in building resilient communities in the face of potential catastrophic health events.

Biosurveillance

(21) The Secretary of Health and Human Services shall establish an operational national epidemiologic surveillance system for human health, with international connectivity where appropriate, that is predicated on State, regional, and community-level capabilities and creates a networked system to allow for two-way information flow between and among Federal, State, and local government public health authorities and clinical health care providers. The system shall build upon existing Federal, State, and local surveillance systems where they exist and shall enable and provide incentive for public health agencies to implement local surveillance systems where they do not exist. To the extent feasible, the system shall be built using electronic health information systems. It shall incorporate flexibility and depth of data necessary to respond to previously unknown or emerging threats to public health and integrate its data into the national biosurveillance common operating picture as appropriate. The system shall protect patient privacy by restricting access to identifying information to the greatest extent possible and only to public health officials with a need to know. The Implementation Plan to be developed pursuant to section 43 of this directive shall specify milestones for this system.

(22) Within 180 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security, shall establish an Epidemiologic Surveillance Federal Advisory Committee, including representatives from State and local government public health authorities and appropriate private sector health care entities, in order to ensure that the Federal Government is meeting the goal of enabling State and local government public health surveillance capabilities.

Countermeasure Stockpiling and Distribution

(23) In accordance with the schedule set forth below, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretary of Homeland Security, shall develop templates, using a variety of tools and including private sector resources when necessary, that provide minimum operational plans to enable communities to distribute and dispense countermeasures to their populations within 48 hours after a decision to do so. The Secretary of Health and Human Services shall ensure that this process utilizes current cooperative programs and engages Federal, State, local government, and private sector entities in template development, modeling, testing, and evaluation. The Secretary shall also assist State, local government, and regional entities in tailoring templates to fit differing geographic sizes, population densities, and demographics, and other unique or specific local needs. In carrying out such actions, the Secretary shall:

(a) within 270 days after the date of this directive, (i) publish an initial template or templates meeting the requirements above, including basic testing of component distribution mechanisms and modeling of template systems to predict performance in large-scale implementation, (ii) establish standards and performance measures for State and local government countermeasure distribution systems, including demonstration of specific capabilities in tactical exercises in accordance with the National Exercise Program, and (iii) establish a process to gather performance data from State and local participants on a regular basis to assess readiness; and

(b) within 180 days after the completion of the tasks set forth in (a), and with appropriate notice, commence collecting and using performance data and metrics as conditions for future public health preparedness grant funding.

(24) Within 270 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security and the Attorney General, shall develop Federal Government capabilities and plans to complement or sup-

plement State and local government distribution capacity, as appropriate and feasible, if such entities' resources are deemed insufficient to provide access to countermeasures in a timely manner in the event of a catastrophic health event.

(25) The Secretary of Health and Human Services shall ensure that the priority-setting process for the acquisition of medical countermeasures and other critical medical materiel for the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) is transparent and risk-informed with respect to the scope, quantities, and forms of the various products. Within 180 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Homeland Security, and Veterans Affairs, shall establish a formal mechanism for the annual review of SNS composition and development of recommendations that utilizes input from accepted national risk assessments and threat assessments, national planning scenarios, national modeling resources, and subject matter experts. The results of each such annual review shall be provided to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget and the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism at the time of the Department of Health and Human Services' next budget submission.

(26) Within 90 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall establish a process to share relevant information regarding the contents of the SNS with Federal, State, and local government health officers with appropriate clearances and a need to know.

(27) Within 180 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of State, Defense, Agriculture, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security, shall develop protocols for sharing countermeasures and medical goods between the SNS and other Federal stockpiles and shall explore appropriate reciprocal arrangements with foreign and international stockpiles of medical countermeasures to ensure the availability of necessary supplies for use in the United States.

Mass Casualty Care

(28) The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security, shall directly engage relevant State and local government, academic, professional, and private sector entities and experts to provide feedback on the review of the National Disaster Medical System and national medical surge capacity required by the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act (PAHPA) (Public Law 109–417). Within 270 days after the completion of such review, the Secretary shall identify, through a systems-based approach involving expertise from such entities and experts, high-priority gaps in mass casualty care capabilities, and shall submit to the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism a concept plan that identifies and coordinates all Federal, State, and local government and private sector public health and medical disaster response resources, and identifies options for addressing critical deficits, in order to achieve the system attributes described in this Strategy.

(29) Within 180 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security, shall:

(a) build upon the analysis of Federal facility use to provide enhanced medical surge capacity in disasters required by section 302 of PAHPA to analyze the use of Federal medical facilities as a foundational element of public health and medical preparedness; and

(b) develop and implement plans and enter into agreements to integrate such facilities more effectively into national and regional education, training, and exercise preparedness activities.

(30) The Secretary of Health and Human Services shall lead an interagency process, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security and the Attorney General, to identify any legal, regulatory, or other barriers to public health and medical preparedness and response from Federal, State, or local government or private sector sources that can be eliminated by appropriate regulatory or legislative action and

shall, within 120 days after the date of this directive, submit a report on such barriers to the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism.

(31) The impact of the “worried well” in past disasters is well documented, and it is evident that mitigating the mental health consequences of disasters can facilitate effective response. Recognizing that maintaining and restoring mental health in disasters has not received sufficient attention to date, within 180 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security, shall establish a Federal Advisory Committee for Disaster Mental Health. The committee shall consist of appropriate subject matter experts and, within 180 days after its establishment, shall submit to the Secretary of Health and Human Services recommendations for protecting, preserving, and restoring individual and community mental health in catastrophic health event settings, including pre-event, intra-event, and post-event education, messaging, and interventions.

Community Resilience

(32) The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security, shall ensure that core public health and medical curricula and training developed pursuant to PAHPA address the needs to improve individual, family, and institutional public health and medical preparedness, enhance private citizen opportunities for contributions to local, regional, and national preparedness and response, and build resilient communities.

(33) Within 270 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Commerce, Labor, Education, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security and the Attorney General, shall submit to the President for approval, through the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, a plan to promote comprehensive community medical preparedness.

Risk Awareness

(34) The Secretary of Homeland Security, in coordination with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, shall prepare an unclassified briefing for non-health professionals that clearly outlines the scope of the risks to public health posed by relevant threats and catastrophic health events (including attacks involving weapons of mass destruction), shall coordinate such briefing with the heads of other relevant executive departments and agencies, shall ensure that full use is made of Department of Defense expertise and resources, and shall ensure that all State governors and the mayors and senior county officials from the 50 largest metropolitan statistical areas in the United States receive such briefing, unless specifically declined, within 150 days after the date of this directive.

(35) Within 180 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Homeland Security, in coordination with the Attorney General, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, and the Director of National Intelligence, shall establish a mechanism by which up-to-date and specific public health threat information shall be relayed, to the greatest extent possible and not inconsistent with the established guidance relating to the Information Sharing Environment, to relevant public health officials at the State and local government levels and shall initiate a process to ensure that qualified heads of State and local government entities have the opportunity to obtain appropriate security clearances so that they may receive classified threat information when applicable.

Education and Training

(36) Within 180 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretary of Homeland Security, shall develop and thereafter maintain processes for coordinating Federal grant programs for public health and medical preparedness using grant application guidance, investment justifications, reporting, program performance measures, and accountability for future funding in order to promote cross-sector, regional, and capability-based coordination, consistent with section 201 of PAHPA and

the National Preparedness Guidelines developed pursuant to Homeland Security Presidential Directive-8 of December 17, 2003 ("National Preparedness").

(37) Within 1 year after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Transportation, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security, and consistent with section 304 of PAHPA, shall develop a mechanism to coordinate public health and medical disaster preparedness and response core curricula and training across executive departments and agencies, to ensure standardization and commonality of knowledge, procedures, and terms of reference within the Federal Government that also can be communicated to State and local government entities, as well as academia and the private sector.

(38) Within 1 year after the date of this directive, the Secretaries of Health and Human Services and Defense, in coordination with the Secretaries of Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security, shall establish an academic Joint Program for Disaster Medicine and Public Health housed at a National Center for Disaster Medicine and Public Health at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. The Program shall lead Federal efforts to develop and propagate core curricula, training, and research related to medicine and public health in disasters. The Center will be an academic center of excellence in disaster medicine and public health, co-locating education and research in the related specialties of domestic medical preparedness and response, international health, international disaster and humanitarian medical assistance, and military medicine. Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Defense authorities will be used to carry out respective civilian and military missions within this joint program.

Disaster Health System

(39) Within 180 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall commission the Institute of Medicine to lead a forum engaging Federal, State, and local governments, the private sector, academia, and appropriate

professional societies in a process to facilitate the development of national disaster public health and medicine doctrine and system design and to develop a strategy for long-term enhancement of disaster public health and medical capacity and the propagation of disaster public health and medicine education and training.

(40) Within 120 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall submit to the President through the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, and shall commence the implementation of, a plan to use current grant funding programs, private payer incentives, market forces, Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services requirements, and other means to create financial incentives to enhance private sector health care facility preparedness in such a manner as to not increase health care costs.

(41) Within 180 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of Transportation and Homeland Security, shall establish within the Department of Health and Human Services an Office for Emergency Medical Care. Under the direction of the Secretary, such Office shall lead an enterprise to promote and fund research in emergency medicine and trauma health care; promote regional partnerships and more effective emergency medical systems in order to enhance appropriate triage, distribution, and care of routine community patients; promote local, regional, and State emergency medical systems' preparedness for and response to public health events. The Office shall address the full spectrum of issues that have an impact on care in hospital emergency departments, including the entire continuum of patient care from pre-hospital to disposition from emergency or trauma care. The Office shall coordinate with existing executive departments and agencies that perform functions relating to emergency medical systems in order to ensure unified strategy, policy, and implementation.

National Health Security Strategy

(42) The PAHPA requires that the Secretary of Health and Human Services submit

in 2009, and quadrennially afterward, a National Health Security Strategy (NHSS) to the Congress. The principles and actions in this directive, and in the Implementation Plan required by section 43, shall be incorporated into the initial NHSS, as appropriate, and shall serve as a foundation for the preparedness goals contained therein.

Task Force and Implementation Plan

(43) In order to facilitate the implementation of the policy outlined in this Strategy, there is established the Public Health and Medical Preparedness Task Force (Task Force). Within 120 days after the date of this directive, the Task Force shall submit to the President for approval, through the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, an Implementation Plan (Plan) for this Strategy, and annually thereafter shall submit to the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism a status report on the implementation of the Plan and any recommendations for changes to this Strategy.

(a) The Task Force shall consist exclusively of the following members (or their designees who shall be full-time officers or employees of the members' respective agencies):

- (i) The Secretary of Health and Human Services, who shall serve as Chair;
- (ii) The Secretary of State;
- (ii) The Secretary of Defense;
- (iii) The Attorney General;
- (iv) The Secretary of Agriculture;
- (v) The Secretary of Commerce;
- (vi) The Secretary of Labor;
- (vii) The Secretary of Transportation;
- (viii) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs;
- (ix) The Secretary of Homeland Security;
- (x) The Director of the Office of Management and Budget;
- (xi) The Director of National Intelligence; and
- (xii) such other officers of the United States as the Chair of the Task Force may designate from time to time.

(b) The Chair of the Task Force shall, as appropriate to deal with particular subject matters, establish subcommittees of the Task Force that shall consist exclusively of members of the Task Force (or their designees under subsection (a) of this section), and

such other full-time or permanent part-time officers or employees of the Federal Government as the Chair may designate.

(c) The Plan shall:

- (i) provide additional detailed roles and responsibilities of heads of executive departments and agencies relating to and consistent with the Strategy and actions set forth in this directive;
- (ii) provide additional guidance on public health and medical directives in *Bio-defense for the 21st Century*; and
- (iii) direct the full examination of resource requirements.

(d) The Plan and all Task Force reports shall be developed in coordination with the Biodefense Policy Coordination Committee of the Homeland Security Council and shall then be prepared for consideration by and submitted to the more senior committees of the Homeland Security Council, as deemed appropriate by the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism.

General Provisions

(44) This directive:

(a) shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and the authorities of executive departments and agencies, or heads of such departments and agencies, vested by law, and subject to the availability of appropriations and within the current projected spending levels for Federal health entitlement programs;

(b) shall not be construed to impair or otherwise affect the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budget, administrative, and legislative proposals; and

(c) is not intended, and does not, create any rights or benefits, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this directive.

Presidential Determination With Respect to Foreign Governments' Efforts Regarding Trafficking in Persons

October 18, 2007

Presidential Determination No. 2008–4

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Presidential Determination with Respect to Foreign Governments' Efforts Regarding Trafficking in Persons

Consistent with section 110 of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (Division A of Public Law 106–386), as amended, (the “Act”), I hereby:

Make the determination provided in section 110(d)(1)(A)(i) of the Act, with respect to Burma, Syria, and Venezuela not to provide certain funding for those countries' governments for Fiscal Year 2008, until such government complies with the minimum standards or makes significant efforts to bring itself into compliance, as may be determined by the Secretary of State in a report to the Congress pursuant to section 110(b) of the Act;

Make the determination provided in section 110(d)(1)(A)(ii) of the Act, with respect to Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and Iran not to provide certain funding for those countries' governments for Fiscal Year 2008, until such government complies with the minimum standards or makes significant efforts to bring itself into compliance, as may be determined by the Secretary of State in a report to the Congress pursuant to section 110(b) of the Act;

Make the determination provided in section 110(d)(3) of the Act, concerning the determination of the Secretary of State with respect to Equatorial Guinea and Kuwait.

Determine, consistent with section 110(d)(4) of the Act, with respect to Algeria, that provision to Algeria of all programs, projects, or activities of assistance described in sections 110(d)(1)(A)(i) and 110(d)(1)(B) of the Act would promote the purposes of the Act or is otherwise in the national interest of the United States;

Determine, consistent with section 110(d)(4) of the Act, with respect to Bahrain, that provision to Bahrain of all programs, projects, or activities of assistance described in sections 110(d)(1)(A)(i) and 110(d)(1)(B) of the Act would promote the purposes of the Act or is otherwise in the national interest of the United States;

Determine, consistent with section 110(d)(4) of the Act, with respect to DPRK, that funding for educational and cultural exchange programs described in section 110(d)(1)(A)(ii) of the Act that are aimed at improving U.S.-DPRK relations would promote the purposes of the Act or is otherwise in the national interest of the United States;

Determine, consistent with section 110(d)(4) of the Act, with respect to Iran, that funding for educational and cultural exchange programs described in section 110(d)(1)(A)(ii) of the Act that include educators and municipal leaders would promote the purposes of the Act or is otherwise in the national interest of the United States;

Determine, consistent with section 110(d)(4) of the Act, with respect to Malaysia, that provision to Malaysia of all programs, projects, or activities of assistance described in sections 110(d)(1)(A)(i) and 110(d)(1)(B) of the Act would promote the purposes of the Act or is otherwise in the national interest of the United States;

Determine, consistent with section 110(d)(4) of the Act, with respect to Oman, that provision to Oman of all programs, projects, or activities of assistance described in sections 110(d)(1)(A)(i) and 110(d)(1)(B) of the Act would promote the purposes of the Act or is otherwise in the national interest of the United States;

Determine, consistent with section 110(d)(4) of the Act, with respect to Qatar, that provision to Qatar of all programs, projects, or activities of assistance described in sections 110(d)(1)(A)(i) and 110(d)(1)(B) of the Act would promote the purposes of the Act or is otherwise in the national interest of the United States;

Determine, consistent with section 110(d)(4) of the Act, with respect to Saudi Arabia, that provision to Saudi Arabia of all programs, projects, or activities of assistance described in sections 110(d)(1)(A)(i) and

110(d)(1)(B) of the Act would promote the purposes of the Act or is otherwise in the national interest of the United States;

Determine, consistent with section 110(d)(4) of the Act, with respect to Sudan, that provision to Sudan of all programs, projects, or activities of assistance described in sections 110(d)(1)(A)(i) and 110(d)(1)(B) of the Act would promote the purposes of the Act or is otherwise in the national interest of the United States;

Determine, consistent with section 110(d)(4) of the Act, with respect to Syria, for all programs, projects, or activities of assistance for victims of trafficking in persons or to combat such trafficking, that provision to Syria of the assistance described in section 110(d)(1)(A)(i) of the Act for such programs, projects, or activities would promote the purposes of the Act or is otherwise in the national interest of the United States;

Determine, consistent with section 110(d)(4) of the Act, with respect to Uzbekistan, that provision to Uzbekistan of all programs, projects, or activities of assistance described in sections 110(d)(1)(A)(i) and 110(d)(1)(B) of the Act would promote the purposes of the Act or is otherwise in the national interest of the United States;

Determine, consistent with section 110(d)(4) of the Act, with respect to Venezuela, for all programs, projects, or activities of assistance for victims of trafficking in persons or to combat such trafficking, or for strengthening democracy or good governance, or for public diplomacy, that provision to Venezuela of the assistance described in sections 110(d)(1)(A)(i) and 110(d)(1)(B) of the Act for such programs, projects, or activities would promote the purposes of the Act or is otherwise in the national interest of the United States;

Determine, consistent with section 110(d)(4) of the Act, that assistance to Venezuela described in section 110(d)(1)(B) of the Act that:

- (1) is a regional program, project, or activity under which the total benefit to Venezuela does not exceed 10 percent of the total value of such program, project, or activity; or

- (2) has as its primary objective the addressing of basic human needs, as defined by the Department of the Treasury with respect to other, existing legislative mandates concerning U.S. participation in the multilateral development banks; or
- (3) is complementary to or has similar policy objectives to programs being implemented bilaterally by the United States Government; or
- (4) has as its primary objective the improvement of the country's legal system, including in areas that impact the country's ability to investigate and prosecute trafficking cases or otherwise improve implementation of a country's anti-trafficking policy, regulations, or legislation; or
- (5) is engaging a government, international organization, or civil society organization, and that seeks as its primary objective(s) to: (a) increase efforts to investigate and prosecute trafficking in persons crimes; (b) increase protection for victims of trafficking through better screening, identification, rescue/removal, aftercare (shelter, counseling) training and reintegration; or (c) expand prevention efforts through education and awareness campaigns highlighting the dangers of trafficking or training and economic empowerment of populations clearly at risk of falling victim to trafficking would promote the purposes of the Act or is otherwise in the national interest of the United States.

The certification required by section 110(e) of the Act is provided herewith.

You are hereby authorized and directed to submit this determination to the Congress, and to publish it in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

Notice—Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Significant Narcotics Traffickers Centered in Colombia

October 18, 2007

On October 21, 1995, by Executive Order 12978, the President declared a national emergency pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701–1706) to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States constituted by the actions of significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia, and the extreme level of violence, corruption, and harm such actions cause in the United States and abroad.

The order blocks all property and interests in property that are in the United States, or within the possession or control of United States persons, of foreign persons listed in an annex to the order, as well as of foreign persons determined to play a significant role in international narcotics trafficking centered in Colombia. The order similarly blocks all property and interests in property of foreign persons determined to materially assist in, or provide financial or technological support for or goods or services in support of, the narcotics trafficking activities of persons designated in or pursuant to the order. In addition, the order blocks all property and interests in property of persons determined to be owned or controlled by, or to act for or on behalf of, persons designated in or pursuant to the order.

The order also prohibits any transaction or dealing by United States persons or within the United States in property or interests in property of the persons designated in or pursuant to the order.

Because the actions of significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia continue to threaten the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States and to cause an extreme level of violence, corruption, and harm in the United States and abroad, the national emergency declared on October 21, 1995, and the measures adopted pursuant thereto to deal with that emergency, must continue in effect beyond October 21, 2007. Therefore, in accordance with

section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency with respect to significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia. This notice shall be published in the *Federal Register* and transmitted to the Congress.

George W. Bush

The White House,
October 18, 2007.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register,
12:42 p.m., October 18, 2007]

NOTE: This notice was published in the *Federal Register* on October 19.

**Message to the Congress on
Continuation of the National
Emergency With Respect to
Significant Narcotics Traffickers
Centered in Colombia**

October 18, 2007

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1622(d), provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the emergency declared with respect to significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia is to continue in effect beyond October 21, 2007.

The circumstances that led to the declaration on October 21, 1995, of a national emergency have not been resolved. The actions of significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States and to cause unparalleled violence, corruption, and harm in the United States and abroad. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to maintain economic pressure on significant narcotics traf-

fickers centered in Colombia by blocking their property and interests in property that are in the United States or within the possession or control of United States persons and by depriving them of access to the U.S. market and financial system.

George W. Bush

The White House,
October 18, 2007.

**Executive Order 13448—Blocking
Property and Prohibiting Certain
Transactions Related to Burma**

October 18, 2007

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) (IEEPA), the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*), the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 (Public Law 108–61, as amended, 50 U.S.C. 1701 note), and section 301 of title 3, United States Code, and in order to take additional steps with respect to the Government of Burma's continued repression of the democratic opposition in Burma,

I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, hereby expand the scope of the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13047 of May 20, 1997, and relied upon for additional steps taken in Executive Order 13310 of July 28, 2003, finding that the Government of Burma's continued repression of the democratic opposition in Burma, manifested most recently in the violent response to peaceful demonstrations, the commission of human rights abuses related to political repression, and engagement in public corruption, including by diverting or misusing Burmese public assets or by misusing public authority, constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States, and I hereby order:

Section 1. Except to the extent provided in section 203(b)(1), (3), and (4) of IEEPA (50 U.S.C. 1702(b)(1), (3), and (4)), the

Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000 (title IX, Public Law 106-387), or regulations, orders, directives, or licenses that may be issued pursuant to this order, and notwithstanding any contract entered into or any license or permit granted prior to the effective date of this order, all property and interests in property of the following persons that are in the United States, that hereafter come within the United States, or that are or hereafter come within the possession or control of United States persons, including their overseas branches, are blocked and may not be transferred, paid, exported, withdrawn, or otherwise dealt in:

- (a) the persons listed in the Annex attached and made a part of this order; and
- (b) any person determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, after consultation with the Secretary of State:
 - (i) to be a senior official of the Government of Burma, the State Peace and Development Council of Burma, the Union Solidarity and Development Association of Burma, or any successor entity to any of the foregoing;
 - (ii) to be responsible for, or to have participated in, human rights abuses related to political repression in Burma;
 - (iii) to be engaged, or to have engaged, in activities facilitating public corruption by senior officials of the Government of Burma;
 - (iv) to have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, logistical, or technical support for, or goods or services in support of, the Government of Burma, the State Peace and Development Council of Burma, the Union Solidarity and Development Association of Burma, any successor entity to any of the foregoing, any senior official of any of the foregoing, or any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to Executive Order 13310 or section 1(b)(i)-(v) of this order;
 - (v) to be owned or controlled by, or to have acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to

Executive Order 13310 or section 1(b)(i)-(v) of this order; or

- (vi) to be a spouse or dependent child of any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to this order or Executive Order 13310.

Sec. 2. (a) Any transaction by a United States person or within the United States that evades or avoids, has the purpose of evading or avoiding, or attempts to violate any of the prohibitions set forth in this order is prohibited.

(b) Any conspiracy formed to violate any of the prohibitions set forth in this order is prohibited.

Sec. 3. For purposes of this order:

- (a) the term “person” means an individual or entity;
- (b) the term “entity” means a partnership, association, trust, joint venture, corporation, group, subgroup, or other organization;
- (c) the term “United States person” means any United States citizen, permanent resident alien, entity organized under the laws of the United States or any jurisdiction within the United States (including foreign branches), or any person in the United States; and
- (d) the term “Government of Burma” means the Government of Burma (sometimes referred to as Myanmar), its agencies, instrumentalities and controlled entities, and the Central Bank of Burma.

Sec. 4. I hereby determine that the making of donations of the type specified in section 203(b)(2) of IEEPA (50 U.S.C. 1702(b)(2)) by, to, or for the benefit of, persons whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to section 1 of this order would seriously impair my ability to deal with the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13047, and relied upon for additional steps taken in Executive Order 13310, and expanded in this order, and hereby prohibit such donations as provided by section 1 of this order.

Sec. 5. For those persons whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to section 1 of this order who might have a constitutional presence in the United States, I find that because of the ability to

transfer funds or other assets instantaneously, prior notice to such persons of measures to be taken pursuant to this order would render these measures ineffectual. I therefore determine that for these measures to be effective in addressing the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13047, and relied upon for additional steps taken in Executive Order 13310, and expanded in this order, there need be no prior notice of a listing or determination made pursuant to this order.

Sec. 6. The Secretary of the Treasury, after consultation with the Secretary of State, is hereby authorized to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA and section 4 of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this order. The Secretary of the Treasury may redelegate any of these functions to other officers and agencies of the United States Government consistent with applicable law. All agencies of the United States Government are hereby directed to take all appropriate measures within their authority to carry out the provisions of this order.

Sec. 7. The Secretary of the Treasury, after consultation with the Secretary of State, is authorized to determine, subsequent to the effective date of this order, that circumstances no longer warrant inclusion of a person in the Annex to this order and that the property and interests in property of that person are therefore no longer blocked pursuant to section 1 of this order.

Sec. 8. Nothing in this order is intended to affect the continued effectiveness of any rules, regulations, orders, licenses, or other forms of administrative action issued, taken, or continued in effect heretofore or hereafter under 31 C.F.R. chapter V, except as expressly terminated, modified, or suspended by or pursuant to this order.

Sec. 9. This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities, or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

Sec. 10. This order is effective at 12:01 a.m. eastern daylight time on October 19, 2007.

George W. Bush

The White House,
October 18, 2007.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:14 a.m., October 22, 2007]

NOTE: This Executive order was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 19, and it and its attached annex will be published in the *Federal Register* on October 23.

Message to the Congress Reporting on Blocking Property and Prohibiting Certain Transactions Related to Burma

October 18, 2007

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) (IEEPA), I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order (the "Order") that expands the scope of the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13047 of May 20, 1997, and takes additional steps with respect to that national emergency.

In 1997, the United States put in place a prohibition on new investment in Burma in response to the Government of Burma's large-scale repression of the democratic opposition in that country. On July 28, 2003, those sanctions were expanded by steps taken in Executive Order 13310, which contained prohibitions implementing sections 3 and 4 of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 (Public Law 108-61) and supplemented that Act with additional restrictions. I have now determined that the Government of Burma's continued repression of the democratic opposition in Burma, manifested most recently in the violent response to peaceful demonstrations, the commission of human rights abuses related to political repression, and engagement in public corruption, including by diverting or misusing Burmese public assets or by misusing public authority, warrant an expansion of the existing sanctions.

The order incorporates existing designation criteria set forth in Executive Order 13310, authorizing the Secretary of the Treasury, after consultation with the Secretary of State, to designate any person determined to be a senior official of the Government of Burma, the State Peace and Development Council of Burma, the Union Solidarity and Development Association of Burma, or any successor entity to any of the foregoing. The order blocks the property and interests in property in the United States of persons listed in the Annex to the order and provides additional criteria for designations of persons determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, after consultation with the Secretary of State, to be responsible for, or to have participated in, human rights abuses related to political repression in Burma; to be engaged, or to have engaged, in activities facilitating public corruption by senior officials of the Government of Burma; to have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, logistical, or technical support for, or goods or services in support of, the Government of Burma, the State Peace and Development Council of Burma, the Union Solidarity and Development Association of Burma, any successor entity to any of the foregoing, any senior official of any of the foregoing, or any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to Executive Order 13310 or section 1(b)(i)-(v) of the order; to be owned or controlled by, or to have acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to Executive Order 13310 or section 1(b)(i)-(v) of the order; or to be a spouse or dependent child of any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order or Executive Order 13310.

The order leaves in place the existing prohibitions on new investment, the exportation or reexportation to Burma of financial services, and the importation of any article that is a product of Burma, which were put into effect in Executive Order 13047 and Executive Order 13310.

I delegated to the Secretary of the Treasury, after consultation with the Secretary of State, the authority to take such actions, in-

cluding the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA and section 4 of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of the order.

I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order I have issued.

George W. Bush

The White House,
October 18, 2007.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 19.

Remarks on the Situation in Burma

October 19, 2007

Laura, thank you for joining—and Madam Secretary. In the last few weeks, the world has been inspired by the courage of the Burmese people. Ordinary men and women have taken to the streets in peaceful marches to demand their freedom and call for democratic change. The world has also been horrified by the response of Burma's military junta. Monks have been beaten and killed. Thousands of prodemocracy protesters have been arrested. And Burma's dictator, Than Shwe, continues to hold captive the leader of Burma's largest democratic party, Aung San Suu Kyi.

Burma's rulers continue to defy the world's just demands to stop their vicious persecution. They continue to dismiss calls to begin peaceful dialog aimed at national reconciliation. Most of all, they continue to reject the clear will of the Burmese people to live in freedom under leaders of their own choosing.

Last month, the United States tightened economic sanctions on the leaders of Burma's regime and imposed an expanded visa ban on those responsible for the most egregious violations of human rights, as well as their family members. The Treasury Department designated 14 top leaders of the Burmese regime for sanctions, including Than Shwe and his deputy, Vice Senior General Maung Aye. And the State Department added 260 names of Burmese officials and their family members to the visa ban list.

In light of the ongoing atrocities by these men and their associates, the United States has today imposed additional sanctions.

First, the Treasury Department has designated 11 more leaders of the Burmese junta for sanctions under existing authorities.

Second, I've issued a new Executive order that designates an additional 12 individuals and entities for sanctions. This Executive order grants the Treasury Department expanded authority to designate for sanctions individuals responsible for human rights abuses, as well as public corruption, and those who provide material and financial backing to these individuals or to the Government of Burma.

Third, I have instructed our Commerce Department to tighten its export control regulations for Burma.

Burmese authorities claim they desire reconciliation. Well, they need to match those words with actions. A good way to start would be to provide the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations access to political prisoners; to allow Aung San Suu Kyi and other detained leaders to communicate with one another; and to permit Special Envoy Gambari to enter their country immediately. And ultimately, reconciliation requires that Burmese authorities release all political prisoners and begin negotiations with the democratic opposition under the auspices of the United Nations.

We will continue to review our policies and consider additional measures if Burma's leaders do not end the brutal repression of their own people whose only offense is the desire to live in freedom. Business as usual is unacceptable. So I applaud the efforts of the European Union and nations like Australia that have announced targeted sanctions on the Burmese regime. I commend nations such as Japan that have curtailed their assistance to Burma in response to the atrocities. I appreciate nations such as Singapore and the Philippines and Indonesia, who have spoken out against the atrocities. I ask other countries to review their own laws and policies, especially Burma's closest neighbors—China, India, and others in the region.

The people of Burma are showing great courage in the face of immense repression.

They are appealing for our help. We must not turn a deaf ear to their cries. They do have many friends around the world, including Laura. I am proud of Laura for all she has done to awaken the conscience of the world to the plight of the Burmese people. I believe no nation can forever suppress its own people. And we are confident that the day is coming when freedom's tide will reach the shores of Burma.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:47 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to First Lady Laura Bush; Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice; and United Nations Special Envoy for Myanmar Ibrahim Gambari. The President also referred to Executive Order 13448.

Statement on the Resignation of Mel R. Martinez as Chairman of the Republican National Committee *October 19, 2007*

Mel Martinez has served his party with the same distinction he serves his country. When Mel accepted the position as general chairman of the Republican National Committee, his goal was to ensure our party had the structure and resources in place for all Republican candidates in the 2008 elections to be successful. He has more than fulfilled that mission.

As general chairman of the Republican National Committee, Mel has effectively communicated our party's commitment to addressing the issues most important to all Americans. His message of hope and opportunity has resonated throughout America and strengthened support for our agenda. Because of his leadership, more Americans understand the Republican Party's efforts to grow our economy, support our troops, strengthen our schools, and protect our country.

As his tenure at the RNC ends, Mel should be proud that he has represented the best of the Republican Party and its core values. I am grateful for his leadership at the RNC, his service in my Cabinet, and his continued service as a Member of the United States Senate.

Mike Duncan has demonstrated that he is an effective chairman who will help our party win in the next election. I have confidence in Mike's leadership and look forward to continuing to work with him.

Presidential Determination Relating to Assistance for Saudi Arabia

October 19, 2007

Presidential Determination No. 2008-5

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Presidential Determination Relating to Assistance for Saudi Arabia

Pursuant to the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 582 of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2006 (Public Law 109-102), and that section as carried forward by the Revised Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2007 (Public Law 110-5), and the Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2008 (Public Law 110-92), I hereby certify that Saudi Arabia is cooperating with efforts to combat international terrorism and that the proposed assistance will help facilitate that effort, and hereby waive the application of such sections.

You are authorized and directed to report this certification to the Congress and publish it in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

The President's Radio Address

October 19, 2007

Good morning. This weekend I will join millions of Americans in one of our favorite national pastimes, fishing. I'm going to be on the Chesapeake Bay. For those who love fishing, the most important thing is not the size of your catch, but the enjoyment of the great outdoors. Every year, millions of Americans grab their tackle boxes and head out to their favorite fishing holes. No matter where they drop their lines, they build memories that last a lifetime. And in the

process, they contribute billions of dollars to our economy.

My administration is committed to protecting the environment that our sportsmen depend on. We believe that to meet the environmental challenges of the 21st century, we must bring together conservationists, fishermen, sportsmen, local leaders, and Federal, State, and tribal officials in a spirit of cooperation. I call this "cooperative conservation." Instead of the old environmental debates that pit one group against another, we're moving our country toward a system where citizens and government can come together to achieve meaningful results for our environment.

One way we are practicing cooperative conservation is through our efforts to preserve our fisheries. Almost 3 years ago, I announced an ocean action plan to promote an ethic of responsible stewardship that will make our waterways cleaner, healthier, and more productive. Last year, I was proud to establish a marine conservation area in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. This is the single largest conservation area in the history of our Nation and the largest protected marine area in the world. We're also working to clean up marine debris and to address harmful fishing practices in international waters that destroy corals and other vital habitats. Earlier this year, I signed a law that will help end overfishing and create market-based regulations to replenish our fish stocks so we can keep them strong for generations to come.

Prior to my fishing trip, I am signing an Executive order that will preserve two of our Nation's most popular recreational fish, striped bass and red drum. These two species were once abundant in American waters, but their stocks have been overfished. The Executive order I sign will protect striped bass and red drum caught in Federal waters by moving to prohibit their commercial sale. It will promote more accurate scientific records about fish population levels. And it will help the Federal Government work with State and local officials to find innovative ways to ensure these two species are conserved for future generations.

As we work to protect our Nation's fisheries, we're also working to help migratory

birds thrive. Each year, more than 800 species of birds make their way south for the winter and then return home to their breeding grounds the following spring. Their ability to survive these long journeys depends on stopover habitat. Unfortunately, some of the areas where birds once stopped and rested on their great migrations have been lost to development. So we're working to protect these species by restoring or replacing their stopover habitats.

One key way we're doing this is by expanding our national wildlife refuges, creating new ones, and restoring and improving hundreds of thousands of acres of habitat for migratory birds. At the same time, we're bringing together Federal, State, and tribal agencies to work with private groups and corporations to improve habitat on private lands. The Department of the Interior is also working with cities across our Nation to build stopover habitats in urban areas. And this weekend, I'm announcing new policies, including new efforts with Mexico, to foster greater habitat conservation for the migratory birds.

America's national parks also play a vital role in our conservation efforts. Earlier this week, Laura spoke at the first-ever leadership summit of the National Park Foundation. She discussed the National Parks Centennial Initiative, a public-private partnership to raise funds for the Park System's 100th anniversary in 2016. This initiative will support many vital projects to improve habitats for local wildlife, including some that will directly benefit birds.

As Americans, we've been given a beautiful country to live in, and we have an obligation to be good stewards of the environment. With the cooperative conservation policies we have put in place, we show our commitment to preserving our Nation's heritage. By making responsible choices today, we will ensure that our children and grandchildren will enjoy a cleaner and more vibrant environment.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on October 19 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on October 20. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 19. The Office

of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

October 13

In the morning, at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, the President had an intelligence briefing.

October 15

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Bentonville, AR, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer, Caroline Worley. He then traveled to Rogers, AR, where he toured Stribling Packaging, Inc.

Later in the morning, at the Whole Hog Cafe, the President had lunch with business and civic leaders.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Memphis, TN, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Chi Zhang. Then, at a private residence, he attended a Lamar Alexander for Senate and Tennessee Victory reception. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

October 16

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Residence, the President met with Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Nambaryn Enkhbayar of Mongolia to the White House on October 22.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Giorgio Napolitano of Italy to the White House on December 11.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Romano Prodi of Italy to the White House on February 4, 2008.

October 17

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

October 18

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced his intention to nominate Allan I. Mendelowitz to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Federal Housing Finance Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate the following individuals to be members of the Broadcasting Board of Governors: Joaquin F. Blaya; Edward E. Kaufman; Susan M. McCue; Dennis M. Mulhaupt; and Steven J. Simmons.

The President announced his intention to designate Paul A. Schneider as Acting Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security.

October 19

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had breakfast with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Nicolas Sarkozy of France to Washington, DC, on November 6–7.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted October 16

Gus P. Coldebella, of Massachusetts, to be General Counsel, Department of Homeland Security, vice Philip J. Perry, resigned.

Simon Charles Gros, of New Jersey, to be an Assistant Secretary of Transportation, vice Roger Shane Karr, resigned.

Deborah K. Jones, of New Mexico, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the State of Kuwait.

Patrick Francis Kennedy, of Illinois, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, to be an Under Secretary of State (Management), vice Henrietta Holsman Fore.

Joseph J. Murin, of Pennsylvania, to be President, Government National Mortgage Association, vice Robert M. Couch, resigned.

Brian Stacy Miller, of Arkansas, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Arkansas, vice George Howard, Jr., deceased.

Withdrawn October 16

Andrew R. Cochran, of Virginia, to be Inspector General, Environmental Protection Agency, vice Nikki Rush Tinsley, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on July 31, 2007.

Submitted October 18

Joaquin F. Blaya, of Florida, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2008 (reappointment).

Joaquin F. Blaya, of Florida, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2011 (reappointment).

Edward E. Kaufman, of Delaware, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2009 (reappointment).

Susan M. McCue,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Broad-
casting Board of Governors for a term expir-
ing August 13, 2010, vice Norman J. Pattiz,
term expired.

Allan I. Mendelowitz,
of Connecticut, to be a Director of the Fed-
eral Housing Finance Board for a term expir-
ing February 27, 2014 (reappointment).

Dennis M. Mulhaupt,
of California, to be a member of the Broad-
casting Board of Governors for a term expir-
ing August 13, 2008, vice Blanquita Walsh
Cullum, term expired.

Dennis M. Mulhaupt,
of California, to be a member of the Broad-
casting Board of Governors for a term expir-
ing August 13, 2011 (reappointment).

Steven J. Simmons,
of Connecticut, to be a member of the
Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term
expiring August 13, 2009 (reappointment).

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office
of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as
items nor covered by entries in the Digest of
Other White House Announcements.

Released October 14

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary on
the reauthorization of State Children's
Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) legisla-
tion

Released October 15

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press
Secretary Tony Fratto

Fact sheet: House FISA Legislation the
Wrong Direction for Our National Security

Released October 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Sec-
retary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press briefing by Assistant to
the President for Domestic Policy on
Wounded Warriors Reform Karl Zinsmeister

Statement by the Press Secretary: President
Bush To Welcome President Enkhbayar of
Mongolia to the White House

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visits of
President Giorgio Napolitano and Prime
Minister Romano Prodi of Italy

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing
that the President signed S. 474 and S. 1612

Fact sheet: Ensuring Our Wounded Warriors
Get the Best Possible Care

Released October 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Health and
Human Services Secretary Michael O.
Leavitt and National Economic Council Di-
rector Alan B. Hubbard on SCHIP reauthor-
ization

Statement by the Press Secretary: Presi-
dential Determination Regarding Brazil
Airbridge Denial (ABD) Program

Released October 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Sec-
retary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Sec-
retary Dana Perino and Spokesman for the
Government of Iraq Ali al-Dabbagh

Statement by the Press Secretary on reau-
thorization of State Children's Health Insur-
ance Program (SCHIP) legislation

Released October 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Sec-
retary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press briefing by White
House Council on Environmental Quality
Chairman James L. Connaughton on the
President's conservation announcements

Statement by the Press Secretary: President
Bush To Welcome President of France Nico-
las Sarkozy

Fact sheet: President Bush Announces
Added Sanctions Against Leaders of Burma's
Regime

Fact sheet: Improving Habitat for Our Na-
tion's Migratory Birds

Fact sheet: Guarding Against Over-Fishing
Through Cooperative Conservation

Approved October 16

S. 474 / Public Law 110–95
To award a congressional gold medal to Michael Ellis DeBakey, M.D.

**Acts Approved
by the President**

S. 1612 / Public Law 110–96
International Emergency Economic Powers
Enhancement Act