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Remarks on Departure for a Tour of Southern California Areas Damaged by Wildfires

October 25, 2007

Good morning. I'm on my way out to California. I'm looking forward to seeing Governor Schwarzenegger, to thank him for all the good work that the State and local authorities are doing to help the good people of southern California battle these wildfires. I will assure the people of California that the Federal Government will be deploying resources, assets, and manpower necessary to help fight these fires. As well, I will assure them that there's a—because of the declaration I signed yesterday, there will be help for the people of California. Evidently, the winds are more favorable today, which should be encouraging to the firefighters.

I'm also looking forward to spending some time with some of the firefighters. We've got some incredibly brave citizens who are risking their lives to protect people and property in California, and we owe a great debt of gratitude to our Nation's firefighters.

It's a sad situation out there in southern California. I fully understand that the people have got a lot of anguish in their hearts, and they just need to know a lot of folks care about them. And I'm looking forward to my trip out there.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:31 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks Following a Tour of Areas Damaged by Wildfires and an Exchange With Reporters in San Diego, California

October 25, 2007

The President. The Senator and the Congressman and the Governor and I have come up here to survey firsthand the terrible devastations done by the fires here in the San Diego area. We've met the Jeffcoats, who came up this hill and went to what was their home. And we know how tough it is for you; 39 years of marriage—that's something that you didn't think you'd be dealing with after all this time. So we want to let you know that the American people care for people like you who are suffering. We appreciate your spirit; we really do. I think all of us who met you were very impressed by your determination to deal with this tough moment in your life and rebuild your lives.

To the extent that people need help from the Federal Government, we will help. I am here, really, to make sure that the Federal effort works hand-in-glove with what the Governor has been doing. The Governor has taken the lead down here, and he's done a fine job. The thing I like about Governor Schwarzenegger, he says, "You show me a problem, I'll charge it; if you show me a hill, I'll go up it"—and that's exactly what he's done.

And my job is to make sure that FEMA and the Defense Department and the Interior Department and Ag Department respond in a way that helps people get the job done. And that's what I'm here to listen to.

I want to thank the Senator for joining me. On the flight down, we had a good conversation. She's deeply concerned about the citizens of California. She asked the right kind of questions, and, you know, we're going to give her the answers.

And Congressman, thank you for joining us. This is his district. It's got to be tough for you to represent the good people here and know that people are suffering.

But anyway, thanks for being here, and God bless you all.

Kendra Jeffcoat. Thank you, President——

The President. God bless the people of this State. Thank you.

Mrs. Jeffcoat. Thank you very much.

Jay Jeffcoat. Thank you.

Federal Response to Southern California Wildfires and Hurricane Katrina

Q. Mr. President, a lot has been made about the contrast between this response and the Katrina response. Do you have any thoughts on that and how you're doing?

The President. You better ask the Governor how we're doing. I will tell you this: On all these responses, the thing that has amazed me most is the courage of our first-responders. The firefighters here in this part