AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

State. And Arnold Schwarzenegger's right. These fires are going to go out because of the bravery of the people behind us, but there's still going to be needs and concerns.

And the final reason I've come is to let you know, we're not going to forget you in Washington, DC; that we want the people to know that there's a better day ahead; that today your life may look dismal, but tomorrow life's going to be better; and to the extent that the Federal Government can help you, we want to do so.

I do want to thank all the volunteers who have stepped forth to help a neighbor in need. There's an impressive number of people that have heard the call that one of their neighbors needs help. And for all of those who are volunteering their time to help somebody get their feet back on the ground, I thank you from the bottom of our Nation's heart.

May God bless those who suffer; may God bless those who are helping the people who are hurting; and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:24 p.m. in Kit Carson Park. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, USA, chief, National Guard Bureau; and Gen. Victor E. Renuart, Jr., USAF, commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command.

Remarks Following a Meeting With First-Responders in Escondido

October 25, 2007

The President. Thank you all very much for letting us come by to say hello to you. I'm proud to be here with the Senator, the Terminator—[*laughter*]—do you still get called the Terminator?

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. Absolutely, especially my wife. [*Laughter*]

The President. You know why we're here—Brian Bilbray, the Congressman from here—we're here to hopefully inspire you by thanking you from the bottom of our hearts for what you do. I'm telling you, there's a lot of folks that live up in these hills that have their houses because of you. And they're not in a position to thank you, but we are. And so we thank you for helping save lives and save property. We thank you for serving our country.

You know, one of the things I like to do is look in the eyes—to make sure you're getting rest, and I know you're not. [*Laughter*] I hope there's enough reinforcements coming to make sure that you get your shifts so you can get some sleep, because the citizens are going to count on you for you awhile.

These fires are tough, but you know better than anybody how hard it is. And so we're here to compliment you on your courage and your compassion. I know you're working incredible hours, and you've got family members who wonder about you, and so one of the things that we can do is also hope you pass on our best regards to your family members. I'm confident they're inspired by you, but they're wondering about your health and your safety. And so please, when you talk to them, tell them the President, the Senator, the Governor, the Congressman, but most of all, the folks here in the San Diego area and around the State affected by the fires are really appreciative.

And finally, I'd like to ask God's blessings on you and to protect you and guard you. Thanks for being great Americans. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:56 p.m. in the Ray Love Picnic Area at Kit Carson Park. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Dianne Feinstein.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

October 26, 2007

President Bush. It's my honor to welcome back to the Oval Office President Kabila. Thanks for coming, sir, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The last time the President was here, we talked about his desire to have free and fair elections in his country. Since that time, his country has had free and fair elections. And my first order of business today was to congratulate the President for garnering 58 percent of the vote.

We talked about the need to work together to help consolidate the gains. We talked about the need to—for the United States to partner with the country to help on economic

development. One of the things the President recognizes is the need for there to be investment in his country, so people can find work and the stability that comes with economic development. And I appreciate your recognition of the opportunity to work together.

We talked about the eastern part of his country. And he shared with me his strategy to make sure that the Government's reach extends throughout the entire country and that there is stability throughout the country. And I want to thank you very much for sharing your thoughts with me.

I did bring up my desire to help our friend deal with malaria. Malaria is a great concern to me and my wife and the Secretary of State. This is an issue that can be solved. We hurt when young babies are dying from a mosquito bite, knowing full well that a strategy can help save lives. And so the President shares the same sense of compassion I do for people all throughout the world who are being affected by malaria.

Mr. President, you are—you've said that you wanted there to be free and fair elections, and you delivered. And I appreciate that and congratulate you on being a man of your word. And we look forward to continuing to work with you, sir, to bring peace and stability to the neighborhood. So, welcome.

President Kabila. Well, Mr. President, thanks a lot. Of course, this is the second time that we meet in the Oval Office. And way back—yes, elections was high on the agenda in 2003. We organized those elections. And basically, our priorities have now changed from elections; it's now stability, and with stability, peace and development. And I emphasized and insisted on the fact that we need continued support from the United States in order to achieve these two remaining goals, which is peace and basic stability throughout the whole country, and embark on a very, very long journey of development and really try to combat poverty, which is the biggest issue not only in the Congo but in the region and on the African Continent.

So thanks a lot for the continued support that we've always had from the United States Government and the administration. And together, let's move further and further ahead.

President Bush. Yes, sir.

President Kabila. Thank you.

President Bush. Glad you're here. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:51 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks on Congressional Action on the Legislative Agenda

October 26, 2007

Good morning. I went out to California yesterday to meet with families affected by the wildfires and to thank the State and local officials for their outstanding work in this difficult time. While I was there, I saw the terrible destruction and heartbreaking loss. Yet I was also encouraged by the spirit I found—the families determined to rebuild, the volunteers who stepped forward to help neighbors in need, and the first-responders who have shown such courage in battling the flames and caring for those who were displaced.

I returned to Washington late last night. And when I got back to the White House, I was disappointed by what Congress had been doing and even more disappointed by what they had not been doing. This week, the majority in the House passed a new SCHIP bill that costs more over the next 5 years than the one I vetoed 3 weeks ago. It still moves millions of American children who now have private health insurance into Government-run health care. It raises taxes to pay for it. And it fails to do what needs to be done: to put poor children first.

After I vetoed their last SCHIP bill, I designated members of my administration to work with Congress to find common ground. Congressional leaders never met with them. Instead, the House once again passed a bill that they knew would not become law. And incredibly enough, the Senate will take up the same bill next week, which wastes valuable time.

As the House was debating SCHIP, the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee unveiled a massive tax package that raises taxes on more than a million small-business owners, among others. Earlier this week, Congress sent me a fiscally irresponsible