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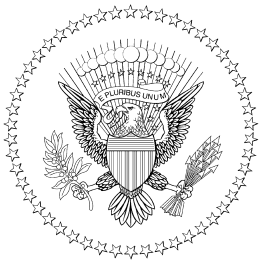

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WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Proclamation 8192—National Character Counts Week, 2007

October 19, 2007

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The greatness of a nation is measured not by power or wealth but by the character of its people. During National Character Counts Week, we underscore our dedication to promoting values for our young people and encourage all Americans to demonstrate good character.

As America's youth strive to become responsible adults, they carry with them the values and traditions they were taught as children. At home, parents and families can teach universal values such as respect, tolerance, self-restraint, fairness, and compassion. In the community, we all can set good examples and demonstrate the virtues of leadership, patriotism, and responsible citizenship. The members of our Armed Forces demonstrate the strength of America's character by answering the call of service to our Nation.

Through the Helping America's Youth initiative, caring adults are connected with at-risk youth so that they have a mentor and an example as they navigate the challenges young people face. By working together, we can give children the skill and habits they need to reach their full potential.

During National Character Counts Week and throughout the year, I urge all citizens to support the character development of our youth and make a difference in the lives of others. One way for all Americans to add to the character of our country is to volunteer to help a neighbor in need, and more information can be found at volunteer.gov. I encourage every American to serve a cause greater than themselves and set a positive example in their community.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim October 21 through October 27, 2007, as National Character Counts Week. I call upon public officials, educators, librarians, parents, students, and all Americans to observe this week with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this nineteenth day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:50 a.m., October 23, 2007]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 20, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on October 24.

Proclamation 8193—National Forest Products Week, 2007

October 19, 2007

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

During National Forest Products Week, we celebrate the rich blessings of our Nation's forests, and we recognize the important resources they provide to our communities and our economy.

Our Nation's forests supply vital products and create important employment opportunities. Trees provide wood to make homes, furniture, musical instruments, paper for books and newspapers, and packaging materials. These and other products are created

by the construction and manufacturing industries and provide economic security for many of our citizens.

All Americans have an obligation to protect the Earth and a responsibility to be good stewards of our land, and my Administration has made forest health a high priority. Under the Healthy Forest Initiative, we are helping to protect the American people, their communities, and the environment from potentially devastating wildfires. Together we can conserve our woodlands and help leave a lasting legacy for future generations.

Recognizing the importance of our forests in ensuring our Nation's well-being, the Congress, by Public Law 86–753 (36 U.S.C. 123), as amended, has designated the week beginning on the third Sunday in October of each year as "National Forest Products Week" and has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this week.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim October 21 through October 27, 2007, as National Forest Products Week. I call upon all Americans to observe this week with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this nineteenth day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

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Remarks at the Patuxent Research Refuge in Laurel, Maryland

October 20, 2007

The President. Listen, thank you all for coming. I appreciate the hospitality you've shown us here at Patuxent Research Refuge. I want to thank all the good folks who work here from the Fish and Wildlife Service as well as the U.S. Geological Survey.

One of the things we've discussed here is a significant environmental challenge we face here in America, and that is, birds are losing the stopover habitats they need and depend on for their annual migrations. And therefore, I've come to discuss a strategy to enhance those habitats, without which many birds could become severely challenged.

To me, this is a national issue that requires national focus. And so I appreciate very much you all giving me a chance to describe our strategy and thanks for your—thanks for working for the country.

I am proud to be here with Laura, birdwatcher extraordinaire. I appreciate Secretary Dirk Kempthorne running our Interior Department. I do thank Wendy Paulson, who's joined us. She's on the board of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Some of the recommendations—or all the recommendations that I'm describing today were brought to our attention by Wendy and a friend of mine from Texas named Rusty Rose, both of whom serve on this important university lab—the board of the lab. I appreciate Judd Howell, the Director, who gave us a tour. And Brad, thank you very much for joining us.

I also want to thank George Fenwick—he's the president of the American Bird Conservancy—for joining us as well. Appreciate the staff members here who worked on this initiative. Thanks for your hard work and your—and bringing what I believe the American people will find is a commonsense policy that makes sense for our future.

I don't know if you know this or not, but each year, more than 800 species of migratory birds brave stiff winds, harsh weather, and numerous predators to fly thousands of miles. Their final destination is the warm climate of the American South or the Caribbean or Mexico, where they stay for the winter. These amazing travelers will then return to their breeding grounds in the north. And as they span these distances, they fascinate and bring joy to millions of our citizens. A lot of folks across the country love to watch birds.

For these migratory birds, surviving their long journey depends on a stopover habitat. That basically means they got to find a place

to rest, a safe place to prepare to continue their journey. Unfortunately, expanding civilization has made it harder for these birds to find places to stop and to rest.

And so that's the challenge we face. And, you know, one area that—one reason we came here is because the national wildlife refuges like this one provide stopover habitat, and they play a really important role in our conservation efforts. My administration has supported the National Wildlife Refuge System. We've expanded some of the existing sites; we created 10 new ones; and we restored and improved hundreds of thousands of acres of habitat for migratory birds. In other words, we recognize the refuge system is an important part of preserving our bird populations.

And we've set a goal that by the time I leave office, we will improve another 200,000 acres. And I appreciate, Mr. Secretary, you joining us and committing your Department to achieving that goal.

In addition to the wildlife refuges, we're also working to improve habitat for migratory birds in our national parks. We've increased funding. But we've got a new initiative that I want to—want the American people to be aware of, and it's called the National Parks Centennial Initiative. And the idea is to match taxpayers' money with private donations to the tune of $3 billion, so that we can improve our national parks. And some of that money is going to go to restoration, to the restoration of a variety of wildlife habitats, including some that directly benefit birds.

Improving our Nation's long-term protections for migratory birds requires conservation beyond the boundaries of our national parks and refuges. And so one of the things this administration has done is to bring together citizens and private groups and officials from every level of government in the spirit of cooperation. In other words, we recognize that the Federal Government alone cannot provide the habitat necessary for migratory birds. We call this program "cooperative conservation," and part of the emphasis is to restore critical habitat.

One of the most important cooperative conservation efforts has been what they call joint venture programs for water fowl. This program has brought together Federal, State, and tribal agencies with private groups and corporations to improve habitat on private lands. It's worked so well for water fowl that we're now using it for other migratory birds. We've had—we have 18 joint ventures now underway, and next year, we're going to add 3 more to help conserve birds along the Rio Grande corridor, the Appalachian Mountains, and on the northern Great Plains.

Here's the way they work. Each venture—joint venture brings together a team of biologists and land managers—these are the experts—and they make—and then they work with the bird conservationists in a particular region to design and carry out critical habitat improvement. To enhance habitat conservation, we're going to put forth next week an innovative policy called recovery credit trading. This policy will provide incentives for landowners to improve habitat for migratory birds and other species. Landowners can earn recovery credits for the habitat they improve, and then they can sell those credits. The idea is to provide incentive for our private landowners to help deal with the concern that I started the speech with, and that is to make sure there's critical habitat available for migratory birds.

There's something else we can do. I asked Congress to provide tax incentives to reward landowners who donate conservation easements. Conservation easements are a good way to ensure the long-term preservation of habitat. They allow people to give up the right to develop parts of their land and then count the value of that right as a charitable contribution. The proposal would allow good citizens who give these conservation easements—allow them to deduct a higher portion of the donation from their income taxes, both in the year they donated and the years that follow. In other words, this is additional incentives for landowners to become a part of this comprehensive national strategy, and Congress needs to pass this piece of tax legislation.

You know, another important measure we've taken is in the conservation title of the farm bill. This title encourages farmers and ranchers to set aside critical habitat through

a program called Conservation Reserve Program, or the CRP. And our proposal to Congress as they rewrite the farm bill, we're asking them to dedicate $50 billion over 5 years to make sure that this program continues in effect. The program has been effective for our farmers and ranchers and, equally importantly, for our bird populations. And my hope is that Congress recognizes its effectiveness and will continue to fund this program.

We're making progress in rural areas, but there needs to be some work in urban areas. And so we've got an interesting program underway to help five cities turn parks and local backyards into stopover bird habitats over the next 2 years. In other words, what we're trying to do is to make sure that we have a successful strategy in five cities that could become the blueprint for cities all around the country.

Many species of birds live part of their lives here in the United States and part in Mexico. So we have a strategy to work with Mexico to enhance bird habitats in their country. I've talked about this issue with President Calderon. He shares my concern about making sure there's critical habitat available for our migratory birds. The Secretaries of State, Interior, and Commerce are working with their counterparts in the Mexican Government. Nongovernmental partners are working to undertake important habitat projects in Mexico as well.

One of the things we have done is we've identified five priority habitats in Mexico. We listened to the experts who pointed us to five important areas, and we have provided $4 million to support conservation initiatives there. I also directed Federal Agencies to increase our Nation's participation in an international effort to protect coastal and marine migratory birds such as albatrosses and petrels. Restoring habitats at home and abroad is going to help us achieve the objectives and goals I have set out, which is providing critical habitat for migratory birds.

Our efforts to restore habitats are strengthening bird populations. Since 2004, the Department of Interior has improved the status of five migratory bird species, and the Department is helping ensure that more than 62 percent of our Nation's migratory bird species are healthy and at sustainable levels. But that's not good enough—62 percent is good, but we can do better. And so I've asked the Secretary to—Secretary Kempthorne to focus on the status of five more species over the next 5 years. And to achieve this goal, we need good data. I mean, we just don't want to be guessing about bird populations; we want to measure. And so I've asked the Secretary to produce a State of the Birds report by 2009. This report will chart our progress. It'll identify species that need additional protections and help us bring more of America's bird species into a healthy and sustainable status.

And, Mr. Secretary, I appreciate your commitment.

Secretary Dirk Kempthorne. Absolutely.

The President. I appreciate the fact that you understand America's greatness is not measured by material wealth alone; it's measured by how we manage and care for all that we have been given. We're people united by our belief that we must be good stewards of our environment. The cooperative conservation policies that we have put in place show our commitment to protecting America's migratory birds, conserving the habitat they depend on, and ensuring that generations of Americans will enjoy the beauty of birds for decades to come.

I appreciate you all joining me. I want to thank you for your interest. God bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:01 a.m. in the Endangered Crane Complex. In his remarks, he referred to Wendy Paulson and Rusty Rose, administrative board members, Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Judd Howell, Director, U.S.G.S. Patuxent Wildlife Research Center; Brad Burns, president, Stripers Forever; and President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico.

Remarks on Signing the Executive Order on Protection of Striped Bass and Red Drum Fish Populations in St. Michaels, Maryland

October 20, 2007

Thank you all. Stuart, thanks for the introduction. Thanks for the invitation here to the Maritime Museum. It's a beautiful site you got here. I can see why people want to live

in St. Michaels, and I do want to thank the good citizens of this community for coming out and greeting me and Laura. By the way, Laura is not here. She's headed over to the Vice President's house. They've kindly invited us for lunch. I guess you could say she's the taster. [*Laughter*]

The Vice President tells me there's a lot of fine fishing here, and I'm looking forward to going out and trying to catch some. I love to fish. And the good news is—there's a lot of good fishing here—is because the Secret Service won't let me go hunting with him. [*Laughter*]

I'm going to sign an Executive order today to protect our striped bass and red drum fish populations; that's what I'm here to do. The Executive order is part of our commitment to end overfishing in America and to replenish our Nation's fish stocks and to advance cooperative conservation and responsible stewardship. And this is a good place to come and sign the Executive order. And I thank you all for coming up and letting me say hello to you and witness this Presidential act.

I want to thank the Secretary of the Interior, Dirk Kempthorne, for joining us today. He cares about our waters and our fish stocks, just like I do. And I appreciate Carlos Gutierrez—he's the Secretary of Commerce—for joining us as well. He's in charge of NOAA, as is Conrad Lautenbacher—run NOAA—you've got a fancy title: Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere. That means he runs NOAA. [*Laughter*] And I appreciate your concern about our waters, Conrad, and I want to thank you for your service to the country.

I appreciate Wayne Gilchrest; he's the Congressman from this district. Mr. Congressman, I'm honored you're here. Thank you for taking time; appreciate you welcoming us.

I want to thank all the State and local folks who've joined us. Particularly, I want to thank people who care about fishing, and thank you for being here. I want to thank the different groups represented here.

I want to say one—there's a fellow up here named Walter Fondren. He's a fellow Texan. He had a lot to do with making sure conservation efforts on the Texas gulf coast worked. He proved, as have others here, that if you get together with responsible officials, you can help get these fishing stocks back to robust. We were losing our red fish in Texas, and he along with other concerned citizens came together and said, "Let's do something about it." And as a result, red fishing is good again. But we want to make it as good as possible all throughout the country because fishing is important to the country.

Listen, it's important to be a commercial fisherman; I understand that. But the commercial fishermen and the sport fishermen don't have to be antagonistic. It's not a zero-sum game. Good policy will help our commercial fishermen, and good policy will help our sports fishermen. And that's what we're here to talk about. And it's important to recognize here in America that sport fishing is a important industry; a lot of people make a living because of sport fishing. I don't know if people know this, but millions of Americans are spending about $40 billion a year on sport fishing. I know in our State, Walter, there's a lot of people, a lot of entrepreneurs making a good living—they're fishing guides. A lot of bait shops and small-business owners are doing well as a result of good sport fishing policy.

And so we're here today to talk about sport fishing. As a matter of fact, I'm fixing to go do some sport fishing. I can't guarantee I'm going to catch anything. I hope that frogman out there does his job. [*Laughter*]

I want to talk about a little bit of the comprehensive strategy we've put in place. In 2004, our administration released an Ocean Action Plan, the whole purpose of which was to make the oceans and the Great Lakes and the coast cleaner, healthier, and more productive. The plan is producing some positive results.

On—one of the results of the plan was the Marine National Monument in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands that I declared. The action created the largest single conservation area in the history of the Nation. It is the largest protected marine area in the world. It is a visible sign that we care about conservation and good water policy.

I also signed the bipartisan Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act. It's a good piece of legislation. Many here worked on it, and I want

to thank you for working the Halls of Congress to get this bill to my desk. The legislation closes loopholes in the law by setting a firm deadline to end overfishing in America by 2011. The law puts in place market-based incentives to help replenish our fish stocks by granting fisherman the right to catch a designated amount of fish during a specified season. The law increases enforcement and raises penalties for those who break our fishing laws. And this law improves data collection to help ensure our decisions are based on sound science. It was an important piece of legislation, and I want to thank the authors of the bill for getting it done. I think it's going to help a lot when it comes to managing our fish stocks in a constructive, smart way.

In addition to the Magnuson-Stevenson Act, over the last couple of years, we've made a strong commitment to improve, restore, and replace our wetlands. I set out the goal that during my Presidency, we would restore—improve, restore, and replace 3 million acres of wetlands. The reason I did that is because wetlands act as what we call nature's nurseries by helping small fish survive before they head into deeper waters. We're going to make that goal. We will have replaced, improved, and restored over 3 million acres of wetlands during my Presidency.

Another significant problem is marine debris. And I was talking to Dirk Kempthorne, and he's going to host a symposium on the gulf coast to call our Nation's attention to this issue. Our strategy is going to be to work with the private sector to help clean up the debris. I don't know if you understand—it is a significant problem. Out there in the Hawaiian Island area that I set aside—Laura went out there, and a lot of birds are eating this stuff that gets washed up as a result of people just dumping whatever they want to in the ocean. It's like a—people kind of view it as, I guess, a giant garbage heap. And part of making sure that doesn't happen is to make it clear to our public the consequences of people just getting on our waters and just dumping whatever they feel like dumping out there.

And we're also going to work with the international community. A lot of the nets we're picking up out of that beautiful sanctuary in the—or the monument in Hawaii of—wash ashore because some trawler decides they don't want to mend the net or store the net or take care of the net. They just cut it and let her go, and the currents wash all that stuff ashore. We literally pulled out tons of material off these islands. And so we're going to develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with this, and call people to account, and ask them to join in protecting our oceans and waterways.

We're also talking about today to make sure that not only we protect the waters; we're going to protect the marine life in the waters. And so I want to talk today about two of the most popular recreational fish, the striped bass and the red drum.

The striped bass—I don't know if our citizens follow the striped bass, but it's a good fish to catch. It's a lot of fun. It's also a good fish to eat. We've got to make sure we've got enough to catch as well as enough to eat, and we can do both in a smart way.

Striped bass range from the St. Lawrence River in Canada to the St. John's River in Florida. They inhabit parts of the Pacific and the Gulf of Mexico. Some people call them stripers or rockfish. I guess we're going to call them rockfish today. [*Laughter*] They can live up to be 30 years old. In the old days, you could catch them up to 55 to 70 pounds pretty easily. And what we're trying to do is to make sure that the old days come back, that the striper is plentiful, and that you can catch some good-sized ones too—nothing like catching a big striper.

They were once so plentiful back in 1614 that Captain John Smith wrote this, he said, a man could cross over the water "dryshod" by walking on the backs of all the fish. What's interesting is, the striped bass was also one of the first species to be protected by the American people. In 1639, Massachusetts forbade the use of striped bass as fertilizer. By the early 1980s, striped bass were significantly depleted by poor water quality and overfishing.

Over the years—since that time, there's been some progress made to protect the striped bass, but not enough has been made. And so today we're going to try to make some more progress.

Red drum is another popular fish that has experienced overfishing. These fish are

called reds or redfish or channel bass or spottail. What happened to this particular fish was that it became popular to eat. The restaurants found it to be good food, and it became a popular dish, and they got overfished.

Now, we put protections in place both at State and Federal level to protect the red drum. Unfortunately, the red drum species is still trying to recover. That's why I'm going to take this additional step today, because the recovery is not complete. In the waters from North Carolina to the tip of Florida, the numbers are still too low. And in parts of our gulf, we're not sure of their status. So if you're not sure of the status, we ought to be taking special precaution. It's important that our fish stocks be full and robust and healthy.

And so I'm about to sign an Executive order, all aimed to help the Federal Government conserve striped bass and red drum in three key ways. First, the Executive order directs the Commerce and Interior Departments—that's why the two Secretaries are standing here—to work with our fishery management councils and commissions to protect—to prohibit the sale of striped bass and red drum caught in Federal waters.

Second, this Executive order encourages the periodic review of the status of the striped bass and red drum populations. This will ensure we have the most up to date information for determining whether breeding stocks are attaining healthy numbers and size in Federal waters.

Data is important when it comes to managing the fishing stocks. To improve the quality of our data, we're building a recreational saltwater registry that will collect information from sportsmen about local fish stocks, which will help us better protect striped bass, red drum, and all our fisheries. We're going to count on the people who really care about the fish stocks to get good, solid, sound information so we can do a better job not only today but tomorrow in making sure our fisheries are strong.

And finally, the Executive order encourages States to take a look at their own management of the fish stocks. See, we believe in cooperative conservation. That means cooperation at the Federal, State, and local levels. We believe in a collaborative approach, that the Federal Government ought to work with all stakeholders to achieve common consensus. And I respect the State's role in the management of the natural resources under their care. So I'm directing Federal Agencies to work with State officials to find innovative ways to help conserve striped bass and red drum.

And one such way is to use the State designation of game fish where appropriate. I hope the State officials take a serious look at game-fish designation; it is an effective tool to protect endangered or dwindling species. See, it prohibits commercial sales, which removes the incentive to catch the fish for anything other than recreational purposes. State designations of game fish have helped the recovery of species such as trout and largemouth bass and tarpon and snook. People need to take a look at this tool to make sure that the fisheries are robust. Strong fisheries mean local sales. Local sales means better local economy.

And so the Executive order shows our commitment to conserving our Nation's resources. Our hope, everybody—the hope of everyone here is that decades from now, our children and grandchildren will see oceans, lakes, and rivers teeming with fish and sea life. I can't guarantee they're going to be able to walk across their backs—[*laughter*]—like John Smith observed, but I can guarantee that we're committed to taking care of that which we have been given. My hope is people look back at our oceans' policies and our record of conservation and say, "We're grateful that concerned citizens came together to protect our heritage."

And so I want to thank you all for coming and giving me a chance to visit with you about a vision that is a hopeful vision and an important vision. And I thank you for witnessing the signing of the Executive order to protect the striped bass and red drum fish populations.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Stuart Parnes, president, Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum; and Walter W. Fondren III, chairman, Coastal Conservation

Association. The President also referred to Executive Order 13449.

Executive Order 13449—Protection of Striped Bass and Red Drum Fish Populations

October 20, 2007

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, to assist in ensuring faithful execution of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, and the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act (chapters 38, 71, and 71A of title 16, United States Code), and to conserve striped bass and red drum fish, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. *Policy*. It shall be the policy of the United States to conserve striped bass and red drum for the recreational, economic, and environmental benefit of the present and future generations of Americans, based on sound science and in cooperation with State, territorial, local, and tribal governments, the private sector, and others, as appropriate.

Sec. 2. *Implementation*. (a) To carry out the policy set forth in section 1, the Secretary of Commerce shall:

(i) encourage, as appropriate, management under Federal, State, territorial, tribal, and local laws that supports the policy of conserving striped bass and red drum, including State designation as gamefish where the State determines appropriate under applicable law;

(ii) revise current regulations, as appropriate, to include prohibiting the sale of striped bass and red drum caught within the Exclusive Economic Zone of the United States off the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico;

(iii) periodically review the status of the striped bass and red drum populations within waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States and:

(A) take such actions within the authority of the Secretary of Commerce as may be appropriate to carry out the policy set forth in section 1 of this order; and

(B) recommend to the President such actions as the Secretary may deem appropriate to advance the policy set forth in section 1 that are not within the authority of the Secretary.

(b) Nothing in this order shall preclude or restrict the production, possession, or sale of striped bass or red drum fish that have been produced by aquaculture.

(c) The Secretary of Commerce shall implement subsections 2(a)(i) and (iii), insofar as they relate to Atlantic striped bass, jointly with the Secretary of the Interior, as appropriate.

Sec. 3. *Definitions*. As used in this order:

(a) "Exclusive Economic Zone of the United States" means the marine area of the United States as defined in Presidential Proclamation 5030 of March 10, 1983, with, for purposes of this order, the inner boundary of that zone being a line coterminous with the seaward boundary of each of the coastal States;

(b) "red drum" means the species *Sciaenops ocellatus*; and

(c) "striped bass" means the species *Morone saxatilis*.

Sec. 4. *General Provisions*. (a) This order shall be implemented in a manner consistent with applicable law (including but not limited to interstate compacts to which the United States has consented by law, treaties and other international agreements to which the United States is a party, treaties to which the United States and an Indian tribe are parties, and laws of the United States conferring rights on Indian tribes) and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(b) Nothing in this order shall 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.

(c) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities, enti-

ties, officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

George W. Bush

The White House,
October 20, 2007.

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Remarks in a Meeting With President Nambaryn Enkhbayar of Mongolia

October 22, 2007

President Bush. Mr. President, thank you very much. Welcome. Thank you.

Mr. President, thank you very much for joining us. Today we're going to sign an important agreement between the United States and our friend Mongolia. Before we sign the agreement, which is to codify a Millennium Challenge compact, I do want to say a couple of things.

First, Laura and I loved our trip to your country. It was most interesting. I still vividly remember the fierce-looking warrior on horseback. And I was reminded of how thankful I am I've never met him on a battlefield. [*Laughter*] I remember the skill of the horsemen. I remember the warm hospitality. I remember the yak's milk. [*Laughter*] And I remember your gracious and kind words there. And I want to thank you again, sir, and the people of your wonderful country for such warm hospitality for Laura and me.

I also want to thank you very much for your strong support in the war against radicals and extremists. After our Nation was attacked on September the 11th by cold-blooded murderers, you and your country stood in solidarity with the American people. And since then you have been a stalwart in helping defeat extremists by helping young democracies survive and thrive. And I want to thank you and the Mongolian people for supporting the young democracies in Iraq and Afghanistan. It's been hard work, but we're making progress. And I know it's been hard for some in your society to see the benefits of free societies emerging, but I appreciate your vision, and I want to thank your troops. The Mongolian troops are well-trained, well-disciplined, and are a great credit to your country.

The Millennium Challenge Account is an important part of our foreign policy. It's an opportunity for the United States and our taxpayers to help countries that fight corruption, that support market-based economies, and that invest in the health and education of their people.

The Millennium Challenge compact encourages countries to make a firm commitment to basic principles, principles that mean the government will listen to their people and respond to the needs of the people. And today, Mr. President, we honor the success of your country and the commitment of your Government to basic principles. That's what we're doing. We hope that the $285 million will help you modernize your railroad and infrastructures, all aiming to make sure that the market economy you put in place inures to the benefit of your people.

Congress must understand how important this program is for U.S. foreign policy. The Millennium Challenge Account has been effective. It's been effective across the world. It will be effective in Mongolia. And when the United States Congress considers full funding for the Millennium Challenge Account, they must think about countries such as Mongolia and the long-term benefits that this program will mean for a solid friend.

And so, Mr. President, I welcome you to the mike. I want to thank you for coming, and then I look forward to signing the document.

President Enkhbayar. Mr. President, it's indeed a great pleasure to be here in Washington, DC, today, attending the ceremony which lays down the beginning of a new and important partnership between Mongolia and the United States. I am proud that our joint efforts, which started with the qualification of Mongolia in May 2004 into the list of the countries eligibly for the Millennium Challenge Account have brought us to this very important stage.

On behalf of the entire nation, its Government, and the people of Mongolia, I wish to extend our sincere gratitude to President Bush for his initiative, to the Government, and the people of the United States for their confidence and support rendered to Mongolia. Thank you.

President Bush. Thanks very much.

President Enkhbayar. The idea of rewarding the successful democracies through supporting their goals inspired the Mongolians from the beginning of this initiative. We welcome the concept for—we sense that the initiative will eventually contribute to the betterment of the life of ordinary people. Mongolia also appreciates and upholds the principle of aid with accountability and ownership advocated by the Government of the United States. Indeed, the whole process through we have arrived at the signing of this compact today is a testimony to our shared commitment to ensuring the—[*inaudible*]—good governance and accountability to our citizens.

We have to always remember—and I know that those are the people who elect us and sometimes criticize us and say whatever they think about us.

President Bush. So it happens there as well? [*Laughter*]

President Enkhbayar. As a partner country of the MCC program, Mongolia has been truly in the driver's seat at every stage of identifying its own development priorities and investment needs and policy directions. This new approach of cooperation is the key to ensuring efficiency and effectiveness of the program. The compact prepared through the broad consultative approach in Mongolia will support our efforts to broaden and deepen the country's economic development, focusing on four key areas.

These areas are in the line with Mongolia's national development strategy, the draft of which was submitted to the Parliament for the consultation and approval. The strategy sets out the vision of a democratic society centered on developing a healthy and educated citizen and a prosperous private-sector-led economy, a society of true partnership and Mongol stakeholders, including the civil society.

I am confident that the compact program will have a truly transformational impact on Mongolia's poverty reduction efforts through investment in our human capital, rehabilitation of vital transportation infrastructure, and strengthening the institutional capacity of the public service agencies.

It should be noted that the compact is about opportunity and excess. We want our people to seize this opportunity to improve their livelihood with training and employment, to participate and benefit from the country's economic growth, to have access to high-quality service and education.

"Hand-in-hand action has to have the trophy," says a Mongolian proverb. I'm certain that this compact will inspire long-lasting, fruitful, and mutually beneficial cooperation between the United States of America and Mongolia. Now we will embark upon the task of successfully transforming our people's ideas and expectations into reality. Your support has been indispensable in reaching this point, and we trust in your continued partnership in the future.

Mr. President, friends, and colleagues, thank you again for this memorable occasion. And I would like to again invite President Bush to visit Mongolia after he goes to Beijing Olympics. President Bush knows that it's not very far away from Beijing.

President Bush. That's right. [*Laughter*]

President Enkhbayar. And I hope that he will again enjoy the hospitality of the Mongolian people.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:53 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks on Congressional Action on Supplemental Appropriations

October 22, 2007

Thank you all for joining me. I just finished visiting with veterans and members of military support organizations, the family of the fallen. Thank you all for being here. I'm proud you're here.

These patriots have come to the Oval Office to make sure and to make clear that our troops have the full commitment of our Government. And I strongly agree that we must

provide our troops with the help and support they need to get the job done. Parts of this war are complicated, but one part is not, and that is, America should do what it takes to support our troops and protect our people. And today I sent Congress an updated supplemental war funding request that will do just that.

The majority of the supplemental funding is for day-to-day military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The bill provides for basic needs like bullets and body armor, protection against IEDs, and Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles. It also funds training missions, vital Embassy programs, improvements in Iraq and Iraqi security forces, and intelligence operations that protect our troops. These are urgent military necessities, and the supplemental was prepared in close consultation with our commanders on the ground. This funding is what General Petraeus and other military leaders say we need, and Congress ought to give it to them.

Our military commanders will use this money to continue carrying out their missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. In Afghanistan, our troops, NATO allies, and Afghan forces are making gains against the Taliban and Al Qaida. In Iraq, our campaign to provide security for the Iraqi people has been difficult and dangerous, but it is achieving results. Al Qaida and other extremists have been driven from strongholds in places like Anbar Province and parts of Diyala Province. In Baghdad, the number of Iraqi civilians murdered by terrorists and death squads is down sharply. Throughout Iraq, the number of American service members killed in September was the lowest since July 2006. And the level of violence during Ramadan was down significantly from last year.

Last month, General Petraeus said he believes that our successes in Iraq mean we can maintain the same level of security with fewer American forces. I accepted this recommendation that we not replace about 2,200 marines who left Anbar last month. We expect to bring home another 3,500 soldiers by Christmas. The funds in the supplemental are crucial to continuing this policy of return on success. Every Member of Congress who wants to see both success in Iraq and our troops begin to come home should strongly support this bill.

I know some in Congress are against the war and are seeking ways to demonstrate that opposition. I recognize their position, and they should make their views heard, but they ought to make sure our troops have what it takes to succeed. Our men and women on the frontlines should not be caught in the middle of partisan disagreements in Washington, DC. I often hear that war critics oppose my decisions, but still support the troops. Well, I'll take them at their word, and this is the chance for them to show it, that they support the troops.

Along with support for our troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, the supplemental also includes emergency funding for other critical national security needs. It includes money to improve medical care for our wounded warriors. It funds equipment repair and upgrades the strategic readiness of the Army. It provides crucial relief for Iraqi refugees. It supports the peacekeeping mission of the United Nations in Darfur. It delivers vital assistance for our partners in Mexico and Central America, who are working to break up drug cartels and fight organized crime and stop human trafficking. All of these are urgent priorities of the United States, and the Congress ought to fund them without delay.

One reason Congress can move the supplemental quickly is that it's had more than 8 months to study most of the provisions. In fact, nearly 75 percent of the funding requested in the supplemental was submitted along with my annual budget in February. We took this step in direct response to requests from Congress. Members of Congress should consider the supplemental promptly. They should keep it focused on true necessities, not pet projects. And they should pass a good, clean bill as soon as possible. Congress should not go home for the holidays while our troops are still waiting for the funds they need.

In addition to passing the supplemental, Congress also needs to complete clean appropriations bills for the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. The House and the Senate have passed versions of both these bills, but leaders in the House have not yet named conferees. They should name them

now so that Members of Congress can work out their differences and send me these vital bills as soon as possible.

I want to thank all those who are standing with me today for their strong support for our troops, our veterans, and our military families. May God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:48 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting a Request for Fiscal Year 2008 Supplemental Appropriations for Ongoing Military and Intelligence Operations and Selected Other International Activities

October 22, 2007

Dear Madam Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed amendments to my FY 2008 Budget request that will provide additional resources for ongoing military and intelligence operations in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, and selected other international activities. These funds will support U.S. efforts to improve stability in these regions. This request is also consistent with the assessments provided by General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker last month and my Iraq Benchmark Assessment Report, as it contains funds to maintain the current pace of operations into FY 2008 and takes into account plans to redeploy five Army brigades by next summer, should conditions on the ground permit.

This request includes funds to improve the protection of our forces by procuring additional Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, which have proved highly effective in countering improvised explosive devices. It also supports pre-deployment training for ground forces; supports the repair, replacement, or supplement of equipment worn out or lost in military operations; upgrades equipment based on lessons learned to date; replenishes depleted prepositioned stocks; and fills shortages in non-deployed units caused by the creation of equipment pools in theater.

In addition, it helps support our military and their families by funding a range of needed services. For example, the request funds the development of a sustainable medical and rehabilitation system to properly care for our wounded warriors. The request also funds enhanced support for servicemembers and their families to mitigate the effect of repeated and continued deployments of the all-volunteer force.

These amendments include funding for urgent and unanticipated international programs, including support for extraordinary security and operating costs associated with U.S. diplomatic activity in Iraq and Afghanistan, for assistance to internally displaced persons in Iraq and Iraqi refugees, and to help create political and economic stability in Afghanistan.

I hereby designate the specific proposals in the amounts requested herein as emergency requirements. This request represents urgent and essential requirements and I encourage you to take up this FY 2008 funding as soon as possible. The details of the request are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

Remarks on Presenting Posthumously the Congressional Medal of Honor to Lieutenant Michael P. Murphy

October 22, 2007

Please be seated. Good afternoon, and welcome to the White House. The Medal of Honor is the highest military decoration that a President can bestow. It recognizes gallantry that goes above and beyond the call of duty in the face of an enemy attack. The tradition of awarding this honor began during the Civil War. And many of those who have received the medal have given their lives in the action that earned it.

Today, we add Lieutenant Michael Murphy's name to the list of recipients who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Deep in the mountains of Afghanistan, this brave officer gave his life in defense of his fellow Navy SEALs. Two years later, the story of his sacrifice humbles and inspires all who hear it. And by presenting Michael Murphy's family with the Medal of Honor that he earned, a grateful nation remembers the courage of this proud Navy SEAL.

I welcome the Vice President; Senator Ted Stevens; Senator Chuck Schumer, from Lieutenant Murphy's home State. I appreciate very much the fact that Congressman Tim Bishop, from Lieutenant Murphy's district, is with us today. Welcome. Thank you all for coming.

I appreciate the fact that Deputy Secretary Gordon England has joined us; Secretary Pete Geren of the Army; Secretary Don Winter of the Navy; Secretary Mike Wynne of the Air Force; Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs; Admiral Gary Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations; and all who wear the nation's uniform. Welcome.

I appreciate the fact that we've got Barney Barnum, Tom Kelley, Tommy Norris, and Mike Thornton, Medal of Honor recipients, with us today.

We do welcome Dan Murphy and Maureen Murphy, father and mother of Michael Murphy; John Murphy, his brother; and other family members that are with us today.

It's my honor to welcome all the friends and comrades of Lieutenant Michael Murphy here to the White House. And I want to thank Chaplain Bob Burt, Chief of Chaplains, for his opening prayer.

Looking back on his childhood in Patchogue, New York, you might say that Michael Murphy was born to be a Navy SEAL. SEALs get their name from operating by sea, air, and land—and even as a toddler, Michael could find his way through any obstacle. When he was just 18 months old, he darted across a neighbor's yard and dove into the swimming pool. By the time his frantic parents reached him, Michael had swum to the other side with a big smile on his face. As he grew older, Michael learned to swim from one side of a nearby lake to the other, and he developed into a talented all-around athlete.

But beyond his physical strength, Michael Murphy was blessed with a powerful sense of right and wrong. This sense came from devoted parents who taught him to love his neighbor and defend those who could not defend themselves. Well, Michael took these lessons to heart. One day in school, he got into a scuffle sticking up for a student with a disability. It's the only time his parents ever got a phone call from the principal, and they couldn't have been prouder. Michael's passion for helping others led him to become a caring brother, a tutor, a lifeguard, and eventually, a member of the United States Armed Forces.

Michael's decision to join the military wasn't an easy one for his family. As a Purple Heart recipient during Vietnam, Michael's father understood the sacrifices that accompany a life of service. He also understood that his son was prepared to make these sacrifices. After graduating from Penn State with honors, Michael accepted a commission in the Navy and later set off for SEAL training. Fewer than a third of those who begin this intense training program graduate to become Navy SEALs. Yet there was little doubt about the determined lieutenant from New York. And in 2002, Michael earned his Navy SEAL Trident.

Michael also earned the respect of his men. They remember a wise-cracking friend who went by "Mikey" or "Murph." They remember a patriot who wore a New York City firehouse patch on his uniform in honor of the heroes of 9/11. And they remember an officer who respected their opinions and led them with an understated, yet unmistakable, sense of command. Together, Michael and his fellow SEALs deployed multiple times around the world in the war against the extremists and radicals. And while their missions were often carried out in secrecy, their love of country and devotion to each other was always clear.

On June 28th, 2005, Michael would give his life for these ideals. While conducting surveillance on a mountain ridge in Afghanistan, he and three fellow SEALs were surrounded by a much larger enemy force. Their

only escape was down the side of a mountain—and the SEALs launched a valiant counterattack while cascading from cliff to cliff. But as the enemy closed in, Michael recognized that the survival of his men depended on calling back to the base for reinforcements. With complete disregard for his own life, he moved into a clearing where his phone would get reception. He made the call, and Michael then fell under heavy fire. Yet his grace and upbringing never deserted him. Though severely wounded, he said thank you before hanging up and returned to the fight before losing his life.

Unfortunately, the helicopter carrying the reinforcements never reached the scene. It crashed after being struck by a rocket-propelled grenade. And in the end, more Americans died in Afghanistan on June 28th, 2005, than on any other day since the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom. This day of tragedy also has the sad distinction of being the deadliest for Navy Special Warfare forces since World War II.

One of Michael's fellow SEALs did make it off the mountain ridge. He was one of Michael's closest friends. Petty Officer Marcus Luttrell of Texas, author of a riveting book called "Lone Survivor," put it this way: "Mikey was the best officer I ever knew, an iron-souled warrior of colossal and almost unbelievable courage in the face of the enemy."

For his courage, we award Lieutenant Michael Murphy the first Medal of Honor for combat in Afghanistan. And with this medal, we acknowledge a debt that will not diminish with time and can never be repaid.

Our Nation is blessed to have volunteers like Michael who risk their lives for our freedom. We're blessed to have mothers and fathers like Maureen and Dan Murphy who raise sons of such character and courage. And we're blessed with the mercy of a loving God who comforts all those who grieve.

And now I ask Michael's parents to join me on stage, and the Military Aide will read the citation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:24 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Rear Adm. Robert F. Burt, USN, Chaplain of the Marine Corps. Following the President's remarks, Maj. Mark Thompson, USMC, Marine Corps Aide to the President, read the citation.

Remarks at the National Defense University

October 23, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. Madam President—[*laughter*]—thank you for that kind introduction. Thank you for welcoming me back to the National Defense University. I really enjoy coming here. After all, this is a great American institution that has educated our Nation's top military leaders and national security thinkers for more than a century.

Today, you're training the next generation of leaders to prevail in the great ideological struggle of our time, the global war on terror. We're at war with a brutal enemy. We're at war with coldblooded killers who despise freedom, reject tolerance, and kill the innocent in pursuit of their political vision. Many of you have met this enemy on the battlefields of Afghanistan and Iraq; you have served with valor in the defense of our country. Students here at NDU have earned 3 Purple Hearts and more than 90 Bronze Stars since the war on terror began. All of you who wear the uniform are helping to protect this country, and the United States of America is grateful for your service.

In this war, we're on the offensive against the enemy, and that's the only way to be. We'll fight them in foreign lands so we don't have to face them here in America. We'll pursue the terrorists across the world. We'll take every lawful and effective measure to protect ourselves here at home.

In an age when terrorist networks and terrorist states are seeking weapons of mass destruction, we must be ready to defend our Nation against every possible avenue of attack. I've come today to discuss the actions we're taking to keep our people safe and to update you on the progress of an initiative I announced on this very campus in 2001, and that is our efforts to defend America against a ballistic missile attack. My administration made a commitment to the American people then that we will defend you against all forms of terror, including the terror that

could arrive as a result of a missile. And we're keeping that commitment.

Another topic of concern is the devastation caused by the wildfires in southern California. All of us across this Nation are concerned for the families who have lost their homes and the many families who have been evacuated from their homes. We send our prayers and thoughts with those who've been affected, and we send the help of the Federal Government as well.

Last night I declared an emergency, which will open up the opportunity for us to send Federal assets to help the Governor and those who are fighting these fires. Today I have sent Secretary Chertoff and Director Paulison of the FEMA to go out to California to listen and to develop an inventory of supplies and help that we can provide.

I appreciate very much the fact that the senior Senator from Alaska has joined us—no stronger supporter for the United States military than Ted Stevens. We're proud you're here, Senator. Thank you for coming. I appreciate—[*applause*]. I want to thank Congressman Todd Akin for joining us as well, from the State of Missouri. Proud you're here, Congressman. Appreciate both of you all taking your time.

There's a lot of high-ranking officials here, but I do want to single out one, that would be your Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, United States marine James "Hoss" Cartwright. General, thank you for coming. Appreciate you being here. Thanks for letting me come by.

The men and women of the National Defense University understand what is at stake in today's war. First of all, you understand we're in war. And secondly, you understand the stakes of this war. September the 11th, 2001, terrorists struck us 5 miles from this very spot; they crashed a plane into the Pentagon and killed 184 men, women, and children. And from this campus, you could see the smoke billowing across the Potomac. You lost one of your own that day, Navy Captain Bob Dolan, class of 1998, who was working in the Pentagon office when the plane hit it. With us today are four NDU students and one professor who helped with the rescue effort. These souls pulled victims from the wreckage; they provided emergency medical care; and they flew choppers to support recovery operations at the site of the attack. The attack that day was personal for people here at NDU. I took it personally as well.

With the presence—with the passage of time, the memories of September the 11th have grown more distant. That's natural. That's what happens with time. And for some, there's the temptation to think that the threats to our country have grown distant as well. They have not. And our job, for those of us who have been called to protect America, is never to forget the threat and to implement strategies that will protect the homeland. On 9/11, we saw that oceans which separate us from other continents no longer separates us from danger. We saw the cruelty of the terrorists. We saw the future they intend for us. They intend to strike our country again. Oh, some dismiss that as empty chatter; I'm telling you, they intend to strike our country again. And the next time, they hope to cause destruction that will make 9/11 pale by comparison.

This new kind of threat has required a new kind of war, and we're prosecuting that war on many fronts. Our Armed Forces have captured or killed thousands of extremists and radicals. We have removed terrorist regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq that had supported terrorists and threatened our citizens. In these two nations, we liberated 50 million people from unspeakable tyranny, and now we're helping them build stable democracies that can govern justly and protect their citizens and serves as allies in this war against extremists and radicals.

And one of the real challenges we face is, will we have confidence in the liberty to be transformative? Will we lose faith in the universality of liberty? Will we ignore history and not realize that liberty has got the capacity to yield the peace we want? And so this administration, along with many in our military, will continue to spread the hope of liberty in order to defeat the ideology of darkness, the ideology of the terrorists, and work to secure a future of peace for generations to come. That's our call.

In this new war, the enemy seeks to infiltrate operatives into our country and attack us from within. They can't beat our Army; they can't defeat our military. And so they

try to sneak folks in our country to kill the innocent, to achieve their objectives. And that's one of the reasons we passed the PATRIOT Act. And over the past 6 years, our law enforcement and intelligence officers have used the tools in this good law to break up terror cells and support networks in California, in New York, in Ohio, in Virginia, in Florida, and other States.

In this new war, the enemy uses advanced technology to recruit operatives and to train suicide bombers and to plan and plot new attacks on our country. And so we passed the Protect America Act, which strengthened our ability to collect foreign intelligence on terrorists overseas. It closed a dangerous gap in our intelligence. Unfortunately, this law is set to expire on February the 1st, 101 days from now. Yet the threat from Al Qaida is not going to expire 101 days from now. So I call on Congress to make sure our intelligence professionals have the tools they need to keep us safe by strengthening the Protect America Act and making it the permanent law of the land.

In this new war, the enemy conspires in secret, and often, the only source of information on what the terrorists are planning is the terrorists themselves. So we established a program at the Central Intelligence Agency to question key terrorist leaders and operatives captured in the war on terror. This program has produced critical intelligence that has helped us stop a number of attacks, including a plot to strike the U.S. Marine camp in Djibouti, a planned attack on the U.S. consulate in Karachi, a plot to hijack a passenger plane and fly it into Library Tower in Los Angeles, California, or a plot to fly passenger planes into Heathrow Airport and buildings into downtown London.

Despite the record of success and despite the fact that our professionals use lawful techniques, the CIA program has come under renewed criticism in recent weeks. Those who oppose this vital tool in the war on terror need to answer a simple question: Which of the attacks I have just described would they prefer we had not stopped? Without this program, our intelligence community believes that Al Qaida and its allies would have succeeded in launching another attack against the American homeland. This CIA program has saved lives; it is vital to the security of the American people.

In this new war, the enemy seeks weapons of mass destruction that would allow them to kill our people on an unprecedented scale. So we're working with friends and allies to stop our enemies from getting their hands on these weapons. We increased funding for a threat reduction program that is helping us to secure nuclear warheads and fissile materials in Russia. We launched the Global Threat Reduction Initiative that has removed enough material for more than 30 nuclear bombs from around the world. We launched the Container Security Initiative and other programs to detect and stop the movement of dangerous materials in foreign ports and intercept these materials before they are placed on vessels destined for the United States.

With Russia, we launched the Global Initiative To Combat Nuclear Terrorism, a coalition of more than 60 nations that are using their own resources to stop the illicit spread of nuclear materials. We established the Proliferation Security Initiative, a coalition of more than 80 nations working to intercept shipments of weapons of mass destruction on land and at sea and in the air. With our allies, we're going after the proliferators and shutting down their financial networks. And through these and other efforts, the message should be clear to the enemy: We're not going to allow mass murderers to gain access to the tools of mass destruction.

The war on terror will be won on the offense, and that's where I intend to keep it, on the offense. Yet protecting our citizens is—also requires defensive measures here at home. It's a new kind of war. It's a different conflict that you're studying here at NDU. It requires us to use all assets to keep the pressure on the enemy. There should be no day where they do not feel the pressure of the United States of America and our allies.

But at home, we've got to put defensive measures in place, measures that we have never had to put in place before. Since 2001, we've taken unprecedented actions to protect our citizens. After all, it's our most solemn duty in Washington, DC, to protect the American people. We created the Department of Homeland Security. We established

a new Northern Command at the Department of Defense. We established new programs to protect our cities against biological and radiological attacks. We beefed up airport and seaport security at home. We've instituted better visa screening for those entering our country. Since September of 2001, my administration has provided more than $23 billion to America's State and local first-responders for equipment and training and other vital needs.

One of the most important defensive measures we have taken is the deployment of new capabilities to defend America against ballistic missile attack. On 9/11, we saw the damage our enemies could do by hijacking planes loaded with jet fuel and turning them into missiles and using them to kill the innocent. Today, dangerous regimes are pursuing far more powerful capabilities and building ballistic missiles that could allow them to deliver these weapons to American cities.

The ballistic missile threat to America has been growing for decades. In 1972, just nine countries had ballistic missiles. Today, that number has grown to 27, and it includes hostile regimes with ties to terrorists. When I took office, our Nation had no capability to defend the American people against long-range ballistic missile attacks. Our research, development, and testing program was hampered by a lack of funding. Our efforts to develop and deploy missile defense were constrained by the ABM Treaty, a 30-year-old agreement negotiated with a Soviet Union that no longer existed.

So one of my administration's first national security initiatives was to reinvigorate our country's efforts to defend against ballistic missile attack. Here at the National Defense University, I announced America's intention to move beyond the ABM Treaty and deploy missile defenses to protect our people, our forces abroad, and our allies around the world against limited attacks. I also pledged that as we build these defenses, America would undertake significant reductions in nuclear weapons, and that we would establish a new approach to deterrence that would leave behind the adversarial legacy of the cold war and allow us to prepare for the threats of the 21st century. Over the past years, we have delivered on those pledges.

The first step we took was to withdraw from the ABM Treaty. At the time, critics warned of a disaster, with some declaring that our—my decision could "give rise to a dangerous new arms race with Russia." Russia did not agree with my decision to withdraw. Yet President Putin declared that the decision at the time "does not pose a threat to Russia." And far from a new arms race, he announced that Russia would join the United States in making historic reductions in our deployed offensive nuclear arsenals.

The second step we took was to make missile defense operational, while continuing our research and development efforts. Instead of spending decades trying to develop a perfect shield, we decided to begin deploying missile defense capabilities as soon as the technology was proven ready and then build on that foundation by adding new capabilities as they matured. By the end of 2004, we had a rudimentary capability in place to defend against limited missile attacks by rogue states or an accidental launch. As new technologies come on line, we continue to add to this system, making it increasingly capable and moving us closer to the day when we can intercept ballistic missiles of all ranges, in every stage of flight, from boost to mid-course and terminal.

The third step we took was to reach out to the world and involve other nations in the missile defense effort. Since 2001, we've worked closely with countries such as Israel and Italy and Germany and Japan and the Netherlands and Britain and others on missile defense. Together with our friends and allies, we're deploying early warning radars and missile interceptors and ballistic missile defense ships. We're working to jointly develop new missile defense capabilities. As a result of this collaboration, missile defense has gone from an American innovation to a truly international effort to help defend free nations against the true threats of the 21st century.

Our decision to make missile defense operational was validated in July of last year, when North Korea launched a series of destabilizing ballistic missile tests, including testing a system our intelligence community believes is capable of reaching the United States. Had these tests taken place just a few

years earlier, they would have underscored America's vulnerability to a ballistic missile attack. Instead, because of the decisions we took in 2001 and because of the hard work of people in this room, our military had in place a capability to track the North Korean vehicle and engage it if it threatened our country. So a test North Korea intended to showcase its power became a demonstration that the pursuit of ballistic missiles will ultimately be fruitless, because America and our allies are building and deploying the means to defend against this threat.

Last month, the Missile Defense Agency conducted its 30th successful "hit to kill" test since 2001. We got a lot of smart people working on this project, and they're proving that our vision can work. With this most recent success, our military commanders believe we can now have a credible system in place that can provide the American people with a measure of protection against threats emanating from Northeast Asia. The next step is to take a system that has passed demanding tests in the Pacific theater and deploy elements of it to Europe so we can defend America and our NATO allies from attacks emanating from the Middle East.

The need for missile defense in Europe is real, and I believe it's urgent. Iran is pursuing the technology that could be used to produce nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles of increasing range that could deliver them. Last November, Iran conducted military exercises in which it launched ballistic missiles capable of striking Israel and Turkey as well as American troops based in the Persian Gulf. Iranian officials have declared that they are developing missiles with a range of 1,200 miles, which would give them the capability to strike many of our NATO allies, including Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, and possibly Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia. Our intelligence community assesses that with continued foreign assistance, Iran could develop an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of reaching the United States and all of Europe before 2015. If it chooses to do so and the international community does not take steps to prevent it, it is possible Iran could have this capability. And we need to take it seriously—now.

Today, we have no way to defend Europe against the emerging Iranian threat, and so we must deploy a missile defense system there that can. This system will be limited in scope. It is not designed to defend against an attack from Russia. The missile defenses we can employ would be easily overwhelmed by Russia's nuclear arsenal. Russia has hundreds of missiles and thousands of warheads. We're planning to deploy 10 interceptors in Europe. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to do the math. [*Laughter*]

Moreover, the missile defenses we will deploy are intended to deter countries who would threaten us with ballistic missile attacks. We do not consider Russia such a country. The cold war is over. Russia is not our enemy. We're building a new security relationship, whose foundation does not rest on the prospect of mutual annihilation.

As part of the new relationship, we're inviting Russia to join us in this cooperative effort to defend Russia, Europe, and the United States against an emerging threat that affects us all. For his part, President Putin has offered the use of radar facilities in Azerbaijan and southern Russia. We believe these sites could be included as part of a wider threat monitoring system that could lead to an unprecedented level of strategic cooperation between our two countries.

For our part, we're planning to deploy a system made up of 10 ground-based interceptors located in Poland and an X-band tracking radar located in the Czech Republic. Such a system would have the capacity to defend countries in Europe that would be at risk from a long-range attack from the Middle East. We're also working with NATO on developing capabilities to defend countries against short- and medium-range attacks from the Middle East. We want to work on such a system with Russia, including through the NATO-Russia Council, see. The danger of ballistic missile attacks is a threat we share, and we ought to respond to this threat together.

The effort to develop ballistic missile defenses is part of a broader effort to move beyond the cold war and establish a new deterrence framework for the 21st century. In 1960, President Eisenhower spoke to the students at this campus. He told them, "Our

first priority task is to develop and sustain a deterrent commanding the respect of any potential aggressor." And during those early years of the cold war, deterrence required building a nuclear force large enough to survive and retaliate after a Soviet first strike.

Today, our adversaries have changed. We no longer worry about a massive Soviet first strike. We worry about terrorist states and terrorist networks that might not be deterred by our nuclear forces. To deal with such adversaries, we need a new approach to deterrence. This approach combines deep reductions in offensive nuclear forces with new, advanced conventional capabilities and defenses to protect free people from nuclear blackmail or attack.

So in 2001, I directed the Department of Defense to achieve a credible deterrent—a credible deterrent—with the lowest number of nuclear weapons consistent with our national security needs, including our obligations to our allies. These reductions were eventually codified in the Moscow Treaty, which commits the United States and Russia to reduce our operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads to between 1,700 and 2,200 within 5 years from now.

Since the Moscow Treaty took effect, the United States has retired all of our Peacekeeper ICBMs and reduced our operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads from more than 6,000 when I took office to fewer than 3,800 today. When the rest of the reductions we have set in motion are completed, the total U.S. nuclear stockpile will be one-quarter its size at the end of the cold war, the lowest level since the Eisenhower administration.

As we reduce our nuclear arsenal, we're investing in advanced conventional capabilities. These include new unmanned aerial combat vehicles and next generation long-range precision weapons that allows us to strike enemies quickly, at great distances, without using nuclear weapons. We're investing in the next generation of missile defenses because these systems do more than defend our citizens; they also strengthen deterrence.

Think of it this way: A terrorist regime that can strike America or our allies with a ballistic missile is likely to see this power as giving them free rein for acts of aggression and intimidation in their own neighborhoods. But with missile defenses in place, the calculus of deterrence changes in our favor. If this same terrorist regime does not have confidence their missile attack would be successful, it is less likely to engage in acts of aggression in the first place. We would also have more options for dealing with their aggression if deterrence fails.

In addition to strengthening our deterrent, missile defense also strengthens our counterproliferation efforts. One reason for the dramatic proliferation of ballistic missile technology over the past 30 years is that America and our allies had no defense against them. By deploying effective defenses, we reduce incentives to build ballistic missiles because rogue regimes are less likely to invest in weapons that cannot threaten free nations.

Missile defense also helps us dissuade nations from developing nuclear weapons. Through our missile defense partnerships with nations in Asia and Europe and the Middle East, we can help friends and allies defend against missile attack. These defenses will build their confidence, and these defenses will make it less likely that they will feel the need to respond to the nuclear ambitions of Iran and North Korea by developing nuclear weapons of their own.

Missile defense is a vital tool for our security. It's a vital tool for deterrence. And it's a vital tool for counterproliferation. Yet despite all these benefits, the United States Congress is cutting funding for missile defense.

Congress has cut our request for missile defenses in Europe by $139 million, which could delay deployment for a year or more and undermine our allies who are working with us to deploy such a system on their soil. Congress has eliminated $51 million from the Airborne Laser program, a critical effort that will allow us to intercept missiles in the boost stage of flight when they're still over the country that launched them. Congress has slashed $50 million from the Multiple Kill Vehicle program that will help us defeat both the incoming warhead and the decoys deployed to overcome our defenses. Congress has cut $50 million from the Space Tracking and Surveillance System, a constellation of

space satellites that can help us more effectively detect and track ballistic missiles headed for our country. Each of these programs is vital to the security of America, and Congress needs to fully fund them.

The greatest threat facing our Nation in the 21st century is the danger of terrorist networks or terrorist states armed with weapons of mass destruction. We're taking decisive action at home and abroad to defend our people from this danger. With bold investments today, we can ensure that the men and women in this hall have the tools you need to confront the threats of tomorrow. We will ensure that you have the tools necessary to do the solemn duty of protecting the American people from harm.

I want to thank each of you for stepping forward to serve our country. You're courageous folks. Because of your willingness to volunteer in a time of war, there's no doubt in my mind we can prevail in this war. It requires determination, resolve, steadfast—steadfastness in the face of a brutal enemy. And having served as the Commander in Chief for nearly 6¾ years, there's no doubt in my mind that the United States military has that resolve and has that courage.

God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:08 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Frances C. Wilson, USMC, president, National Defense University; Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

Proclamation 8194—United Nations Day, 2007

October 23, 2007

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

After World War II, representatives from around the globe gathered to begin deliberations on a new international bill of rights. The document adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, stands as a landmark achievement in the history of human liberty. On United Nations Day, we recognize the contributions of this important body and underscore our dedication to reforming the institution and advancing the high ideals on which it was founded.

Today, the United Nations must recommit itself to maintaining international security and helping solve economic, social, and humanitarian problems. This great institution must work for great purposes: to free people from tyranny and violence, hunger and disease, illiteracy and ignorance, and poverty and despair. With renewed commitment and courage, we can pursue the vision of the Universal Declaration and build a world where people are free to speak, assemble, and worship as they wish, and where opportunity crosses every border.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim October 24, 2007, as United Nations Day. I urge the Governors of the 50 States, the Governor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the officials of other areas under the flag of the United States to observe United Nations Day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-third day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:52 a.m., October 24, 2007]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on October 25.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Protocol Amending the Convention on the International Hydrographic Organization

October 23, 2007

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Protocol of Amendments to the Convention on the International Hydrographic Organization done at Monaco on

April 14, 2005. The Protocol amends the Convention on the International Hydrographic Organization, which was done at Monaco on May 3, 1967, and entered into force for the United States on September 22, 1970 (TIAS 6933; 21 UST 1857; 752 UNTS 41). I am also transmitting, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Secretary of State on the Protocol.

The Protocol will facilitate the reorganization of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO). The IHO, which is a technical and consultative international organization headquartered in Monaco, facilitates safe and efficient maritime navigation throughout the world. It accomplishes these objectives by facilitating the coordination of the activities of national hydrographic offices, promoting uniformity in the nautical charts and documents generated by such offices, encouraging the adoption of reliable surveying methods, and fostering the development of the science of hydrography. Reorganization of the IHO will result in a more flexible, efficient, and visible organization.

Ratification of the Protocol would serve important U.S. interests. United States commercial shipping, the United States Navy, and the scientific research community rely heavily on hydrographic information collected and shared under the auspices of the IHO. The United States plays an important leadership role in the IHO and as a result enjoys expeditious and economical access to this information. Moreover, the United States has committed more resources than any other country to research, development, and evaluation of hydrographic instruments and therefore stands to benefit significantly from the efficiencies generated by this reorganization.

Article XXI of the Convention sets forth the procedure for the approval and entry into force of amendments: amendments that are adopted or "approved" by the Conference enter into force for all Contracting Parties to the Convention 3 months after two-thirds of the Contracting Parties have notified the depositary of the their consent to be bound.

I recommend that the Senate give prompt and favorable consideration to the Protocol and give its advice and consent to ratification.

George W. Bush

The White House,
October 23, 2007.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 24.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting

October 24, 2007

Southern California Wildfires

I want to thank the members of my Cabinet for being here today to discuss a lot of issues. I started off the meeting by summarizing a series of conversations that I've had regarding the fires in southern California. I had a conversation with Governor Schwarzenegger. My question to him was, are you getting what you need; are the people there in California getting the help they need from the Federal Agencies to help the good folks in California deal with these devastating fires? His answer was, yes. I assured him that if he needs anything and we're able to provide it, we'll do so.

I also had an opportunity to thank him, as well as California officials, for working hard to save houses, save lives. I appreciate very much the fact that they're willing to work in a collaborative fashion with the Federal Government. I've been meeting with my Cabinet Secretaries that are responsible for helping the State and local authorities fight these fires. I will report to you that I am—I believe the effort is well-coordinated. I know we're getting the manpower and assets on the ground that have been requested by the State and local authorities.

I wish we could control the wind, because one of the things that's hampering our joint capability of fighting these fires is the strong westerly winds. I'm told the winds may be dying down soon, in which case it will make it—make this equipment we've got in place a lot more effective at helping fight the fires.

I initially declared an emergency declaration, which will enable us to send Federal

equipment and manpower into the scene, including Department of Defense help. Today I've signed a major disaster declaration, which will then enable Federal funds to start heading toward the families who have been affected by these fires.

Looking forward to going out to California tomorrow. I will continue to make sure that our efforts are coordinated, that we are responsive to the needs of people. But most importantly, I want the people in southern California to know that Americans all across this land care deeply about them. We're concerned about their safety; we're concerned about their property; and we offer our prayers and hopes that all will turn out fine in the end. In the meantime, they can rest assured that the Federal Government will do everything we can to help put out these fires.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:55 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California.

Remarks at the Department of State

October 24, 2007

Thank you very much. *Gracias. Buenos dias*. I am pleased to be here at the State Department. I appreciate the work that's done here. Every day, the men and women of this Department serve as America's emissaries to the world. Every day, you help our country respond to aggressors and bring peace to troubled lands. Every day, you advance our country's mission in support of basic human rights to the millions who are denied them. Secretary Rice constantly tells me about the good work being done here at the State Department, and on behalf of a grateful nation, I thank you for your hard work, and I'm pleased to be with you.

Few issues have challenged this Department—and our Nation—longer than the situation in Cuba. Nearly half a century has passed since Cuba's regime ordered American diplomats to evacuate our Embassy in Havana. This was the decisive break of our diplomatic relations with the island, a troubling signal for the future of the Cuban people and the dawn of an unhappy era between our two countries. In this building, President John F. Kennedy spoke about the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba's dictatorship. And it was here where he announced the end of the missile crisis that almost plunged the world into nuclear war.

Today another President comes with hope to discuss a new era for the United States and Cuba. The day is coming when the Cuban people will chart their own course for a better life. The day is coming when the Cuban people have the freedom they have awaited for so long.

Madam Secretary, thank you for your introduction. I'm pleased to be with you and Ambassador Negroponte and all who work here. Thanks for the hospitality. I'm pleased to be here with our Secretary of Commerce, Secretary Carlos Gutierrez—born in Cuba. I appreciate other members of my administration who are here.

I particularly want to thank the Members of Congress who have joined us: Senator Mel Martinez, born in Cuba; Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, born in Cuba; Lincoln Diaz-Balart, born in Cuba; *su hermanito*—[*laughter*]—Mario Diaz-Balart. I want to thank Chris Smith for joining us, Congressman from Jersey; Thaddeus McCotter, Michigan; Debbie Wasserman Schultz from Florida, as well as Tim Mahoney from Florida. Appreciate you being here.

I thank the members of the diplomatic corps who have joined us. I appreciate the Ambassadors to the Organization of American States who are with us. I particularly want to thank the Cuban families who have joined me on the stage.

One of the great success stories of the past century is the advance of economic and political freedom across Latin America. In this room are officials representing nations that are embracing the blessings of democratic government and free enterprise. And the United States is proud and active to work with you in your transformations.

One country in our region still isolates its people from the hope that freedom brings and traps them in a system that has failed them. Forty-eight years ago, in the early moments of Cuba's revolution, its leaders offered a prediction. He said—and I quote—

"The worst enemies which the Cuban revolution can face are the revolutionaries themselves." One of history's great tragedies is that he made that dark prophecy come true.

Cuba's rulers promised individual liberty. Instead, they denied their citizens basic rights that the free world takes for granted. In Cuba, it is illegal to change jobs, to change houses, to travel abroad, to read books or magazines without the expressed approval of the state. It is against the law for more than three Cubans to meet without permission. Neighborhood watch programs do not look out for criminals. Instead, they monitor their fellow citizens, keeping track of neighbors' comings and goings, who visits them, and what radio stations they listen to. The sense of community and the simple trust between human beings is gone.

Cuba's rulers promised an era of economic advancement. Instead, they brought generations of economic misery. Many of the cars on the street predate the revolution, and some of—Cubans rely on horse carts for transportation. Housing for many ordinary Cubans is in very poor condition, while the ruling class lives in mansions. Clinics for ordinary Cubans suffer from chronic shortages in medicine and equipment. Many Cubans are forced to turn to the black market to feed their families. There are long lines for basic necessities—reminiscent of the Soviet bread lines of the last century. Meanwhile, the regime offers fully stocked foodstores for foreign tourists, diplomats, and businessmen in communism's version of apartheid.

Cuba's rulers promised freedom of the press. Instead, they closed down private newspapers and radio and television stations. They've jailed and beaten journalists, raided their homes, and seized their paper, ink, and fax machines. One Cuban journalist asked foreigners who visited him for one thing: a pen. Another uses shoe polish as ink—as a typewriter ribbon.

Cuba's rulers promised, quote, "absolute respect for human rights." Instead, they offered Cubans rat-infested prisons and a police state. Hundreds are serving long prison sentences for political offenses such as the crime of "dangerousness"—as defined by the regime. Others have been jailed for the crime of "peaceful sedition," which means whatever Cuban authorities decide it means.

Joining us here are family members of political prisoners in Cuba. I've asked them to come because I want our fellow citizens to see the faces of those who suffer as a result of the human rights abuses on the island some 90 miles from our shore.

One of them is Olga Alonso. Her brother, Ricardo Gonzalez Alonso [Alfonso]*, has been harassed by Cuban authorities since he was 11 years old, because he wrote things that the Cuban authorities did not like. In 2003, Ricardo was arrested for his writings and sentenced to 20 years in prison. The authorities seized illegal contraband they found in his home. These included such things as a laptop computer, notebooks, and a printer. Olga, we're glad you're here, and thank you for coming.

Marlenis Gonzalez and her daughter Melissa are here. They recently arrived from Cuba, but without Melissa's father. Jorge Luis Gonzalez Tanquero dared to defend the human rights of his countrymen. For that, he was arrested for crimes against the state. Now he languishes in poor health inside a Cuban prison. *Bienvenidos*.

Damaris Garcia *y su tia* Mirta Pernet are with us today. Damaris calls the Cuban Government "a killing machine"—those are her words. They've seen relatives imprisoned for supporting liberty. One beloved family member, Omar Pernet Hernandez, was a poor man who sold candy on the streets of Havana. For advocating freedom, he is serving a sentence of 25 years. He's 62 years old; he's emaciated; yet he remains a determined advocate for human rights for the Cuban people. *Bienvenidos*.

Also with us is Yamile Llanes Labrada. Yamile's husband, Jorge [Jose]* Luis Garcia Paneque, was a surgeon and journalist. He was sentenced to 24 years in prison for daring speak the truth about the regime. Yamile herself was accused of espionage, and she feared for the safety of her four children. After Jose's arrest, a mob organized by state authorities surrounded their house. The mob carried sticks and threatened to set fire to the house with the family inside. Earlier this

* White House correction.

year, Yamile and her children made it off the island. They do not know when they'll see their father again. *Bienvenidos*, Yamile.

I want to thank each of you coming today. I thank you for allowing me to share your stories, and I thank you for your courage. I ask that God watch over you and your loved ones. *Que Dios les bendiga a ustedes y a su familias*. And I join your prayers for a day when the light of liberty will shine on Cuba.

These are just a few of the examples of the terror and trauma that is Cuba today. The "socialist paradise" is a tropical gulag. The quest for justice that once inspired the Cuban people has now become a grab for power. And as with all totalitarian systems, Cuba's regime no doubt has other horrors still unknown to the rest of the world. Once revealed, they will shock the conscience of humanity, and they will shame the regime's defenders and all those democracies that have been silent. One former Cuban political prisoner, Armando Valladares, puts it this way: It will be a time when "mankind will feel the revulsion it felt when the crimes of Stalin were brought to light." And that time is coming.

As we speak, calls for fundamental change are growing across the island. Peaceful demonstrations are spreading. Earlier this year, leading Cuban dissidents came together for the first time to issue the Unity of Freedom, a declaration for democratic change. They hear the dying gasps of a failed regime. They know that even history's cruelest nightmares cannot last forever. A restive people who long to rejoin the world at last have hope, and they will bring to Cuba a real revolution, a revolution of freedom, democracy, and justice.

Now is the time to support the democratic movements growing on the island. Now is the time to stand with the Cuban people as they stand up for their liberty. And now is the time for the world to put aside its differences and prepare for Cuban's transition to a future of freedom and progress and promise. The dissidents of today will be the nation's leaders tomorrow. And when freedom finally comes, they will surely remember who stood with them.

The Czech Republic and Hungary and Poland have been vital sources of support and encouragement to Cuba's brave democratic opposition. I ask other countries to follow suit. All nations can make tangible efforts to show public support for those who love freedom on the island. They can open up their Embassies in Havana to prodemocracy leaders and invite them to different events. They can use their lobbies of the Embassies to give Cubans access to the Internet and to books and to magazines. They can encourage their country's nongovernmental organizations to reach out directly to Cuba's independent civil society.

Here at home we can do more as well. The United States Congress has recently voted for additional funding to support Cuban democracy efforts. I thank you all for your good work on this measure, and I urge you to get the bill to my desk as soon as we possibly can. I also urge our Congress to show our support and solidarity for fundamental change in Cuba by maintaining our embargo on the dictatorship until it changes.

Cuba's regime uses the U.S. embargo as a scapegoat for Cuba's miseries. Yet Presidents of both our political parties have long understood that the source of Cuba's suffering is not the embargo but the Communist system. They know that trade with the Cuban Government would not help the Cuban people until there are major changes to Cuba's political and economic system. Instead, trade with Cuba would merely enrich the elites in power and strengthen their grip. As long as the regime maintains its monopoly over the political and economic life of the Cuban people, the United States will keep the embargo in place.

The United States knows how much the Cuban people are suffering, and we have not stood idle. Over the years, we've granted asylum to hundreds of thousands who have fled the repression and misery imposed by the regime. We've rallied nations to take up the banner of Cuban liberty, and we will continue to do so. We've authorized private citizens and organizations to provide food and medicine and other aid—amounting to more than $270 million last year alone. The American people, the people of this generous land, are the largest providers of humanitarian aid to the Cuban people in the entire world.

The aid we provide goes directly into the hands of the Cuban people, rather than into the coffers of the Cuban leaders. And that's really the heart of our policy: to break the absolute control that the regime holds over the material resources that the Cuban people need to live and to prosper and to have hope.

To further that effort, the United States is prepared to take new measures right now to help the Cuban people directly, but only if the Cuban regime, the ruling class, gets out of the way.

For example—here's an interesting idea to help the Cuban people—the United States Government is prepared to license nongovernmental organizations and faith-based groups to provide computers and Internet access to Cuban people, if Cuba's rulers will end their restrictions on Internet access for all the people.

Or the United States is prepared to invite Cuban young people whose families suffer oppression into the Partnership for Latin American Youth Scholarship Programs to help them have equal access to greater educational opportunities, if the Cuban rulers will allow them to freely participate.

We make these offers to the people of Cuba, and we hope their rulers will allow them to accept. You know, we've made similar offers before, but they've been rejected out of hand by the regime. It's a sad lesson, and it should be a vivid lesson for all: For Cuba's ruling class, its grip on power is more important than the welfare of its people.

Life will not improve for Cubans under their current system of government. It will not improve by exchanging one dictator for another. It will not improve if we seek accommodation with a new tyranny in the interests of "stability." America will have no part in giving oxygen to a criminal regime victimizing its own people. We will not support the old way with new faces, the old system held together by new chains. The operative word in our future dealings with Cuba is not "stability." The operative word is "freedom."

In that spirit, today I'm also announcing a new initiative to develop an international multibillion dollar Freedom Fund for Cuba. This fund would help the Cuban people rebuild their economy and make the transition to democracy. I have asked two members of my Cabinet to lead the effort, Secretary Rice and Secretary Gutierrez. They will enlist foreign governments and international organizations to contribute to this initiative.

And here's how the fund will work. The Cuban Government must demonstrate that it has adopted, in word and deed, fundamental freedoms. These include the freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of press, freedom to form political parties, and the freedom to change the Government through periodic, multiparty elections. And once these freedoms are in place, the fund will be able to give Cubans—especially Cuban entrepreneurs—access to grants and loans and debt relief to help rebuild their country.

The restoration of these basic freedoms is the foundation of fair, free, and competitive elections. Without these fundamental protections in place, elections are only cynical exercises that give dictatorships a legitimacy they do not deserve.

We will know there is a new Cuba when opposition parties have the freedom to organize, assemble, and speak with equal access to the airwaves. We will know there is a new Cuba when a free and independent press has the power to operate without censors. We will know there is a new Cuba when the Cuban Government removes its stranglehold on private economic activity.

And above all, we will know there is a new Cuba when authorities go to the prisons, walk to the cells where people are being held for their beliefs, and set them free. It will be a time when the families here are reunited with their loved ones and when the names of free people—including dissidents such as Oscar Elias Biscet, Normando Hernandez Gonzalez, and Omar Rodriguez Saludes—are free. It will be a moment when Cubans of conscience are released from their shackles—not as a gesture or a tactic, but because the Government no longer puts people in prison because of what they think or what they say or what they believe.

Cuba's transition from a shattered society to a free country may be long and difficult. Things will not always go as hoped. There will be difficult adjustments to make. One

of the curses of totalitarianism is that it affects everyone. Good people make moral compromises to feed their families, avoid the whispers of neighbors, and escape a visit from the secret police. If Cuba is to enter a new era, it must find a way to reconcile and forgive those who have been part of the system but who do not have blood on their hands. They're victims as well.

At this moment, my words are being transmitted into—live into Cuba by media outlets in the free world, including Radio and TV Marti. To those Cubans who are listening—perhaps at great risk—I would like to speak to you directly.

Some of you are members of the Cuban military or the police or officials in the Government. You may have once believed in the revolution. Now you can see its failure. When Cubans rise up to demand their liberty, they deserve—they—the liberty they deserve, you've got to make a choice. Will you defend a disgraced and dying order by using force against your own people? Or will you embrace your people's desire for change? There is a place for you in the free Cuba. You can share the hope found in the song that has become a rallying cry for freedom-loving Cubans on and off the island: "*Nuestro Dia Ya Viene Llegando*"—our day is coming soon.

To the ordinary Cubans who are listening: You have the power to shape your own destiny. You can bring about a future where your leaders answer to you, where you can freely express your beliefs, and where your children can grow up in peace. Many experts once said that that day could never come to Eastern Europe or Spain or Chile. Those experts were wrong. When the Holy Father came to Cuba and offered God's blessings, he reminded you that you hold your country's future in your hands. And you can carry this refrain in your heart: *Su dia ya viene llegando*—your day is coming soon.

To the schoolchildren of Cuba: You have a lot in common with young people in the United States. You both dream of hopeful futures, and you both have the optimism to make those dreams come true. Do not believe the tired lies you are told about America. We want nothing from you except to welcome you to the hope and joy of freedom. Do not fear the future. *Su dia ya viene llegando*—your day is coming soon.

Until that day, you and your suffering are never far from our hearts and prayers. The American people care about you. And until we stand together as free men and women, I leave you with a hope, a dream, and a mission: *Viva Cuba Libre*.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to President Fidel Castro Ruz of Cuba. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Leslie H. Southwick as United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit

October 24, 2007

The confirmation of Judge Leslie Southwick to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit is a victory for America's judicial system and for the citizens of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. Today's bipartisan vote resolves a longstanding judicial emergency and will help ensure that the Fifth Circuit can operate more effectively. Judge Southwick is a man of character and intelligence who will apply the law fairly. I appreciate the Senate's approval of his nomination.

While today's vote resolves one judicial emergency, many of America's Federal courts continue to have unnecessary vacancies. I have nominated highly qualified men and women to serve on these courts. Now the Senate must act. In the final 2 years of the past 3 administrations, the Senate has confirmed an average of 17 circuit court judges. But since January of this year, the Senate has confirmed only five circuit court nominees. The Senate has more work to do. I once again call upon the Senate to fulfill its constitutional responsibilities and promptly provide these nominees fair up-or-down votes.

Notice—Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation In or In Relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo

October 24, 2007

On October 27, 2006, by Executive Order 13413, I declared a national emergency with respect to the situation in or in relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701–1706), ordered related measures blocking the property of certain persons contributing to the conflict in that country. I took this action to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States constituted by the situation in or in relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has been marked by widespread violence and atrocities that continue to threaten regional stability and was addressed by the United Nations Security Council in Resolution 1596 of April 18, 2005, Resolution 1649 of December 21, 2005, and Resolution 1698 of July 31, 2006.

Because this situation continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States, the national emergency declared on October 27, 2006, and the measures adopted on that date to deal with that emergency, must continue in effect beyond October 27, 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 declared in Executive Order 13413.

This notice shall be published in the *Federal Register* and transmitted to the Congress.

George W. Bush

The White House,
October 24, 2007.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:45 a.m., October 25, 2007]

NOTE: This notice was published in the *Federal Register* on October 26.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation In or In Relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo

October 24, 2007

To the Congress of the United States:

The situation in or in relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has been marked by widespread violence and atrocities that continue to threaten regional stability and was addressed by the United Nations Security Council in Resolution 1596 of April 18, 2005, Resolution 1649 of December 21, 2005, and Resolution 1698 of July 31, 2006, continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13413 of October 27, 2006, and the related measures blocking the property of certain persons contributing to the conflict.

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 national emergency with respect to the situation in or in relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the related measures blocking the property of certain persons contributing to the conflict in that country, must continue in effect beyond October 27, 2007.

George W. Bush

The White House,
October 24, 2007.

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

of the world are incredibly brave people. The police force has done a fabulous job.

And same in the Katrina area. I mean, I know there was a lot of criticism of effort, but remember, there was 33,000 people pulled off roofs by brave Coast Guard men and women flying those choppers. A lot of people's lives were saved.

Representative Brian Bilbray. San Diego County has a centralized disaster response team made up of the county chairman as the chairman of the Disaster Council and every police chief and fire chief and mayor, so there's a network here that those of us in the Federal and the State level are able to come supplement. But the backbone of this response was the local providers, because they were organized. So the real heroes here are the providers, are the men and women working for the counties and the cities and the fire districts that really were here first and foremost, and we're just supplementing.

The President. Yes, see, that's an interesting question. I appreciate you asking it. My hearts are with the Jeffcoats right now, that's what I'm thinking. I'm thinking about people whose lives turned upside down. The experts can try to figure out whether the response was perfect or not. All I can tell you is, when the Governor calls, I answer his phone. When the Governor says, "We need this help; think about sending these troops here," I got on the phone; I called the appropriate people. I'm interested in helping him solve problems and helping the folks here at the county level. There's all kinds of time for historians to compare this response or that response, but those of us who are here from Government, our hearts are right here with the Jeffcoats; that's where we are.

And I'm looking forward—and I know the Senator and Governor and Congressman is—to eating lunch with the firefighters. We can't thank people enough for putting their lives at risk to help a neighbor, and that's exactly what's taking place. If there needs to be more firefighters, we'll send more firefighters. Those are the kind of questions that we're asking; what does it take to get the job done?

Fire-suppression Equipped Airplanes

Q. Mr. President, Congressman Hunter tried to get some of the C–130s here, and they are here, but they are still on the ground, and the National Guard won't let them fly. What seems to be the problem? We really need those because the flames continue to fan.

The President. I'll find out. I'll find out.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. I just want to add to this because I want to thank the President for coming out here today. I can tell you that when we saw on Monday the flames going out of control and it becoming really a major disaster, I told my assistant that we got to call the President and ask for help. And before I ever had a chance to make that phone call—I remember I was in the middle of a briefing—the President—I was in—I got the phone, they said, it's the President on the phone. And he called me, and he told me that he's really concerned about the fires here in California, and if anything he can do, anything that we need, we should let him know; that all his entire Cabinet and his whole staff, his team, everyone is available.

So I call this quick action, I mean, quicker than I expected, I can tell you that. And since then, we've been talking every day on the phone. And we asked him for an emergency declaration; they got it within 24 hours. We asked for a disaster declaration; we got that within 24 hours. And then he called me back and says, "I'm going to come out because I'm really concerned about the people in California and what they are going through. We want to make sure that we help them get back on their feet." And here he is.

So I call this very unbelievable response from the Federal Government and the Bush administration, from everyone. And from Senator Feinstein—I want to thank you also for the great response, and she was calling us every hour and being concerned. So I would say this is really great response, and you cannot do this without everyone working together. And what we have seen here, unlike other disasters, I mean, how quickly the locals, the State, and the Federal Government came together, and everyone working together was really extraordinary to watch. So I want to thank everyone. I want to thank you again, President, for coming out here today and helping us.

The President. Okay, thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:28 a.m. in the Rancho Bernardo neighborhood. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Dianne Feinstein.

Remarks in Escondido, California

October 25, 2007

Governor, thank you very much. First thing I want to let the people know out here in southern California is that many across our Nation have been moved by the plight of the citizens who have lost their homes, lost their possessions, and particularly those who have lost their life. It's very important for those who are wondering about their future to know, there's a lot of good citizens all across America who are praying for your future and who really want to stand with you.

I appreciate the leadership of Governor Schwarzenegger. I said earlier, when we were at the neighborhood, there's no hill he's not willing to charge, no problem he's not willing to solve. And we've got a big problem out here, and I appreciate his leadership. It makes a significant difference when you have somebody in the statehouse willing to take the lead. I've come to make sure that the Federal Government provides the help for people here at the local level.

I do want to thank Senator Feinstein for joining us. I want to thank the local mayors, statehouse folks, the Congresspeople for being with us as well.

Really, it's important for me to come out here and see firsthand the situation. And there's no question, a lot of people are suffering. And there's no question, there's been terrible losses.

I also am out here to make sure these firefighters behind me and the first-responders know how much I appreciate and how much the country appreciates their courage and bravery. Firefighters are on the scene and on the frontlines. The police have helped maintain order. Emergency medical teams have treated the sick. And our National Guard personnel is providing very important assistance. It turns out, when the President shows up, so does a lot of the other brass. I'm proud to be here with General Tuck [Blum]*, who runs the entire National Guard Bureau.

All of us associated with the Federal Government, Governor, are here to make sure that the resources at our disposal are deployed to help you. And that's why there's all kinds of people from all different Departments at the Federal level, to assess the needs, to listen to the concerns, and to respond. And that's exactly what we've been doing, and that's exactly what we'll continue to do.

As the Governor mentioned, I did issue an emergency declaration which allows Federal Agencies across the Government to help State and local authorities. It empowers FEMA to provide vital supplies as well as to pay emergency grants to help pay for the cost of firefighting, evacuation shelters, and traffic control.

Our Department of Agriculture and Interior have provided elite firefighters and equipment. As I mentioned, the Department of Defense is in this to help you through NORTHCOM. The military has got assets that we can help you with. General, thanks for coming. We've got a four-star general with us today. He runs NORTHCOM, and the reason he's here, Governor, is to listen to you, find out what assets we can continue to deploy to help you.

As the Governor mentioned, yesterday I signed a second declaration to help California's recovery and rebuilding efforts. The major disaster declaration authorizes the release of Federal funds for debris removal and long-term assistance to individuals and businessowners. People affected by the fires can now apply for assistance for temporary housing and home repair and low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses.

Now, people here in this part of the world are wondering, is there a number they can call to get help? And here's the number: 1–800–621–FEMA. If you want to find out whether or not you qualify for help, Federal help, just call 1–800–621–FEMA or go to the web site FEMA.gov. And there's a third way that you can find out whether you get help, and that is through a mobile disaster recovery center that FEMA's deployed around this

* White House correction.

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

water resources bill. The House version came in at $15 billion. The Senate version came in at $14 billion. So the House and Senate compromised and sent me a bill that costs $23 billion. In Washington, they call that "splitting the difference."

And today Congress set a record they should not be proud of. October the 26th is the latest date in 20 years that Congress has failed to get a single annual appropriations bill to the President's desk. And that's not the only thing congressional leaders have failed to get done.

They have yet to make the Internet tax moratorium permanent or even extend it, even though this moratorium is set to expire in just a few days. The House and Senate have both passed temporary extensions but have not agreed on a final bill. I urge Congress to keep the Internet tax-free and to get a bill to my desk that I can sign.

They have yet to move Judge Michael Mukasey's nomination to be Attorney General out of the Senate Judiciary Committee, even as Members complain about the lack of leadership at the Department of Justice.

They have yet to act on our emergency war funding supplemental, even though our troops on the frontlines depend on these vital funds to fight our enemies and to keep us safe at home.

This is not what congressional leaders promised when they took control of Congress earlier this year. In January, one congressional leader declared, and I quote: "No longer can we waste time here in the Capitol, while families in America struggle to get ahead." He was right. With only a few weeks left on the legislative calendar, Congress needs to keep their promise to stop wasting time and get essential work done on behalf of the American people.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:32 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.R. 3963; H.R. 976; H.R. 3970; and H.R. 1495.

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 20

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to Laurel, MD, where they toured the Patuxent Research Refuge. They then traveled to St. Michaels, MD.

Later in the morning, the President participated in an interview with Chris and Melissa Fischer of ESPN's "Offshore Adventures" program.

In the afternoon, at the Vice President's residence, the President and Mrs. Bush had lunch with Vice President Dick Cheney and his wife, Lynne Cheney. Later, they returned to Washington, DC.

October 21

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Governor-elect Bobby Jindal of Louisiana to congratulate him on his election victory.

October 22

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a video teleconference with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq.

In the afternoon, the President had lunch with President Nambaryn Enkhbayar of Mongolia. Then, in the Oval Office, the President met with veterans, leaders of military service organizations, and family members of a marine who was killed in the war on terror. Later, he had two telephone conversations with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California to discuss the wildfires in southern California.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with President Vladimir Putin of Russia and President Abdullah Gul of Turkey.

In the evening, at Decatur House, the President attended a Republican Governors Association reception.

October 23

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California to discuss the wildfires in southern California.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff and Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator R. David Paulison, who briefed him on the damage and recovery efforts in southern California.

The President announced his intention to nominate James Shinn to be Assistant Secretary of Defense (Asian and Pacific Security Affairs).

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert A. Sturgell to be Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration.

The President declared an emergency in California and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area struck by wildfires beginning on October 21 and continuing.

October 24

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a video teleconference with Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff, Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator R. David Paulison, Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne, Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England, Acting Secretary of Agriculture Charles F. Conner, and Gen. Victor E. Renuart, Jr., USAF, commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command, to discuss the wildfires in southern California.

The President declared a major disaster in California and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by wildfires beginning on October 21 and continuing.

October 25

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to San Diego, CA, where, aboard Marine One, he took an aerial tour of the areas damaged by the wildfires. He then traveled to Escondido, CA.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

The President announced his intention to nominate Steven R. Chealander to be a member of the National Transportation Safety Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate John H. Gibson to be Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Financial Management).

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark V. Rosenker to be Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Kenneth C. Canterbury, Jr., as a member of the medal of Valor Review Board (Law Enforcement).

The President announced that he has named Brian V. McCormack as Deputy Assistant to the President for Strategic Initiatives and External Affairs.

October 26

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

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 23

James Shinn,
of New Jersey, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense (new position).

Robert A. Sturgell,
of Maryland, to be Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration for the term of 5 years, vice Marion C. Blakey, term expired.

Submitted October 26

Steven R. Chealander,
of Texas, to be a member of the National Transportation Safety Board for a term expiring December 31, 2012 (reappointment).

John H. Gibson,
of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, vice Michael Montelongo, resigned.

Mark V. Rosenker,
of Maryland, to be Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board for a term of 2 years (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 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Press Secretary Tony Fratto

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary: Request To Fund Security Cooperation With Mexico and Central America

Fact sheet: 2008 War Funding Request

Released October 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press briefing by a senior administration official on the President's speech on Cuba

Statement by the Press Secretary on Senate passage of an appropriations bill to fund the Departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services and other agencies

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to California

Fact sheet: Defending America and Its Allies Against Ballistic Missile Attack

Released October 24

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1124, H.R. 2467, H.R. 2587, H.R. 2654, H.R. 2765, H.R. 2778, H.R. 2825, H.R. 3052, and H.R. 3106

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to California

Fact sheet: Encouraging Freedom, Justice, and Prosperity in Cuba

Released October 25

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on House of Representatives passage of State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 995

Released October 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3233

Acts Approved by the President

Approved October 24

H.R. 1124 / Public Law 110–97
To extend the District of Columbia College Access Act of 1999

H.R. 2467 / Public Law 110–98
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 69 Montgomery Street in Jersey City, New Jersey, as the "Frank J. Guarini Post Office Building"

H.R. 2587 / Public Law 110–99
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 555 South 3rd Street Lobby in Memphis, Tennessee, as the

"Kenneth T. Whalum, Sr. Post Office Building"

H.R. 2654 / Public Law 110–100
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 202 South Dumont Avenue in Woonsocket, South Dakota, as the "Eleanor McGovern Post Office Building"

H.R. 2765 / Public Law 110–101
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 44 North Main Street in Hughesville, Pennsylvania, as the "Master Sergeant Sean Michael Thomas Post Office"

H.R. 2778 / Public Law 110–102
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 3 Quaker Ridge Road in New Rochelle, New York, as the "Robert Merrill Postal Station"

H.R. 2825 / Public Law 110–103
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 326 South Main Street in Princeton, Illinois, as the "Owen Lovejoy Princeton Post Office Building"

H.R. 3052 / Public Law 110–104
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 954 Wheeling Avenue in Cambridge, Ohio, as the "John Herschel Glenn, Jr. Post Office Building"

H.R. 3106 / Public Law 110–105
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 805 Main Street in Ferdinand, Indiana, as the "Staff Sergeant David L. Nord Post Office"

Approved October 25

H.R. 995 / Public Law 110–106
To amend Public Law 106–348 to extend the authorization for establishing a memorial in the District of Columbia or its environs to honor veterans who became disabled while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States

Approved October 26

H.R. 3233 / Public Law 110–107
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at Highway 49 South in Piney Woods, Mississippi, as the "Laurence C. and Grace M. Jones Post Office Building"