

Remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast

February 7, 2008

The President. *Gracias, mi amigo.*

Senator Kenneth L. Salazar. *De nada.*

The President. Thank you, friend. Laura and I are honored to join you all here for the 56th National Prayer Breakfast. A lot of reasons to pray, and one, of course, is to strengthen us against temptation, particularly this morning—from temptation to stay in bed. [Laughter] Obviously there's a lot of prayerful people here. [Laughter] And I appreciate your warm welcome.

We have a lot of distinguished guests here today: Members of Congress, military leaders, captains of industry. Yet at this annual gathering, we are reminded of an eternal truth: When we lift our hearts to God, we're all equal in His sight. We're all equally precious; we're all equally dependent on His grace. It's fitting that we gather each year to approach our Creator in fellowship and to thank Him for the many blessings He has bestowed upon our families and our Nation. It is fitting that we gather in prayer, because we recognize a prayerful nation is a stronger nation.

I want to appreciate Senators—[ap-
plause]—I appreciate Senators Salazar and Enzi. Thank you for putting this deal on. Madam Speaker, Leader Hoyer, Leader Blunt, thank you all for being here. Welcome the Members of Congress. I appreciate the heads of state who are here. Welcome to America, again. I thank the members of the diplomatic corps who have joined us. Appreciate the distinguished dignitaries, all the members of my Cabinet—don't linger; get back to work. [Laughter]

Admiral, thank you for your leadership. Always proud to be with the members of the United States military. I thank the State and local officials. Ward, thanks for your remarks. Those were awesome. I guess that's a Presidential word. [Laughter] Proud to be here with Michael W. and Debbie. They're longtime friends of our family. Thank you for lending your beautiful voice. Judge, I'm not going to hold the Texas thing against you. [Laughter]

Every President since Dwight Eisenhower has attended the National Prayer Breakfast, and I am really proud to carry on this tradition. It's an important tradition, and I'm confident Presidents who follow me will do the same. The people in this room come from many different walks of faith, yet we share one clear conviction: We believe that the Almighty hears our prayers and answers those who seek Him. That's what we believe; otherwise, why come? Through the miracle of prayer, we believe He listens—if we listen to His voice and seek our presence—His presence in our lives, our hearts will change. And in so doing, in seeking God, we grow in ways that we could never imagine.

In prayer, we grow in gratitude and thanksgiving. When we spend time with the Almighty, we realize how much He has bestowed upon us, and our hearts are filled with joy. We give thanks for our families. We give thanks for the parents who raised us. We give thanks for the patient souls who married us and the children who make us proud each day. We give thanks for our liberty and the universal desire for freedom that He has written in every human heart. We give thanks for the God who made us in His image and redeemed us in His love.

In prayer, we grow in meekness and humility. By approaching our Maker on bended knee, we acknowledge our complete dependence on Him. We recognize that we have nothing to offer God that He does not already have, except our love. So we offer Him that love and ask for the grace to discern His will. We ask Him to remain near to us at all times. We ask Him to help us lead lives that are pleasing to Him. We discover that by surrendering our lives to the Almighty, we are strengthened, refreshed, and ready for all that may come.

In prayer, we also grow in boldness and courage. The more time we spend with God, the more we see that He is not a distant king, but a loving Father. Inspired by this confidence, we approach Him with bold requests. We ask Him to heal the sick and comfort the dying and sustain those who care for them. We ask Him to bring solace to the victims of tragedy and help to those suffering from addiction and adversity. We ask him to strengthen our families and to protect the

innocent and vulnerable in our country. We ask Him to protect our Nation from those who wish us harm and watch over all who've stepped forward to defend us. We ask Him to bring about the day when His peace shall reign across the world and every tear shall be wiped away.

In prayer, we grow in mercy and compassion. We are reminded in prayer that we are all fallen creatures in need of mercy. And in seeking God's mercy, we grow in mercy ourselves. Experiencing the presence of God transforms our hearts. And the more we seek His presence, the more we feel the tug at our souls to reach out to the poor and the hungry, the elderly and the infirm. When we answer God's call to love a neighbor as ourselves, we enter into a deeper friendship with our fellow man and a deeper relationship with our eternal Father.

I believe in the power of prayer because I have felt it in my own life. Prayer has strengthened me in times of personal challenge. It has helped me meet the challenges of the Presidency. I understand now clearly the story of the calm in the rough seas. And so at this final prayer breakfast as your President, I thank you for your prayers, and I thank our people all across America for their prayers. And I ask you not to stop in the year ahead. We have so much work to do for our country, and with the help of the Almighty, we will build a freer world and a safer, more hopeful, more noble America.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:16 a.m. at the Hilton Washington Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Adm. Michael G. Mullen, USN, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Edward "Ward" Brehm, Chairman of the Board of Directors, United States African Development Foundation; entertainer Michael W. Smith and his wife, Debbie; and Carlos F. Lucero, U.S. Circuit Judge for the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Remarks on Nominations Awaiting Senate Confirmation

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Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for coming. I appreciate you being here in a timely fashion. After all, Washington traffic

is famous for making people late. These days, it seems the worst delays, however, are in the committee rooms of the United States Senate.

Many of the nominees for important Government posts have been waiting for Senate confirmation for way too long. Some of these men and women here—are with us today, and I want to thank you all for joining me. More importantly, I thank you for your willingness to step forward to serve our great country. These folks are qualified, and the Senate needs to give them a prompt vote.

I appreciate very much Members of the Senate who have joined us. These are good, strong leaders, people who share the same spirit about the need to get confirmation done quickly, starting with the Senate minority leader, Mitch McConnell. I appreciate Arlen Specter joining us. You might remember Arlen that when—Arlen was the man, when I named two nominees for the Supreme Court, did a fantastic job of getting those nominees out of the Judiciary Committee and onto the floor of the Senate. And he had good help from Orrin Hatch, his friend and member of the Judiciary Committee.

I'm also here with some of the younger stars—not to call you guys old—but some of the younger stars—[laughter]—of the Senate: Richard Burr from North Carolina, Lindsey Graham from South Carolina, and Jim DeMint from South Carolina. Thank you all for coming. Appreciate you guys being here.

I thank members of my administration joining us. Steve, thanks for being here. Chief of Staff Bolten, I appreciate you being here. And thank you all for coming.

As President, I have a constitutional responsibility to nominate qualified men and women for public office. That's my responsibility. I take it very seriously. I have nominated skilled and faithful public servants to lead Federal Agencies and sit on the Federal bench. The Constitution also gives Senators an important responsibility. They must provide advice and consent by voting up or down on these nominees. Unfortunately, the Senate is not fulfilling its duty.