

My attitude is, if they're still analyzing number 1, 43 doesn't need to worry about it. I'm not going to be around to see the final history written on my administration. The truth is that history's verdict takes time to reveal itself.

But we don't have to wait on history for one thing: In the year ahead, the pundits, the so-called experts, commentators, analysts will offer more gloomy predictions and more big Government solutions. And when they do, let us remember their record. This is a group that is seldom correct—[laughter]—but never in doubt.

You and I have seen that in our own time. Ronald Reagan was called a “warmonger,” “an amiable dunce,” a “movie actor detached from reality.” Yet within a few years after President Reagan left office, the Berlin Wall came down, the evil empire collapsed, the cold war was won. And over the years, a strange thing has happened. A lot of people who spent the 1980's criticizing President Reagan now tell us they were with him all along. [Laughter]

You were with him all along. And over the past 7 years, you've been with me. I appreciate your support.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you all. I appreciate the chance that you've given me—help me get this opportunity to serve our country. It's been a fantastic experience. I appreciate the countless phone calls you've made. I appreciate the volunteer work you did in two tough campaigns. I'll always—always—be grateful [to each of you] * for supporting our cause, for giving me a chance, and for loving our country. I thank you for that.

I look forward to working with you this year. My energy is up; my spirit is high; and I will finish strong. And in the meantime, we will elect a new President. We've had good debates, and soon we'll have a nominee who will carry a conservative banner into this election and beyond. Listen, the stakes in November are high. This is an important election. Prosperity and peace are in the balance. So with confidence in our vision and faith in our values, let us go forward, fight

for victory, and keep the White House in 2008.

God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:21 a.m. at the Omni Shoreham Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to David A. Keene, chairman, American Conservative Union Foundation and Conservative Political Action Conference; and President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan. He also referred to H.R. 5140 and Executive Order 13457.

Remarks Following a Briefing on Regional Tornado Damage in Lafayette, Tennessee

February 8, 2008

Listen, I want to thank you for the briefing. People have got to understand here in the region that a lot of folks around America care for them now. And I'm here to listen, to determine—to make sure that the Federal response is compassionate and effective. I don't want people to think something is going to happen that's not going to happen. And therefore, when we say something is going to happen to help them get their feet back on the ground, it will happen.

Secondly, I am here to thank the people that will provide the compassion for people who hurt. I notice we've got the Red Cross sitting over there. They're good responders. They respond to help people in need.

Thirdly, I will make it clear to people here that I have no doubt in my mind this community will come back better than before. Macon County people are down-to-earth, hard-working, God-fearing people, who, if just given a little help, will come back stronger.

And that's what—and so I want to thank you all for the briefing. Governor, again, thank you for being here. Appreciate the Senators and Congressmen joining us too.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. at the Lafayette Fire Department's Atwell & Scruggs Fire Station. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Phil Bredesen of Tennessee.

* White House correction.

Remarks Following a Tour of Tornado Damage in Lafayette

February 8, 2008

The President. Phil and June Spears have just—I looked in their eyes and saw incredible sadness and worry.

Phil Spears. It's true.

The President. And I know the Governor joins me in sharing our concerns with you. But I hope a couple of things become evident to you. One, there's a lot of people who care about you, total strangers showing up here in this community to help you get back on your feet.

And the Government has got a role to play. And I want to thank the Senators and Congressmen for being here, because they know that there is programs available for you. And one of the things the people have got to do is call a phone number. Life has been turned upside down here. If you've been affected, you ought to call 1-800-621-3362—1-800-621-3362. And that's where you can find out the help that is available.

What happened is, is that the Governor and his team quickly moved as this storm moved through this—moved through the State of Tennessee, and he made an assessment, and he sent the paperwork up to me. And because he moved quickly, I was able to sign a disaster declaration that then frees help. And so we want the folks to know that there is help from the Federal Government, and he can get the number I just outlined. But there's also going to be a lot of help from loving neighbors.

And we're sorry you're going through what you're going through. You know, life sometimes is unfair, and you don't get to play the hand that you wanted to play.

Mr. Spears. That's true.

The President. But the question is, when you get dealt the hand, how do you play it? And I've come away with this impression of the folks in Macon County: One, they're down-to-earth, good, hard-working people. They have a respect for the Almighty. And this community is going to be as strong as ever. That's what I think.

Mr. Spears. Yes, sir.

The President. I bet you feel the same way.

Mr. Spears. Yes, sir. If it wasn't for my friends, I don't know what I'd do.

The President. And you're going to find you got some new friends showing up too——

Mr. Spears. Appreciate it.

The President. ——people you've never heard of, they don't know who you are, total strangers. But when they know there's a neighbor in need, they'll come and help you.

And I appreciate you giving me a chance to come by, and I know the folks traveling with me appreciate. We're so sorry you're going through what you're going through, but there's help, and that's what you've got to know.

Anyway, God bless. Thank you.

June Spears. Appreciate it.

Mr. Spears. Thank you.

The President. Yes. Hang in there, brother.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:43 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Phil Bredesen of Tennessee.

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.

February 2

In the morning, at Camp David, MD, the President had an intelligence briefing.

February 3

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

February 4

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister-elect Samak Sundaravej of Thailand to congratulate him on his appointment. He then had separate telephone conversations with New