

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