

hours with family and friends who are still with us because of his healing touch. His legacy is grandparents who lived to see their grandchildren. His legacy is holding the fragile and sacred gift of human life in his hands and returning it unbroken.

For nearly 100 years, our country has been blessed with the endless talents and dedication of Dr. Michael DeBakey. And he has dedicated his career to a truly noble ambition: bettering the life of his fellow men.

So, Dr. DeBakey, on behalf of all those you've healed and those you've inspired, we thank you. May God bless you.

And now I ask the Speaker and Senator Reid to join me for the Gold Medal Presentation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:33 a.m. in the Rotunda at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Katrin Fehlhaber, wife of Michael E. DeBakey.

Remarks on National Small Business Week

April 23, 2008

Welcome. I'm glad you're here. Thanks for coming. Nothing better, being in the East Room of the White House with successful entrepreneurs, small-business owners, dreamers, and doers who really add such richness to our country. So I welcome you here. I'm glad you're here. It's exciting to be here, isn't it? Yes, after 7½ years, it's still exciting for me too. And I'm really glad you're here.

I want to thank Steve Preston. He's done a fantastic job as the head of the SBA; so good that I named him to be the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. And I congratulate you, Steve, for taking the job. I'm looking forward to getting the Senate to take up your nomination quickly and get you approved.

So, Small Business Week—the truth of the matter is, every day ought to be small business day in America because—[applause]. People say, why? Well, first of all, small businesses create over two-thirds of all new jobs in America. And if you want your economy to grow, and if you want the country to be hopeful, it seems like you ought to be cele-

brating the talent and the energy of our small-business owners daily. But we've decided to do it week—yearly—Small Business Week. I presume that's 1 week out of the year. [Laughter]

And so the first thing I've got to do is congratulate all the award winners who are here. Thanks. It's—owning a small business is hard. It's not an easy experience. I've had the pleasure of getting to meet a lot of small-business owners during my time as, first, Governor of Texas and then President of the country. And you'll be amazed at how many times people have said, well, you know, it all started around the kitchen table. You'll also be amazed at how many family members are involved in the creation and operation of a small business. And our fellow citizens wouldn't be amazed to know that the number of hours required to make sure the business is going is a lot. But the thing that struck me the most, besides the fact that people are willing to dream and work hard, is how proud the small-business owner is of the employees with whom the person works and how caring the owner is to make sure that those who've helped the business succeed are treated well.

I have the pleasure of welcoming and recognizing one Shawn Christopher Boyer, who happens to be the recipient of the Small Business Owner of the Year. Now, Shawn started off by helping a friend search online for an internship, and he got an idea for a business right there. Sometimes that happens. You know, it's just like, click. And the idea was to create a web site to help unemployed Americans with job opportunities. And actually, I asked him to leave a business card because it seems like I might be looking here after a while. [Laughter]

He started his business with just two employees. I bet you a lot of the winners here can say, "I started my business with one or two employees." He has grown—got 100 employees now. He is—earnings have grown from almost \$900,000 in '03 to over \$11 million 4 years later. And as I just told you, he was named National Small Business Person of the Year. I met with Shawn; the CFO, David Boshier; Tennille; as well as his dad.

And I want to congratulate you, Shawn. Welcome to the White House, and I really wish you all the very best.

Angela Timm—where's Angela? Oh, there you are. Thank you, Angela. She started a company in her home that sells music boxes and framed messages that offer words of hope and inspiration. She's gone through what a lot of other small-business owners go through, which is good times and bad times. And the fundamental question is, do you have the perseverance to endure the bad time and the humility to handle the good times?

In 2004, her business hit hard times. She had a good idea, but sometimes everything doesn't go well for you in the business world. The company's line of credit was maxed out. They had to let managers go, and her home was hit by a tornado. Her family and Angela held on through the adversity. They recovered. They hired back employees. In recent years, they have seen sales in the millions, with healthy profits. And that is why she's the runner-up Small Business Owner of the Year.

And the reason I bring up these two stories—we could be here for the other 48 stories, which would have a lot of similarities. I appreciate you all coming together to share stories, to reach out to others who wonder what it's like to be an entrepreneur, to help others realize the great wonders of ownership, and to make sure that as you tell the story, that people are realistic about what it takes to succeed.

Government has a role to play as well, and that is to create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit flourishes. I mean, as I remind people, that Government doesn't create success in a small business. Matter of fact, Government can pass policies that make it harder to succeed in small business. Government's got to be mindful of the contribution of the entrepreneur and make sure that the environment is such that people feel comfortable dreaming and owning and expanding.

And so I know you're going to be speaking to elected officials, and I've got a few suggestions about what you might offer them in the way of advice. First, you might suggest to Members of Congress that they let you keep

your money—in other words, to keep taxes low. This is obviously a difficult time for the economy, and I like to say it's a rough patch. And the reason I call it that is because I'm confident that with good policies and hard work, we'll come out stronger than we were entering. But nevertheless, it's tough. And it's tough on small-business owners.

We did take action in which, rather than just analyzing the situation, we saw this coming and moved swiftly with Members of Congress from both parties, believe it or not—actually got something done in a constructive way without feeling like they had to call each other names. And it's a progrowth package which will provide tax rebates to more than 130 million American households. And that ought to help—that ought to help stimulate consumption. The money hadn't hit yet. It's going to be there—start moving in the second week of May.

The stimulus package also provides incentives for businesses like yours to invest in new equipment and technology this year. In other words, it's a temporary stimulus package aimed at dealing with the rough patch that we've entered into, but it's got to be robust enough to matter. So when you're affecting 130 million households, that's robust. And when you're affecting all the businesses in the United States, that's a robust message.

And the reason why it's important to stimulate investment is because if tax policy can encourage you to buy a piece of equipment, one, it helps your business be more productive, but also somebody has got to make the equipment. And if somebody is making the equipment, then somebody has got to buy the supplies to make the equipment, and it kind of ripples throughout the economy.

So the idea was to provide stimulus to businesses and to provide—give money to the taxpayers so that they can go out and purchase things and remain active consumers. And it's going to take a while for this to have an effect. The experts tell me that—you got these economists that say, on the one hand, and on the other hand—if they had three hands, it would be three opinions, but nevertheless—all due respect to some of my economist friends here. [Laughter] But pretty well consensus that the stimulus package, when it takes full effect, will affect our

growth in the third quarter, which begins in July of this year.

There's other work to be done on taxes. One of my concerns about tax policy is that it creates uncertainty. In other words, when you're trying to figure out a 5-year projection about your companies, you've got to be certain that the tax load that you now bear isn't going to increase. It's hard to plan. It's hard to have a successful small business if there's uncertainty in the environment. And one place where there can be a lot of uncertainty is whether or not your taxes are going to remain low. And the reason why that's the case is because the tax relief we passed is going to expire, some of it beginning in 2010.

Now, the tax relief we passed, you might remember, cut taxes on all people who pay taxes. We have—and emphasis on families with children, for example. We tried to get rid of the death tax forever. A small-business owner has got to be saying to Members of Congress: “I don't want to be taxed twice; once when I'm alive, and once after I die”—particularly if you own a small business. It's an unfair tax. Yet that tax, which is on the road to extinction, is going to come back to life.

And equally damaging, as far as I'm concerned, is the fact that people are saying, we're going to let the personal income tax rates go back up. And, of course, the language is, “only on the rich people.” Well, the sad fact is, is that many of our small businesses are subchapter S corporations, LLCs, limited partnerships that pay tax at the individual income tax level. And so the tax relief we provided was in many ways—should have been called a small business tax relief plan. And the idea of saying that we're going to raise individual income tax rates really is counterproductive to making sure that the economy remains strong.

If you're creating over two-thirds of the new jobs, why would we want to be taking money out of the treasuries of those job creators? Less money in your treasury means it's going to be harder for you to create the jobs necessary for this economy to be strong. If Congress truly cares about keeping this economy strong, they ought to have certainty in the Tax Code by making all the tax cuts we passed permanent.

A couple other issues, now that I got you stuck here. [Laughter] Health care—I fully understand that you're concerned about affordable health care. You're concerned, obviously, because it affects your bottom line, but you're also more concerned because it affects the people you work with. And I understand that. And there's a choice that we can make in Government. One is, do we have kind of a wholesale plan sponsored by—executed by the Federal Government, or do we put policy in place that encourages the decisionmakers to be directly in touch with the providers? That's what I have tried to propose, and have proposed, such as health savings accounts.

For those of you who have not explored health savings accounts, I strongly urge you to do so. It's a very powerful way for you to better afford health insurance and, at the same time, empower your employees.

I believe Congress should change the Tax Code. If you're working for a big company in America, you get a better tax break than if you're working for—on your own or you're a contract employee. And so there ought to be a standard deduction for health insurance so that the bias in the Tax Code is eliminated.

We ought to confront junk lawsuits that drive good docs out of practice and run up the cost of your health care.

And finally, I strongly believe that Congress should allow small businesses to pool risk across jurisdictional boundaries. Those are long words. Like, if you're a restaurant guy in Texas, you ought be able to put your employees in the same risk pool as a restaurant person in Maryland. Those are called association health plans that will enable small businesses to be able to buy insurance at the same discounts that big businesses get. But what we shouldn't do is have a health care system where the decisions are made in Washington, DC, not made in your offices or between patients and doctors.

I want to talk about an interesting issue that is getting a lot of attention these days, and that is the issue of trade and markets. And as you know by now, I hope, that I'm—I believe that it's in our interests to open up markets for U.S. products and goods and services. I also know it's in our interest to say to the world, treat us the way we treat you. In other words, all we want to do is

be treated fairly. And one of the interesting votes coming up here soon—hopefully, if the Speaker doesn't change her—does change her mind—which would be on the Colombia free trade agreement. And let me tell you why I think this is important.

First of all, there are about 9,000 American businesses that export to Colombia. Most of those businesses, by far the vast majority, are mid-sized and small businesses. The problem is, is that that which they export generally faces significant tariffs. In other words, the product that they selling is more expensive because of the tariffs. On the other hand, as a result of congressional policy over the years, products coming from Colombia into the United States don't face tariffs. So American goods and services, mainly provided by mid-sized and small-sized businesses, are taxed going into Colombia, making it harder for those products to gain market access. On the other hand, as a result of years of policy, Colombian goods come here duty free.

Now, doesn't it make sense to say to Colombia, we value our friendship, but we would like to be treated the way we treat you? And that's what the Colombia free trade agreement says. It—this is a bill that is beneficial to our small businesses and mid-sized businesses. It makes eminent sense to level the playing field. Yet, unfortunately, the leadership in the House of Representatives chose a unusual procedure to block a vote. I believe the bill will pass. I know that when people really analyze whether it's fair or not to be treated one way and yet Colombia be treated beneficially—say, well, why don't we just level the playing field?

The other thing is this vote has got enormous national policy implications. First of all, it's in our interest to have a neighborhood that's free—when people who believe in rule of law and human rights—support leaders in our neighborhood that are tough on dealing with narcotraffickers.

In Colombia, there's a group called FARC, which is funded by, in large part, drugs; that are willing to use violence to advance their agenda. And they're threatening our ally. And President Uribe is taking them on in a way that doesn't violate the human rights of his people. He's a strong, strong leader. And yet if Congress turns down this agree-

ment, it's like turning our back to an ally, which will encourage the voices of false populism in our neighborhood.

And so I—this is an important vote. It's important for small businesses; it's important for our economy; and it's important for our national security interests. And the United States Congress must give it a vote on the floor of the House.

So those are some of the things that are on my mind. [*Laughter*] You know, it's interesting; there's a portrait of a fellow that hangs here in the White House who—he failed at nearly every enterprise he started. He invested in a zinc mine, but lost his money. He invested in an oil company, but the company sold the lease to a—and it turned out to be a gusher, but he didn't own any of it at that point in time. He ran a store with a friend, but it went bankrupt after a few years. And yet he was arguably one of the finest Presidents we had, and that was Harry Truman.

I'm convinced—I've never had a visit with Harry at all, but I'm convinced that he would say, "The lessons I learned in trying to be a small-business owner are lessons that are important for a decisionmaker in the White House." And although it's hard to say he was a successful businessperson, he learned about hard work and determination and resilience and willing to face adversity with good spirit.

And that is why I am honored to be with you today, because I'm confident that's what you've done. What you've chosen to do is not easy, but what you've chosen to do is important for our country. It's the collective decisions by our small-business owners that make America the envy of the world in many ways.

I love it when people can say, "I have a idea, and I am going to apply all my talent and all my effort to see the idea come to fruition." It is what made us great in the past, it's what makes us great today, and what is going to make us great in the future. And I hope you take great pride in the contributions that you're making to your community, your family, and your Nation.

Thanks for coming. May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:50 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Shawn C. Boyer, president and chief executive officer, David Bosher, senior vice president and chief financial officer, and Tennille Boyer, national account executive, SnagAJob.com, Inc.; J. Hardin Boyer, father of Mr. Boyer; and Angela Timm, founder and chief executive officer, Cottage Garden Collections.

Statement on National Donate Life Month

April 23, 2008

During National Donate Life Month, we show our appreciation for our fellow Americans who have saved lives by becoming organ, tissue, marrow, and blood donors, and we honor the health care professionals, researchers, and others involved in this life-saving work. I was pleased today to meet with organ donors, medical professionals, and organ recipients, all of whom participated in a historic six-recipient kidney transplant in which six patients received new organs from six unrelated living donors. This history-making medical event took place 3 weeks ago at Johns Hopkins Comprehensive Transplant Center. These people are all firsthand witnesses to the gift of life, or, in this case, lives.

We are blessed to have a health care system that is the best in the world and includes skilled medical professionals like those I met with today. We are also blessed to be a nation filled with generous and compassionate people. The selflessness of those who are donors is an inspiration.

Unfortunately, thousands of Americans are on waiting lists for an organ or tissue transplant. I urge all Americans to make the decision to donate. For information about becoming an organ and tissue donor, go to organdonor.gov. Talk to your family, talk to your friends, and register. You can give a transforming gift of life.

Remarks at the White House Summit on Inner-City Children and Faith-Based Schools

April 24, 2008

Thank you all. Aysia, thanks for the introduction. You did a fabulous job. I'm told that you're a very hard worker who loves school, and it's clear you always wear a smile. She's a member of her school's student advisory group, has performed in plays ranging from Shakespeare to "The Lion King," writes short stories, and as you just heard her explain, she loves all language arts. Well, that's good. Some people say I'm pretty artful with language as well. [Laughter]

It is clear she has a promising future because of the education she is receiving at Saint Ann's. Unfortunately, thousands of other children like her are missing out on these opportunities because America's inner-city faith-based schools are closing at an alarming rate. And so that's why we've convened this summit, to discuss how we can extend lifelines of learning to all America's children. And I want to thank you for coming.

I take this summit seriously. Obviously, you do as well. My administration looks forward to working with you. This is a national objective, to make sure every child gets a good education. And I really appreciate you coming.

I want to thank my friend and the Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, for joining with us today. I thank the Acting Secretary of HUD, Roy Bernardi.

Archbishop Wuerl, thank you very much, sir, for being here. We were just talking about what a glorious week it was to welcome His Holiness to America. It was an extraordinary moment for all who were directly involved and, I think, an extraordinary moment for all of America.

I got to know Archbishop Wuerl in Pittsburgh. I hope I conveyed to him my sense that providing a sound education for every child is one of the really important challenges for America. I happen to believe it is one of the greatest civil rights challenges. I am fully aware that in inner-city America, some children are getting a good education, but a lot are consigned to inadequate schools.