

Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



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WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, April 25, 2008

The President's Radio Address

April 19, 2008

Good morning. Next week, I will be hosting the North American leaders' summit in New Orleans. This event will give me an opportunity to meet with Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Mexican President Felipe Calderon to discuss some of the most significant issues facing our hemisphere and the world.

One of the issues I will be discussing with these leaders is the importance of expanding trade in our hemisphere. Recently, I sent Congress an agreement that would expand America's access to markets in Colombia. Unfortunately, the Speaker of the House has chosen to block the Colombia free trade agreement instead of giving it an up-or-down vote that Congress committed to. Her action is unprecedented and extremely unfortunate. I hope that the Speaker will change her mind. If she does not, the agreement will be dead. And this will be bad for American workers and bad for America's national security.

And here is why. Today, almost all of Colombia's exports to the United States enter duty free. But the 9,000 American businesses that export to Colombia, including nearly 8,000 small and midsized firms, face significant tariffs on their products. The situation is completely one-sided. Our markets are open to Colombian products, but barriers that make it harder to sell American goods in Colombia remain. If the free trade agreement were implemented, however, most of Colombia's tariffs on American goods would be eliminated immediately.

There's also a strategic imperative to approve the agreement. By obstructing this agreement, Congress is signaling to a watching hemisphere that America cannot be trusted to support its friends. Over the past 6 years, Colombia's President Uribe has been a steadfast ally of the United States. He's

transformed his country from a near-failed state to a stable democracy with a growing economy. He has partnered with America in the fight against drugs and terror. And he has addressed virtually every one of Congress's concerns, including revising the free trade agreement to include some of the most rigorous labor and environmental protections in history.

He has done all this while his country is under violent assault from a terrorist organization and facing constant intimidation from anti-American regimes in the region. As Canada's Prime Minister Harper has said, "If the U.S. turns its back on its friends in Colombia, this will set back our cause far more than any Latin American dictator could hope to achieve."

Leaders in Congress have made a serious error, but it is not too late to get it right. This week, a long list of senior officials from Democratic administrations and Democrats from previous Congresses signed a letter urging Congress to approve the agreement this year. They wrote, quote: "We feel that the treaty should be considered as soon as possible and that any obstacles should be quickly and amicably resolved." I strongly agree. I believe that if the Speaker allows a vote on the merits, a majority of the House of Representatives will approve the trade agreement. So I urge leaders in Congress to reconsider their position, recognize the stakes at hand, and approve the Colombia agreement as soon as possible.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:35 a.m. on April 18 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 19. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 18 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

**The President's News Conference
With President Lee Myung-bak of
South Korea at Camp David,
Maryland**

April 19, 2008

President Bush. Welcome. We're glad you're here, Mr. President, and we're glad you brought Mrs. Kim. We had a wonderful dinner last night and looking forward to having lunch too, today.

We've had great visits. And this is an important visit for me to get to know you. I heard about your background. I admire your strength of character. And this is an important visit to strengthen the relationship between our two countries, and I believe we have done so.

President Lee. Thank you.

President Bush. President Lee is the first Korean President to visit Camp David. And I don't know if the American citizens understand your nickname.

President Lee. Yes.

President Bush. You're known as "the Bulldozer." [*Laughter*] He said to make sure that it was a bulldozer with a computer. [*Laughter*] And the reason why is that this is a man who takes on big challenges, and he doesn't let obstacles get in the way. I like his spirit; I like his candor; and I like his optimistic vision. But most of all, I really appreciate his values.

A good relationship is based upon common values, and our countries share common values, values of the rights of each individual to live in a free society. We believe in human dignity and justice.

Now, we discussed a variety of issues. We talked about our defense cooperation. In 2004, our nations began an alliance transformation that has involved realigning U.S. forces in Korea and relocating some of them from the peninsula. We're in constant touch, and we're constantly reassessing our needs. And we have reaffirmed our need to remain in close dialog. And we reached an agreement to maintain the current U.S. troop level on the peninsula. This is a mutual agreement that benefits both our nations and will strengthen our alliance, and Secretary Gates and Defense Minister Lee will coordinate its implementation.

Korea has asked that—to upgrade its foreign military sales status with the United States and to have the same access to U.S. military technologies as NATO and other key allies. And I strongly support this request and have instructed Secretaries Rice and Gates to work with the Congress to get this done.

Yesterday our nations signed a memorandum of understanding on security improvements necessary for Korea to enter the Visa Waiver Program. This was a very important issue for the President.

President Lee. Yes. Sure.

President Bush. We spent a lot of time talking about this issue. These security enhancements put Korea on the path toward visa-free travel to the United States for its people. We promised that both sides will work hard on this issue so that Koreans will be visiting the United States under the Visa Waiver Program before this year ends.

The United States and Korea are working to improve security and advance freedom in the Asia-Pacific region. Together with China, Russia, and Japan, our nations are pressing North Korea to fulfill its obligations to abandon its nuclear weapons program. Thanks to the six-party framework, North Korea has begun disabling the plutonium production facilities at Yongbyon. And now North Korea must fulfill its other obligations: provide a full declaration of its nuclear programs and proliferation activities in a verifiable way.

President Lee and I discussed our mutual concern for the human condition in North Korea. I mean, we are—our hearts break when we hear these stories of families that have been torn apart or people being subjected to harsh work camps because of their beliefs. We believe in basic rights, and we believe those rights ought to be extended to the people of North Korea.

We're also thankful for the Koreans' contributions to the young democracies, whether it be Afghanistan or Iraq or Lebanon. And we want to thank you and your people, Mr. President, for those sacrifices.

And then, of course, we talked about our economy. As a former CEO, President Lee understands the importance of trade. First of all, I want to thank you, Mr. President, and I appreciate your decision to reopen the Korean market to American beef, consistent

with international standards. This is good news for Korean consumers, and it's good news for American beef producers. As a matter of fact, we had some good American beef last night for dinner. [Laughter]

Now, our United States Congress must reject protectionism. It must not turn its back on a friend and ally like Korea and must approve the free trade agreement with Korea this year. So the President was wondering—he's been reading about the decision by our Speaker that effectively killed the Colombia free trade agreement, unless, of course, she gives us a date certain of when there will be a vote. He wonders if this protectionist sentiment is such that it will cause me, for example, not to continue to fight for free and fair trade.

I assured him that the Korea trade agreement is a priority of this administration, and I assured him that we will press hard with the United States Congress. It's in our country's interests that we approve this agreement, Mr. President. It's in our interests that we stand with our friends and allies. And it's in the interests of the world that we complete the Doha negotiations for the WTO. We spent some time discussing that as well.

And then—and finally, we talked about our mutual desire to have a rational, practical approach to international climate—the international climate issue, global warming. I mean, it's—how can you possibly have an international agreement that's effective unless countries like China and India are not full participants? And that's why I assured him this major economies meeting that's taking place in Paris—I assured him I meant what I said in my speech in the Rose Garden, and that hopefully by the time we get to G-8, there's a serious effort by all major economies to become active participants in a effective strategy to deal with this issue.

So we had a great discussion. Really appreciate you coming. And, Mr. President, the podium is yours.

President Lee. Thank you very much, Mr. President. First of all, thank you for inviting me and my wife to this beautiful place called Camp David. I would like to extend my thanks to President Bush and Mrs. Laura Bush for their invitation. And I was warmly welcomed by the American people. If I were

to have known I was going to get this warm hospitality, I should have come earlier. [Laughter]

Again, I would like to extend my most sincere gratitude to you, Mr. President. And also, we had a very productive discussion. We had a very open and frank discussion. And I believe that today's meeting was very constructive, and I'm very thankful for having this meeting, Mr. President.

The Korea-U.S. alliance was pivotal in ensuring peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula but also that of Northeast Asia. Now, as the international situation as well as the economic and security situation change dramatically, our alliance is also called upon to undergo new changes. And so in order to effectively respond to these need for change, President Bush and I agreed to develop our alliance into an alliance based on freedom and democracy, human rights, and the principle of market economy—otherwise known as the 21st century strategic alliance, something that will contribute to global peace and security as well.

Furthermore, we both agreed to—based on such mutual understanding and common ideas—to discuss specific ways to realize our vision for this strategic alliance. So we'll discuss this when President Bush visits Korea later on this year.

Just a while ago, President Bush mentioned as for the U.S. forces in Korea, he decided to maintain the current troop levels in Korea. Is that right, Mr. President?

President Bush. Yes, that's an accurate statement.

President Lee. Both of us reaffirmed once again that under no circumstances would we allow North Korea to possess nuclear weapons. Also, we agreed to work together closely within the six-party talks so that North Korea can fully and completely give up all their nuclear weapons program as soon as possible.

Korea and the United States do not harbor any hostile intent towards North Korea. We both agreed to work together to help North Korea escape international isolation and to improve the lives of the North Korean people. President Bush supported our policy towards North Korea, including our denuclearization opening 3000 policy, and also said that the United States will continue

to dialog—seek ways to promote dialog in exchange with North Korea.

Both President Bush and I agreed that the passage of the KORUS FTA will benefit not only our two economies but also act as a catalyst to substantially improve exchange and cooperation in all areas between our two countries. And so we agreed to work closely together for the speedy ratification of the KORUS FTA. And, Mr. President, he agreed to work very closely and to convince the United States Congress to pass the KORUS FTA by the end of this year. I would like to thank him for that.

Among the achievements of my visit to the United States—there were a lot of difficulties for Koreans to visit the United States. Most of all, the difficulty they faced was due to the difficulty in getting visas to enter the United States. However, the Republic of Korea has signed a memorandum of understanding for—to take part in the Visa Waiver Program, and we agreed to implement this by the end of this year. Once that happens, our cultural exchange as well as our economic exchange and the exchange in many areas will expand, and I have high hopes for that.

At the same time, President Bush and I agreed to expand exchange programs for our youth and students, which will ensure a brighter future for our bilateral ties.

We reaffirm that nuclear nonproliferation and the promotion of democracy and human rights are all a vital component in making our world a better, safer place. In this regard, in order to ensure sustainable development, we agreed to work closely on the issues of climate change and energy securities, matters which are very serious and concerns us all.

During the summit meeting today, I was very heartened to hear that the United States and President Bush personally had a very strong interest in fighting global warming and climate change. That's a very important decision, and I hope that the United States—and I have confidence that the United States will take a leading role in this issue, and I have confidence Mr. President Bush will do that as well.

I invited President Bush and Mrs. Laura Bush to visit Korea this summer. And I'm pleased to note that President Bush agreed

and readily accepted to come visit Korea with Mrs. Bush.

Once again, today's meeting was an opportunity for us to reaffirm our mutual trust, and that we agreed to work together to solve issues not only of the peninsula but to work closely and cooperate with issues of global concern.

I'm very happy with the results of today's meeting. And we will work very closely together to see the complete dismantlement of the nuclear weapons program of North Korea, and we will work closely within the six-party talks framework. And we must see the satisfactory conclusion, which will lead to helping the North Korean people lead better lives with dignity.

Once again, Mr. President, I'm very happy to have met you, Mr. President, as well as Mrs. Laura Bush. And thank you for the warm hospitality extended to me and my delegation by the people of America. We will work closely together with a future-oriented mind. And I promise you I will do my very best, Mr. President.

President Bush. Thank you. We'll do two questions a side.

North Korea

Q. I have the same question for both of you.

President Bush. I warned him.

Q. [*Inaudible*]*—not two questions.*

President Bush. Well, no, it's—[*laughter*].

Q. Isn't—first to President Bush—isn't scaling back demands about what the—North Korea has to declare giving in to a country that has repeatedly demonstrated that it can't be trusted? Former U.N. Ambassador Bolton has called it a complete collapse in the deal, and your critics are saying that you're selling out to get an agreement. Why is it not?

President Bush. Look, we're going to make a judgment as to whether North Korea has met its obligations to account for its nuclear program and activities, as well as meet its obligations to disable its reactor. In other words, we'll see. The burden of proof is there. We've laid out—they've made some promises, and we'll make a judgment as to whether they met those promises. And then

we and our partners will take a look at North Korea's full declaration to determine whether or not the activities they promised they could do could be verified. And then we'll make a judgment of our own as to whether or not—you know, we'll—about our own obligations.

Q. So you're not—[inaudible]—about what you're asking them?

President Bush. You know, there's all kinds of rumors about what is happening and what's not happening. Obviously, I'm not going to accept a deal that doesn't advance the interests of the region. The whole objective of the six-party talks and framework is to get them to disclose their weapons programs, is to get them to dismantle their plutonium processing, is to get them to talk about activities, nuclear activities. And we'll make a judgment as to whether or not they do that. But somehow, people are precluding—you know, jumping ahead of the game. They have yet to make a full declaration. Why don't we just wait and see what they say before people go out there and start giving their opinions about whether or not this is a good deal or a bad deal.

But one thing is for certain: The most effective way to deal with this issue is to do so with parties like China and Japan and Korea joining the United States and South Korea with a common voice. The whole object of this exercise is to convince the leader of North Korea to give up his nuclear weapons ambitions. That's the whole object.

And so we have yet to come to the stage where he has made a full declaration. And so we'll wait and see what he says, and then we'll make a decision about our obligations, depending upon whether or not we're convinced that there is a solid and full declaration and whether or not there's a way to verify whether or not he's going to do what he says he's going to do.

President Lee. As for the declaration of North Korea, that is in a very important process. I believe, if North Korea's declaration is not satisfactory or if the verification is not satisfactory, we could probably have a temporary achievement. But in the long term, that will cause a lot more serious problems. I believe President Bush shares this thought with me.

Mr. President Bush explained just now the declaration, the verification process, has not begun. We are still waiting for North Korea to declare their full program. They should not get away with this temporary measure. The United States is not dealing with the—North Korea alone. There are other parties to the six-party talks, and they must all agree to North Korea's declaration. So in that regard, North Korea's declaration of their nuclear weapons program should be complete and correct, and verification—I'm not sure how long that is going to take, but North Korea must faithfully cooperate with verification process.

All the parties of the six-party talks are with one mind that the verification process must be full and complete and satisfactory. I think it's inappropriate and unconstructive for us to have too many doubts before the process even begins. The process is beginning. We should have trust in the process, and I will watch this process and cooperate fully.

North Korea-South Korea Relations

Q. I have a question for President Lee. Korea and the United States have made many achievements through the summit meeting, especially North Korean nuclear issue and the strengthening of the alliance. As for North Korean nuclear issue, Mr. President Lee suggested setting up a permanent liaison office in both Seoul and Pyongyang. What are some of the followup effects, if you do have any followup actions? And do you have any thoughts of proposing a meeting with Chairman Kim at an earlier date?

President Lee. The process is not something that we discussed between ourselves during the summit meeting. In fact, when I was staying in Washington, DC, I had an interview with one of the newspapers there, and it came up. Of course, it was not a sudden suggestion. I did have a meeting among my staff and related ministries, and I talked about this in detail before I came to the United States.

We have a new administration in Korea, and we haven't yet to begun dialog with the North Koreans. Inter-Korean dialog—there is a need for us to have dialog all the time. Up until now, we had dialogs whenever the

need arose, and then it would stop. However, dialog should be based on genuine cooperation and sincerity. And so with this in mind, I thought that it would be helpful to set up a permanent liaison office in both Seoul and Pyongyang.

As for the summit meeting between myself and Chairman Kim, I will agree to it when the need is real. And I already said publicly that I am willing to meet with him—not just once, but many times—but if the meeting will yield substantial and real results. I believe only when that is possible, I am ready to meet with him and have sincere dialog, because that will help to bring about peace and stability of the peninsula.

So basically, I do hold that thought, but I'm not suggesting that—to have a meeting with Chairman Kim anytime soon. If the need arises, again, I'm ready to meet with him.

President Bush. Steven Lee [Steven Lee Myers, New York Times].

North Korea/Six-Party Talks

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President. If I could follow up a little bit on North Korea—the North Koreans agreed last year to make their disclosure. We're now in April, and we've yet to see this disclosure. There are continued negotiations, a new round next week. Are you concerned that, given this record, they're not prepared to make this full disclosure; that they're stalling the process somehow? And if so, a question for both of you, how do you respond to that?

President Bush. Yes, of course. I mean, they may be trying to stall. One thing about a nontransparent society where there's not a lot of free press, for example, or a lot of opposition voices, it's hard to tell what's going on. Now, he has made declarations, and he's testing the relationship. He's wondering whether or not the five of us will stay unified. And the only thing I know to do is to continue pressing forward within the six-party framework.

The decision—we've made our decision. We, the five of us, have made our decision, and that is, there's a way forward. And obviously we hope he chooses to honor his commitments in a verifiable way. But it's—when you're dealing with a society in which it's

hard to get information out of, you just have to wait and see whether they're sincere or not. Unlike our society, of course, where there's all kinds of people in the administration talking and sharing information with you—some of it authorized, some of it's not—it doesn't happen that way in North Korea. It's a closed society. It's a society in which the will of one person decides the course of the future.

And, again, we're very hopeful. We talked about our mutual desire to keep the six-party framework in place to deal with a lot of issues. The first one, of course, is with North Korea. And it's—I can just tell you, Steven Lee, it's much more effective to have more than one voice speaking on this issue than to be the sole voice speaking on the issue. And so if it—if there ever is going to be a breakthrough, it's through the six-party framework.

And, look, I'm hopeful. We'll see. This has been a—I've been at this for quite awhile. And there's been moments where it looked like the process was going to go very smoothly and everybody's going to honor their commitments, and then for one reason or another, there's a—there was a setback. But the key thing is, is that we haven't abandoned the efforts to solve this problem peacefully and diplomatically.

President Lee. Thank you. If you correctly understand North Korea and if you do understand North Korean society, you'll probably get a better picture of why we are seeing some delay in the process at the moment. If North Korea wasn't like that, then we would have seen the resolvment of this issue already. We need persistent patience, ladies and gentlemen. And we need time in order to have complete resolution of this issue.

However, it's difficult to convince North Korea to give up their nuclear weapons program, but it's not impossible. It is not impossible. I believe that. So in order to resolve this issue, I believe that the six-party talks is the most effective way and mechanism to resolve this issue, like the President mentioned. And right now we're in the stages of waiting for their declaration, and then we can move on to the verification process.

So I think it's up to you to make the atmosphere so that North Korea can faithfully abide by their promise and make the right declaration; that once North Korea does so, it is also in their interest to make the correct decision to give a full and complete declaration. And it will also help the North Korean people improve the quality of their life, and that is the best strategic choice that they can make.

South Korea-U.S. Relations/China

Q. Chosun Daily News—I have a question for President Bush. The United States has a divergent alliance with countries like the United Kingdom, Japan. In your opinion, President Bush, what kind of alliance do you have with the Republic of Korea? And during your summit meeting today, I believe you agreed to upgrade the Korea-U.S. alliance. In order to upgrade the alliance, what kind of new movement will you take on, for instance, the transfer of wartime operational control? And what will you do, President Bush—do you have any intention to meet with both President Lee and Chairman Kim in order to resolve this issue?

President Bush. No—[inaudible]—described the relationship—[inaudible]—a 21st century strategic alliance. That makes sense to me. So what does that mean? Well, it means we work in ways to deal with 21st century problems, such as proliferation of nuclear materials, such as working to make sure our children are educated with the tools necessary to be productive citizens, such as having a recognition that in the 21st century, a free and fair trading system will be necessary for prosperity. And that's why it's going to be very important for our Congress to ratify the free trade agreement with Korea.

It's going to be very important a 21st century alliance recognizes that China is a opportunity for both nations to engage in a constructive way. We have our problems with China, of course, whether it be human rights or how the Chinese leadership deals with the Dalai Lama or with Burma—a variety of issues. On the other hand, you can either have a constructive relationship—we can work constructively with China—or we can have a destructive relationship. I've chosen to have a constructive relationship.

And so the step one is to anticipate the issues confronting our peoples in the 21st century, and step two is to develop a practical way to deal with those issues. And that's exactly what our conversation revolved around. And I'm confident that this meeting has strengthened our relationship, and I'm confident that the American people understand how important this relationship is to our own prosperity and our own security.

And so it's been a really good visit, and we're glad you came here too. [Laughter] Yes. Thanks for coming. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:17 a.m. In his remarks, the President referred to Kim Yoon-ok, wife of President Lee; Minister of National Defense Lee Sang-hee of South Korea; Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea; and Tenzin Gyatso, the Dalai Lama of Tibet. A reporter referred to Ambassador John R. Bolton, former U.S. Representative to the United Nations. President Lee and some reporters spoke in Korean, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Announcing the Reopening of the Mexican Consulate in New Orleans, Louisiana

April 21, 2008

President Bush. Thank you. *Sientese, por favor.* Mr. President, we are sure glad you're here.

President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico. Thank you, sir.

President Bush. And thank you for inviting me to be here. Madam Foreign Minister, Consul Garcia Guerra, Ambassador, thanks. Governor, *el alcalde*—Mr. Mayor, Ambassador Garza, I am really glad to be with you on this special occasion. I am pleased that Mexico has chosen to reopen its consulate in New Orleans, and I'm honored to attend.

New Orleans has had a long tradition of diplomatic ties with Mexico. In 1824, New Orleans, Louisiana, became the first site of the Mexican—where the first Mexican—became the site for the first Mexican consulate in the United States. Isn't that interesting? Unfortunately, the consulate was closed in

2002. And so today we're reopening the consulate. And it's a good sign, because we celebrate the values that cause Mexico and the United States to be friends, values like family and faith and culture.

We celebrate the enduring and close partnership between our countries. Mexico and the United States are working together to build a future of prosperity and opportunity for people on both sides of the border.

And at this ceremony, we also celebrate the comeback of a great American city. You know, I chose New Orleans for our meetings with Mexico and Canada because I wanted to send a clear signal to the people of my country that New Orleans is open for business, and it's a good place to visit, and that after the devastation of Katrina, it's become a hopeful city.

And so, on behalf of the people of the United States, Mr. President, *mi amigo*, I thank you for reopening this consulate. I look forward to our meetings. And it's my honor to bring you to the podium.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Foreign Relations Patricia Espinosa Cantellano and Consul Andrea Garcia Guerra of Mexico; Mexico's Ambassador to the U.S. Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana; Gov. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana; and Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Calderon. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Discussion With President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico in New Orleans

April 21, 2008

President Bush. Mr. President, thank you very much. We just had a very long and really good discussion on a variety of issues. U.S.-Mexican relations are very important, and sometimes we in America take those relations for granted. But we share a large border; we share the same values. We've got people on both sides of the border who've got friends and family members. And it is

fitting that you and I have this kind of conversation.

I want to congratulate you and thank you for your strong leadership. I appreciate the fact that you inherited a very difficult situation. One, you inherited, you know, high demand for drugs in the United States. In other words, people are using drugs, and therefore, people are supplying drugs. And it's caused difficult security problems in your country, and you've responded aggressively. And I think it's in our interests that we fund the joint initiative. We got to work hard on our side to make sure that we reduce our drug use and, at the same time, work with you in the close coordination to defeat these drug traffickers.

We need to do—continue our initiative that we started with—during your administration, Mr. President, on dealing with arms trafficking—arms coming from the United States into Mexico. We've got a strategy in place, and we're now beginning to implement it. Congress has a chance to send a strong statement that we want to work in a collaborative fashion with the money that's going to be in the supplemental. My hope, of course, is they fully fund the program, and they fund it—a strategy that will be effective.

We talked about trade and how trade has been beneficial to both our countries. When you and I grew up in our respective countries, the border region of Mexico and the United States was very poor. And today, when you go down there, there's prosperity on both sides of the border. A lot of that has to do with trade. Our trade has tripled, and our economies have grown. And this has been a very positive aspect for both our countries. And so we're going to talk about that, of course, with the Canadian Prime Minister in our dinner tonight.

But we also talked about the need to have a successful Doha round. We talked about climate change. We talked about a lot of issues and—but that's what you expect friends to do. So I welcome you.

[At this point, President Calderon spoke in Spanish, and it was translated as follows below.]

Interpreter. [Inaudible]

President Bush. I understood every word. [Laughter]

Interpreter. Thank you very much, Mr. President. Thank you so much for your hospitality and for very long and productive discussion we had today. As is fitting for the relationship that Mexico and the United States enjoy, we have been able to discuss a long list of issues today, because we have a very complex and rich relationship.

We talked first of all, as President Bush said, about security. We talked about security along our common border. We talked about the common strategies that we are implementing in order to fight the double scourge of organized crimes and drug trafficking.

President Calderon. The common enemy.

Interpreter. Common enemy—thank you, Mr. President.

[The interpreter continued to translate President Calderon's remarks as follows.]

Interpreter. We discussed the Merida Initiative, a very important initiative that will allow a common strategy that will benefit families on both sides—on the side of Mexico and on the side of the United States.

I also want to express my appreciation for the work the U.S. Government has begun on the problem of arms trafficking. We know that this is a complex issue. We know there is much to be done, but a very important first step has already been made in that direction.

We also discussed the defense of the Mexican administration, of the rights of our Mexican citizens. And we have also discussed the issue of trade and how trade is benefiting both of our peoples. And we have discussed the issue of trade and its benefits. I think that I have made it very clear that as far as I'm concerned, trade is an issue that benefits both sides greatly. It is something that generates jobs both on the U.S. side and on the side of Mexico. We have seen an enormous increase in benefits for consumers as a result of trade as well. We see that the quality of products in general has gone up as a result of increased trade.

And I stress this issue because recently NAFTA has come under criticism, and I do not believe that people are realizing how

many benefits NAFTA has brought both to the United States and to Mexico. I can say that hundreds of thousands of jobs have been created on both sides of the border. As far as Mexico is concerned, this increase in jobs has also led to a direct decrease in the amount of immigration from Mexico to the United States. It has generated growth; it has generated jobs; and it is decreasing the flow of immigration.

And we have discussed the defense of the rights of Mexican citizens and the need to increase the way we watch over those rights. This is a very important issue for my administration. We need to continue working on an agenda to find a comprehensive solution for that. I understand that the United States is going through an electoral process, and we respect that process, of course. But I do want to point out that it's very important for my administration—for us to find a solution to this issue, and a solution that will not just find a way to deal with the immigration problem but one that will do so with respect and responsibility.

We also discussed the concern that we have with regard to the increase of prices of foods around the world and the public policies that are involved in finding alternative fuels and how all of this goes into the mix. We need to face the problem of economies all around the world who have not been able to deal with this problem very well. In Mexico, we have been able to find solutions, but we are concerned about the situation of other countries in Latin America that are not faring quite as well.

And finally, I simply want to say how happy I am to be in the United States. And I don't want to get ahead of myself, but tonight I will be extending an invitation, hopefully, to the next President of the United States to visit us in Mexico next year for this event. And of course, President Bush will always be a welcome visitor in Mexico.

President Calderon. Thank you.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:40 p.m. at the Windsor Court Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Discussion With Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada in New Orleans

April 21, 2008

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you, sir, for your personal friendship. Thank you for your leadership. I don't know if the people of Canada understand the leadership role you took in Romania, but it was strong and effective. And I want to congratulate you in front of your media about the job you did. Not only did you represent your country well, you represented universal values, and you spoke clearly about them. And so I thank you for that.

We had a good visit. I'm always interested in making sure that if there's any bilateral tensions or bilateral issues, that I know of them so that we can work collaboratively to deal with them. And in the past, one such issue was whether or not our people could travel back and forth between our respective countries in a way that didn't inconvenience them, or if our borders were—being able to flow smoothly so it didn't inconvenience trade. And I think we've worked through those issues.

I can remember the last time we visited, there was great concern about whether or not the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative would be counterproductive to our friendship and relationship. And I thank your Government, thank your ministers, and the people in your staff for working hard to find a way that meets our laws and didn't inconvenience the people of Canada or the United States. So I'm pleased with that progress.

We also talked about the importance of trade between Canada and the United States, and Canada and Mexico, and the United States and Mexico. And I assured the Prime Minister that I'm a strong advocate for free trade. I believe it's in our nations' interests that we continue to have a free trade agenda. All of us want to make sure we're treated fairly, and we can do that. And this summit comes at an opportune time to reaffirm the benefits of the trading arrangements between our three nations.

Canada and the United States have got a very unique and important relationship, and I really appreciate the chance to spend time

with you and visit about these—about the issues of concern.

Finally, the Prime Minister is very articulate on the subject of climate change. And I assured him that my speech in the Rose Garden was a sincere speech, a speech that laid out a strategy that I think will be effective. And I look forward to continuing to work with you on that issue.

But, thanks; good to see you.

Prime Minister Harper. It's nice to see you again. Thank you for the warm welcome and hospitality.

[At this point, Prime Minister Harper spoke in French, and no translation was provided.]

Prime Minister Harper. I'll just say once again, delighted to be here in New Orleans—originally a francophone city, in fact, founded by New France—

President Bush. That's true.

Prime Minister Harper. —my dad's favorite American city, I was telling him. We discussed a lot of things to do with the border, to do with environment, energy, trade, and commercial relations. And as you've mentioned, we've made some considerable progress on some of these things.

That said, what I appreciate most—what I've appreciated in our relationship over the past couple years has been the fact that whether we agree or disagree, we're always able to talk very frankly, very upfront. The President has never promised me anything he couldn't deliver, and that's always appreciative—appreciated.

We have some important joint work going on, not just in this continent but around the world, including in Afghanistan. I appreciate your words about Bucharest, and I can tell you our armed forces look very much forward to working in partnership with your people in Kandahar.

So I'm sure we'll have a great summit. And see you again at the G-8. And I feel we've got a few more of these to go through before it's over. [Laughter]

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:19 p.m. at the Windsor Court Hotel.

Remarks at a United States Chamber of Commerce Reception in New Orleans

April 21, 2008

I want to thank the band for giving me a chance to relive my youth. *[Laughter]* I've had many a fine day here in New Orleans and a pretty good night too. *[Laughter]* And it's great to be back. I want to thank the U.S. Chamber for hosting this reception in honor of the North American leaders' summit between Canada, the United States, and Mexico. And for all of you here from Canada and Mexico, welcome to New Orleans, one of America's greatest cities.

I chose to host this summit in New Orleans for a variety of reasons, one of which is, for centuries, this city has been a place where commerce and culture from across the globe have come together—one of the really great international cities in the United States. And once again, New Orleans now steps on the international scene, where it should be.

I want to thank Tom for hosting the deal, and I want to thank all the members of the U.S. Chamber for being here tonight. I thank members of the North American Competitiveness Council for being here—looking forward to meeting with you in the morning.

I want to thank the Governor of the great State of Louisiana, Bobby Jindal, and the first lady for being here. My old buddy the mayor—Mayor Nagin is here. Mr. Mayor, it's great to see you. We have spent some quality time together—*[laughter]*—including on the deck of the USS *Iwo Jima*—yes, nonalcohol beer for me. *[Laughter]*

I thank all the State and local officials. I particularly want to say thanks to the Senators from Louisiana for joining us today. Mary Landrieu—thanks for coming, Senator. David Vitter—Senator, it's good to have you here. Thanks for coming. Congressman William Jefferson—thanks for being here, Jeff. Appreciate you being here. I thank the—thanks for coming.

One thing is for certain: New Orleans has come a long way since Hurricane Katrina hit. It—and we've tried to do our part at the Federal level. We spent over \$120 billion to help the gulf coast recover. The money has helped rebuild a school system, a dilapidated school

system, that is now better than before. The money has helped improve the criminal justice system. The money has helped to rebuild highways. The money has helped to strengthen storm surge protection systems so people can feel comfortable living here.

New Orleans faces immense challenges. There's still a lot of work to be done. But there's a lot of hope in this city. I mean, you can see it in the face of the teachers. You can see hope in the jobs that are being created. There's a lot of entrepreneurial spirit in New Orleans. You can see hope in the fact that people are absolutely determined to rebuild this city better than it was before.

And so for all of you who have contributed to New Orleans's resurgence, I want to thank you on behalf of a grateful nation.

This is an important summit. It gives three friends a chance to come together to discuss our commitment to security and prosperity. It's a chance to reconfirm the need for the three of us to work in harmony together for the good of our peoples. It's a chance to talk about how we can best protect our people and extend prosperity. And one of the best ways to do that is through trade.

The people of Louisiana understand the benefits of trade firsthand. While many sectors of the economy were hit hard by Katrina, exports were a source of strength. And they continue to be in the years since. I don't know if a lot of people know this, but exports from Louisiana surpassed \$30 billion in the year 2007—that would be \$30 billion for the first time ever. And a lot of these exports come through New Orleans, which is a source for jobs and hope.

And the fundamental question is, will we continue to be a nation that believes in free and fair trade? Canada and Mexico are our two most important trading partners. Since the North American Free Trade Agreement took effect, an agreement I strongly support, trade between the United States, Mexico, and Canada has more than tripled, and our economies have grown by more than 50 percent.

One of the challenges for the North American Competitiveness Council is to find unnecessary regulations that prohibit the free flow of trade. And so tomorrow the leaders at the Council will come forth with specific

recommendations. And I'm looking forward to hearing them, and I'm looking forward to implementing them.

The United States has an opportunity to continue a trading agenda. As a matter of fact, we have an opportunity with three important countries: Colombia, South Korea, and Panama. Interestingly enough, all three of these countries are among Louisiana's top 10 foreign markets for exports. These agreements will be good for New Orleans's workers and businesses. And the mayor recognized that. He wrote a letter to our Speaker—wrote a letter to our Speaker, who is the leader in the Congress, and here's what he said: "Each of the future free trade agreements would provide unique opportunities for the city of New Orleans to increase international economic development."

Unfortunately, we had a setback in a very important free trade agreement with Colombia. The Speaker made a decision to block the free trade agreement. It's unfortunate decision, and the deal is dead unless she changes her mind. And that's bad for American workers, and it's bad for our security, and it's bad for the people here in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The economic argument for free trade with Colombia is very clear. Almost all Colombian products now enter America duty free, yet many of our products face steep tariffs in Colombia. Now think about that. All I suggest is that we level the playing field, that we be treated just like we treat others. Our products into Colombia face a tax, a tariff, which makes them more expensive. It makes it harder for our small businesses and farmers to be able to sell into Colombia. Yet their products come here virtually duty free. And so by approving this deal, it will level the playing field, but more importantly, it will help our entrepreneurs and help our workers.

There's another cost because of congressional inaction, and that is, Colombia is one of our strongest allies in our neighborhood. And it's important to support our friends. And it's important to send a clear message that we stand for rule of law and democracy, which is precisely what President Uribe believes in. He's fighting these terrorists and these narcotraffickers. He has strengthened

the rule of law. He's protecting his labor leaders. He is a strong, solid leader.

Yet if we turn down this deal or if this deal does not go forward, it would send a variety of messages: One, America can't be counted on to stand next to its friends; two, it will embolden the voices of false populism in our neighborhood; and three, it will make it harder for President Uribe to do what is necessary to make sure Colombia is a safe place for people to live. I fully understand that this is a tough political vote for some, but it's about time America sets aside petty politics and focuses on doing what's right for the United States of America.

So thanks for letting me come by, and thanks for hosting this very important meeting. I am confident the Prime Minister of Canada and the President of Mexico will really enjoy their stays in New Orleans. They will find what I have found, that it's a city not only of good food, good cheer, but it's a city of really fine people. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:36 p.m. at Gallier Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas J. Donohue, president and chief executive officer, U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Supriya Jindal, wife of Gov. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana; Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA; Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada; and President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico.

Proclamation 8242—National Day of Prayer, 2008

April 21, 2008

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

America trusts in the abiding power of prayer and asks for the wisdom to discern God's will in times of joy and of trial. As we observe this National Day of Prayer, we recognize our dependence on the Almighty, we thank Him for the many blessings He has bestowed upon us, and we put our country's future in His hands.

From our Nation's humble beginnings, prayer has guided our leaders and played a vital role in the life and history of the United States. Americans of many different faiths

share the profound conviction that God listens to the voice of His children and pours His grace upon those who seek Him in prayer. By surrendering our lives to our loving Father, we learn to serve His eternal purposes, and we are strengthened, refreshed, and ready for all that may come.

On this National Day of Prayer, we ask God's continued blessings on our country. This year's theme, "Prayer! America's Strength and Shield," is taken from Psalm 28:7, "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped." On this day, we pray for the safety of our brave men and women in uniform, for their families, and for the comfort and recovery of those who have been wounded.

The Congress, by Public Law 100-307, as amended, has called on our Nation to reaffirm the role of prayer in our society by recognizing each year a "National Day of Prayer."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 1, 2008, as a National Day of Prayer. I ask the citizens of our Nation to give thanks, each according to his or her own faith, for the freedoms and blessings we have received and for God's continued guidance, comfort, and protection. I invite all Americans to join in observing this day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, 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, 11:07 a.m., April 23, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 22, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on April 24. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this proclamation.

The President's News Conference With President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada in New Orleans

April 22, 2008

President Bush. Thank you all. Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister, welcome to the great city of New Orleans. Thank you all for coming as well. New Orleans is one of America's really top cities. And they—the people of New Orleans appreciate the help you gave them right after Hurricane Katrina, and so I want to thank you very much for that. New Orleans has always been a crossroads for our continent. And today, there's no better place for our nations to look forward to a bright future, and that's what we're here to do.

I—one of the things are—you know, people ask, well, does it make sense for Mexico, Canada, and the United States to meet? Absolutely, it makes sense. We're neighbors. A prosperous neighborhood is in our interests; a secure neighborhood is in our interests. And we share common values. So I'm not surprised we've had good meetings. Plus, we like each other. It's easy to work with leaders who are straightforward and honest, tell you what's on their mind, and who care deeply about the people of their countries and who are problem-solvers. And that's how I have found this meeting and the previous meetings we've held.

We talked about trade. Mexico, Canada, and the United States made a bold decision in the early 1990s. Our countries decided to reduce our trade barriers through the North American Free Trade Agreement. That was a visionary move by previous leaders, a move that has benefited all three of our countries a lot. Trade has tripled. Our economies have grown by more than 50 percent.

Now is not the time to renegotiate NAFTA or walk away from NAFTA. Now is the time to make it work better for all our people. And now is the time to reduce trade barriers worldwide.

And so we spent time talking about the Colombia free trade agreement. Canada is negotiating a Colombia free trade agreement. Mexico has a free trade agreement with Colombia. And a lot of folks are waiting

for the United States Congress to bring this issue up and pass it. It makes no sense, to me, to say that Colombia goods can come into our country duty free, yet our goods can't go into Colombia duty free. And yet that's the case.

An agreement with Colombia would level the playing field, and a failure to pass an agreement would send a terrible signal to our neighborhood. The Speaker of the United States Congress has killed this bill unless she gives us a date certain for a vote. It is a bad decision on her part, and it's bad for our hemisphere to have the United States of America turn its back on a mutual friend like Colombia.

We're working to make sure we reduce regulations and to add—to make sure that our small businesses and farmers and producers are able to move product in a way without a bunch of government regulations in between. And it's not easy work, because, obviously, we want to maintain high standards and work for good safety precautions. Yet we're making progress.

And we've charged others to continue to work; like Carlos Gutierrez and my Cabinet will work on issues with his counterparts for more harmonized standards to reduce the cost of producing cars and trucks throughout our entire market. In other words, you've got different regulations in different countries that make it difficult to compete globally and cause our products to be more expensive than they should be.

We're talking about food and product safety standards to make them compatible in a way that guarantees safety for our consumers. We talked about the need for us to work together to promote clean, efficient, low-carbon energy technologies. Obviously, we talked about global warming and the need to make sure that major economies are all party to an agreement.

People say, well, are you really committed to global—to reducing global warming? Absolutely. As a matter of fact, I gave a speech in the Rose Garden the other day that made it abundantly clear the United States is for an effective climate agreement that includes binding commitments from all major developed and developing economies, and we'll continue to work toward that end.

And then, obviously, we're still working to make sure our borders work well. I mean, there's complications on these long borders. I understand that. We're making progress addressing problems and, at the same time, making sure that our people are safe.

For example, we've had an issue with Mexico. The last time—the time before last we met, the President made it abundantly clear that he felt the United States ought to do more to prevent guns from going into the—from the United States into Mexico. I couldn't agree more with him. And we put a process in place that do a variety of things, all aiming to make sure that our neighbors and our neighborhood isn't scourged by these thugs who use guns out of the United States to hold their people hostage, hold the country hostage. And so we've got a lot of tough work to do, but we're doing it.

And finally, in terms of just bilateral relations with Mexico, the Merida project is an important project to help implement a dual strategy to deal with crime and drugs. The President and I have talked about this initiative in a way that benefits the people of Mexico and the United States. The initiative conclude—includes a commitment this year of \$550 million by the United States. And Congress needs to pass the deal—pass the bill. And they need to pass it in such a way that it conforms to the strategy that the President of Mexico thinks will best help deal with this issue.

All in all, it's been a very—it's been a good summit. And I appreciate you all coming. New Orleans is a fun town. I'm looking at the press corps to make sure that they didn't take advantage of it. *[Laughter]* You look well rested.

Anyway, it's a great place. I'm glad you're here. Thanks for coming.

Mr. President.

President Calderon. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, President Bush, my friends from the media, from the press, Prime Minister Harper. First of all, I'd like to thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to thank President Bush and the people of the United States for your hospitality. I think that the city of New Orleans has been an ideal venue for this leaders' summit.

And I'd like to say that I congratulate the people of Louisiana for their determination, for their strength. I congratulate the people of the United States, as well, for the recovery they've shown after the effects of Hurricane Katrina. And I repeat that Americans can always count on the solidarity of Mexicans during times of tragedy as a result of, in this case, a natural phenomenon.

I'm pleased because the meeting allowed President Bush, Prime Minister Harper, and myself to work on an agenda that was devoted to improving the welfare of our peoples. President Bush already mentioned some of the issues we talked about. I would simply underscore the following.

First, we reasserted commitments we adopted in Montebello last year, such as that of strengthening the competitiveness of our region, cooperation in the area of imports, products from other areas of North America, food security, and also improving the situation of all the regulation among our three countries. And our Secretary will be spearheading the work on the Mexican side in order to deregulate measures affecting trade.

Second, we talked a lot about the NAFTA, and of course, we agreed that this is not the time to even think about amending it or canceling it. This is the time to strengthen and reinvigorate this free trade agreement among our three countries. Thanks to the free trade agreement, trade exchange went beyond \$900 trillion, behind which we have jobs; we have investment; we have goods and services that improve the quality of life of Canadians, Americans, and Mexicans. And we want these benefits to reach more and more of all our citizens.

Third, we agreed on the need to strengthen investments and cooperation among all our nations. And the business leaders of the three countries gave us a very specific agenda that records the progress we've made and also establishes how much more quickly we need to work within the North American Competitiveness Council, where the three leaders agreed we fully need to support the work of this Competitiveness Council.

Fourth, we recognized the progress made within the regulatory framework that's compatible for all three countries.

Fifth, we agreed that the efforts we've made in the area of intellectual property have transferred to major hits against smuggling and the work of pirates. In the case of Mexico, for example, last year, we carried out the biggest seizures in the history of our country. And, in fact, last night we had some major efforts carried out against organized crime. And the three countries will continue to work on improving the conditions of law enforcement.

Six, we also talked a lot about border projects. Our three countries want to have safe borders, and we want to have efficient borders, borders that will improve the competitiveness of our various businesses and for the entire region. We talked about how to make the flow along the borders even better, how to improve trade there.

Of course, there are issues of interest between Canada and the United States. They're working on those issues. In the case of Mexico, we are working very hard on how to expand the border crossings between Mexico and the United States with projects that are already in course—ones in Reynosa, others in Juarez and different points across the border.

We also exchanged viewpoints on the issues that have to do with security in the region. And in this case, we talked to President Bush about the Merida Initiative, an initiative that is focused on facing a joint strategy with regard to a joint—a common enemy, which is organized crime, which operates on both sides of the border and which does not recognize any borders, any limits. And unfortunately, it affects Mexican, Canadian, and U.S. families.

It's very important for our Congresses and Parliaments in our respective countries to strengthen, support the decisive actions that we are carrying out in order to eradicate this scourge that is affecting all of North America.

We also stressed the need to continue to promote growth and development in our entire region. Throughout the continent, and especially in Mexico, we're concerned about Latin America. That's why it's important for this cooperative and collaborative mechanism among the United States, Canada, and Mexico to work. And that's why we also need to redouble the successful cases where trade

and cooperation are fruitful and lead to tangible results for our people.

I want to talk about the efforts being made in this country to establish free trade agreements that are much more practical and beneficial for everyone, in particular, the one under discussion now in the U.S. Congress between the United States and Colombia. It's extremely important, I think, to bear in mind that when you provide more opportunities for trade in the Latin American region, there will be many more opportunities for prosperity. And it needs to be made very clear that the prosperity of Latin America, and particularly that of Mexico, is a crucial factor for the prosperity of the people of North America.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, I'm convinced, and after this meeting even more so, that after 14 years of a very decisive step, which was the North American Free Trade Agreement, today, the relations between the United States, Canada, and Mexico is more dynamic, more fluid, much more successful than ever before.

In particular, I want to thank President Bush for his leadership in holding not just this meeting here in the United States but the fact that these meetings were established in the year 2005. And President Bush's leadership has been very important for these meetings to be held among the three countries, which don't just affect the leaders attending the meetings themselves but allow all of us to coordinate our policies, our activities, and our objectives in order to ensure greater regional prosperity.

This is the last meeting for President Bush. From now on, the veteran for these meetings is going to be Prime Minister Harper. And I'm sure that whoever the next President of the United States will be, he or she will continue with this regional effort. Independently of the fact that, unfortunately, President Bush will not be with us, we have at least informally invited him to our next meeting personally.

And I'd like to announce formally, on behalf of the Mexican Government, that we have conveyed to the Governments of the United States and Canada a very special invitation to take part at the next leaders' summit of 2009 to be held in Mexico. And of course,

from now on, we will be preparing to make sure the summit is memorable and productive, a summit that will offer the taste of the hospitality of the people of Mexico and will also allow us to reach various specific decisions on a number of issues which, as we have shown at this meeting, have been very carefully analyzed. And the options for the North American Competitiveness Council and the three administrations is very clear.

I hope that we will continue have an even more prosperous North American region, a region where the United States, Canada, and Mexico will gain in competitiveness vis-a-vis other regions of the world which are now leading in terms of growth and productivity. But I'm sure that we can achieve this, especially if we persevere with the good will that has been demonstrated at this New Orleans meeting.

Thank you so much, Mr. President, and thank you to the American people.

Prime Minister Harper. This is the last—we talked about common stakes for our three countries. President Bush, myself, and—we have discussed about commerce and the advantages that NAFTA brings to our three countries and has been doing for 14 years. We talked about the progress that we've made, and we have talked about not only what has been done but also what needs to be done.

We concluded that it's essential for the prosperity of our countries to continue this effort. And we have emphasized in particular the border crossing, Windsor-Detroit. It is evident that a greater North American cooperation will lead to the creation of jobs and will allow us to compete in a very effective way to other emerging commercial blocs around the world.

I would like—also talked about our concern about the thickening of the border between our countries. The Chambers of Commerce of the United States and Canada are concerned about these border issues for several years. And the council for competitiveness has also talked about their concern about this border issues.

It was a great pleasure to come to New Orleans for this summit. And of course, I

want to thank President Bush and the population of New Orleans for their great hospitality. And I'm looking forward to see President Calderon, who will greet us in Mexico and welcome us to Mexico next year.

[At this point, Prime Minister Harper continued in English.]

President Bush, President Calderon, and I have discussed the common issues and challenges facing our three countries. We discussed the importance of cooperation on security and trade and the benefits that NAFTA has produced for each of our three countries over the last 14 years.

We also talked about the progress we've made and are continuing to make to improve North American security. We agreed that continuing to improve and expand trade is the key to greater prosperity for our peoples, and we are putting special emphasis on the Detroit-Windsor crossing.

It's clear that greater North American cooperation is our best option to create jobs and to compete effectively with emerging trading blocs elsewhere in the world. To that end, I specifically raised concerns about the so-called thickening of the Canada-U.S. border. The Canadian and American Chambers of Commerce have been worried about this for several years, and the North American Competitiveness Council raised their concerns at our meeting this morning.

It has been a pleasure to come to New Orleans for this summit. I—my only regret, Mr. President, is that I didn't bring my wife and decide to spend a lot more time here. But it's been wonderful to visit here, to see the rebuilding. I won't say my farewells, because you and I have a few more meetings, including the G-8 this summer, that we're looking forward to.

I also look forward to seeing you, President Calderon, in the future—and for your offer to host us next year. And I can tell you, Canadians are always delighted to visit Mexico in the wintertime, so keep that in mind. *[Laughter]*

President Calderon. Thank you.

President Bush. Okay, a couple of questions.

Trade/2008 Presidential Elections/ Mexico-Canada-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I want to follow up on your comments about NAFTA. The Democratic Presidential candidates, in fact, are talking about renegotiating that trade agreement if elected. I'm wondering if you're worried that their comments on the campaign trail are perhaps overshadowing your pro-trade agenda. In essence, do you worry that you're losing the free trade debate in the course of public opinion?

And to President Calderon and Prime Minister Harper, I'd like to get your thoughts about expanding your trade relationship with the United States. Is there a point at which you shift attention to the people running for the White House and their views and try to reach out to them?

President Bush. Actually, my biggest concern on trade right now is with Colombia. NAFTA exists, and NAFTA—when you analyze it in an objective way, it benefits—beneficial to America. It also happens to be beneficial to Mexico and Canada, which makes it a, you know, a very good, comprehensive agreement.

It's beneficial to us because when you're able to export to your neighborhood, it helps create jobs. Jobs are created when people find outlets for their goods and services. We have found a lot of outlets for our goods and services with our—in our neighborhood. It also helps consumers when you import. In other words, the more choices consumers have, the more options they have, the more—less likely it is there will be price increases, and it's better for your consumers. This agreement's been beneficial in creating wealth in our neighborhood. Our economies have all grown.

I also happen to think it's very important for our citizens. I wish people could remember what the border looked like between Texas and Mexico before NAFTA. I mean, it was poor, really poor, on both sides of the border. If you go down there today, there's prosperity on both sides of the border, and that's in our Nation's interests.

I mean, one way to increase pressure on the border is to—if you do it—away with NAFTA, there's going to be a lot of Mexicans—more Mexicans out of work. It will

make it harder on the border. It will make it harder to deal with. So people who say, "Let's get rid of NAFTA," because of a throwaway political line, must understand this has been good for America, and it's also been good for Mexico and Canada, and that's what you want in your neighborhood.

Secondly, my biggest concern is to turn our back on our friends in Colombia. The Speaker of the House made a decision, using an extraordinary procedure, to prevent a vote on a trade bill that had been negotiated in good faith between our respective countries. You heard the—President Calderon say, it's in the region's interest to trade freely and fairly. Well, this agreement we have with Colombia right now is not fair for America; it's not fair for our businesses; it's not fair for our farmers. And all I'm asking the Congress is to make it fair.

And if they—if the Speaker doesn't bring—give us a date certain on the bill, she's effectively killed it. It's her responsibility, and she's going to have to explain why the voices of false populism have been strengthened, why anti-Americanism could flourish, when America turns its back on a strong leader like President Uribe and a friend for democracy like President Uribe.

I'm concerned about protectionism in America. It's not in our interests to become a protectionist nation. And so I'll continue to speak out on it and assure our friends that we will work hard to explain to the people the benefits of why free and fair trade is in our Nation's interest.

President Calderon. First of all, what we have to do—all of us who have responsibilities vis-a-vis our citizens—is to objectively study the facts. What's happened with NAFTA in our three countries? Before NAFTA, there were many businesses, Mexican businesses, that were afraid, and they alleged that it was impossible to compete with the sophisticated and modern U.S. companies. And they weren't going to survive. There were also many U.S. companies who thought it was impossible to compete in more open markets. Now, what was the result? The result has been that trade has grown, and that has led to gains for everyone involved.

Contrary to what they believe—that one was going to win, the other would lose—it

was a win-win situation, and NAFTA has benefited the three countries. Trade has grown in all three; jobs have grown in all three; and even wage levels have gone up in all three. Today, the economies of Canada, Mexico, and the United States are bigger and stronger than they were 14 years ago. Income per capita for all three has also grown compared to 14 years ago. The benefits are visible, and all you need to do is to talk based on demonstrated results.

To talk about taking a step backwards, in terms of free trade in the case of Mexico, would effectively provoke considerable damage on the economy. And another factor I was discussing yesterday with President Bush—that he reiterated today, and I will reiterate as well—would be a sudden loss of economic opportunities that would even lead to even greater migratory pressure in the—against—with the United States.

We are doing everything we can in order to create job opportunities in Mexico for people so that Mexicans will not need to seek job opportunities outside their country. And the only way to do it is by creating jobs in Mexico—and the only way is, precisely, multiplying our possibilities of trade.

In the case of the U.S. economy, if you were to take a step backwards with regard to NAFTA or free trade, you would be condemning Americans to have one of the least competitive economies in the developed world. While other parts of the world are accelerating their growth, their integration—China, Japan, India, Asia—in order to have more competitive economies and more complementary situations—and Europe is already becoming a single trade group, and they're adding more and more countries to that bloc every year—here you see protectionist voices arising. And the only thing they would achieve, if they were to prosper, would be to condemn North America as a region to complete backwardness in today's world. And that is the worst possible solution you can provide to your citizens.

It is not my role to talk to the three candidates or precandidates to the Presidency. I'm very respectful of the domestic politics of this country. This is a decision that is solely in the hands of U.S. citizens. And for that

reason, I must respect that process completely. It is not my role to talk to any candidates or precandidates. All I would do is speak to the person who will eventually be the President of the United States. And we will speak openly and sincerely about the future of both of our countries or, in this case, our three countries in the trilateral meetings that we hold.

But Mexico will have a respectful relationship with the next President of the United States and will always seek the prosperity of our nations, knowing that through free trade, we have a clear, open, and respectful relationship among all our countries that will achieve prosperity.

If we want to solve common problems, if we want to solve problems like security, problems like immigration, problems like economic growth in the United States and in Mexico, we need to understand that only to the extent that North America is more competitive as a region—only to that extent will we be able to successfully face our problems.

Prime Minister Harper. We have been working with the current U.S. administration. We've had a very productive relationship with President Bush and his administration. And I trust that this will continue, that it will continue with any of the Presidential candidates here in the United States.

Of course, it's the United States who needs to make a decision about this election. But I think that in the end, Canada really is confident that the next President will also understand the importance of NAFTA and the importance of the commercial relationship between the United States and Canada. And I must emphasize that for energy security, the commercial relationship between our two countries is even more important today than it was 20 years ago. And I think this relationship will be even more important in the future.

[Prime Minister Harper continued in English.]

—productive relationship with the current administration, and I anticipate that Canada will have a very productive relationship with the next administration, because I'm confident that when the facts are looked

at, any President, just as any Prime Minister of Canada, will quickly conclude how critically important NAFTA and our North American/Canadian-American trade relations are to jobs and prosperity on both sides of our border and, in particular, the importance of energy security that is a particularly critical part of the NAFTA arrangement.

Canada is the biggest and most stable supplier of energy to the United States in the world. That energy security is more important now than it was 20 years ago, when NAFTA was negotiated, and will be even more important in the future.

Mexico's Government

Q. Yes, good afternoon. I'd like to ask a domestic question but hear from Mexico. President Calderon, I'd like to ask your ideas about the situation in our Congress and also the spot that was presented lately on the statements made by Mr. Lopez Obrador and comparisons with Hitler and Mussolini. What is your opinion of this? And do you think that this helps the unity you've always called for among Mexicans, with regard to the presentation of the bill on energy in our Mexican Congress?

President Calderon. This kind of attitude can only be compared to the people who are making it. Congress is working normally. There is a responsible attitude on the part of most of the political parties represented therein. People from the PRI, the PAN, the Green Party, the New Alliance, other political parties are working firmly. And I simply deplore this attitude, which only impoverishes the image of those behind it and weakens even more the presence of Mexicans from parties as important as the PRD, which, aside from their own internal crisis, are losing their public image because of the activities of people who simply make them look ridiculous.

I hope that our institutional life will be strengthened and that we strengthen dialog and the capacity for talking among ourselves.

This issue that you referred to is already in the hands of the authorities. And I'm sure that a new electoral authority, like the IFE, will make a decision according to what it seems—it deems fit based on those TV spots you referred to.

Canada's Campaign Finance Regulations

Q. Prime Minister, if you would respond in both official languages—Canadians have seen the RCMP visit to your party headquarters. They've heard the allegations from Elections Canada. And they're wondering what's going on. Did you know about this scheme, and will you practice it again in the next election?

Prime Minister Harper. Well, this is the same story as before. As you know, Elections Canada view is that some of our local spending should count as national spending. We have a different view. We looked into this at the time, and that's the view we've taken.

Our position is always that we always follow the law as we understand it, and more importantly, we always follow the law as it has been interpreted. We were following, in the last election, the interpretations that had been put on that law in the past. If those interpretations change, we'll, of course, conform, but we will expect the same rules for every single party.

[Prime Minister Harper continued in French, and his remarks were translated as follows.]

And as I just said, it's always the same thing in this for quite a while. Elections Canada think that some of our local expenditures should at—should be considered as national expenses. But we do not agree with that, and that's why we went to court with this issue. And in the end, we will respect the law and the interpretations of the law as they are, as we have done in the past.

Price of Gasoline/Energy/U.S. Economy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Oil prices today rose above \$118 a barrel. It's another record. Are Saudi Arabia and other oil producers—are they our adversaries, or have you had any success with your recent appeals with them? And also, the effect of the gasoline prices— isn't that about to erase or certainly erode the benefit of the economic stimulus package?

President Bush. Yes, no question, rising gasoline prices are like a tax on our working people. And what's happening is, is that we've had an energy policy that neglected hydrocarbons in the United States for a long period of time, and now we're paying the

price. We should have been exploring for oil and gas in ANWR, for example. But, no, we made the decision—our Congress kept preventing us from opening up new areas to explore in environmentally friendly ways. And now we're becoming, as a result, more and more dependent on foreign sources of oil. Fortunately, Canada and Mexico are our biggest providers, for which we are grateful. But our energy policy is—wasn't effective over the past decades, and now we're paying the price.

Secondly, there's not a lot of excess capacity in the world. As a matter of fact, unfortunately, a lot of the supplies are coming from parts of the world where there's political instability. Fortunately, again, Canada and Mexico are not included in that group. There are some countries that are not reinvesting in their reserves, which decline without maintenance.

And so I'm obviously concerned for our consumers. All the more reason to have passed a rebate, tax relief, and all the more reason for the United States Congress to keep the tax relief I passed permanent. We got people out there campaigning, "Well, we're just going to tax the rich." You can't raise enough money to meet their spending appetites by taxing the so-called rich. Every one of those so-called tax the rich schemes end up taxing the middle class families. And in a time of economic uncertainty, we need tax certainty. In a time of rising gasoline prices, we need to be sending a message to all Americans: We're not going to raise your taxes.

Global Economy/Colombia

Q. Good afternoon, gentlemen. For President Bush, how deep and how long will the economic recession be in the United States, and how will it affect Mexico?

And what is your perspective, Mr. President, of the reform presented by President Calderon in Mexico?

And for all three of you, what's the security context that exists with regard to what's happening to NAFTA and the FTA with Colombia after Colombia carried out a military invasion in Ecuador?

President Bush. First of all, I—we're not in a recession. We're in a slowdown. We grew

in the fourth quarter of last year. We haven't had first quarter growth statistics yet, but there's no question, we're in a slowdown. And people are concerned about it, obviously. I'm—of all the three of us standing up here, I'm probably the most concerned about the slowdown. After all, it's affecting the people who I have the honor of representing.

That's why we passed, in working with the Congress, a significant progrowth economic package that will pass back rebates to our citizens, starting in the second week of May. Part of that package also included incentives for large and small businesses to invest in the year 2008. I think this is going to have a positive effect on the economy. Experts say it's going to have a positive effect on the economy. And so we'll see what happens there. The key is for Congress not to raise taxes during this period of time and send a signal that they're not going to raise taxes.

You know, the President is plenty capable of handling reform. She's a—he's a good, honest man who cares deeply about the people of Mexico. And he'll do what he thinks is right for the country of Mexico.

And in terms of President Uribe, we got no better friend in South America than President Uribe. He believes strongly in rule of law. He's a reformer, and he's working hard to protect his country from a bunch of narco-traffickers who murder innocent people to achieve their objectives. And he ought to have our support. He has the support of the United States of America in many ways, but if we don't agree to a free trade agreement that we honest—negotiated in good faith with them, it will undermine his efforts, and it will destabilize parts of the world. And it would be a big mistake for the Congress to turn its back on Colombia.

President Calderon. I simply want to stress the measures Mexico is adopting before this situation—this slowdown of economic growth in the United States, which obviously affects us. More than 82 percent of our exports go to the United States, and we're adopting a number of measures. One of them is a very aggressive program for public expenditure and infrastructure, not just private spending. To give you an idea, Mexico is going from spending 3 percentage

points of the GDP per year on infrastructure to over 5½ percent of the GDP on infrastructure.

We're talking about Mexico this year having expenses for infrastructural programs of about \$500 billion for private-public programs. That's already showing up in the figures of the first quarter of the year.

We're also working on an anticyclic program with very aggressive tax stimulus package for investment in the poorest regions of Mexico, where whoever invests there will get a 100 percent deduction on all investments, and the Federal Government, for a year-and-a-half, will pay all expenses associated with social security, with labor—all the labor costs associated with social security. And that's a very, very strong stimulus package.

The first data coming in indicates that for Mexico, our economic activity had 4.25 percent growth rate per year. The figures for February and March indicate that industrial activity continues to show about 4 percent growth. So it's a difficult time because of the enormous interconnection among our economies, but we are prepared to face the situation and at a slower place than the one we've had in the past. But we are dealing with the situation. We are moving with everything at the Government's disposal to accelerate the growth of the Mexican economy.

I hope that this situation will not continue for very long, and that soon the authorities in the United States will be able to completely overcome the situation. I think that the steps taken so far by the fiscal tax monetary authorities in the United States and the Bush administration—and in general—have been appropriate. They have been the right measures, and we hope that they will very soon demonstrate effects so that we have a quick recovery among all our economies.

Prime Minister Harper. I would just say that in spite of a slowdown of the economy in Canada, the basis of our economy are stable and solid. And we have undertaken measures to ensure the continuous growth in the future.

Now, as far as the Colombia situation is concerned, Canada has negotiated a free trade agreement with Colombia. And it's important also for the United States and for

Mexico to benefit from free trade *avec* Colombia.

Last year, in the summit, I said that Colombia can have drug trafficking with our countries without a free trade agreement, but if you want legitimate business for all our economies, we need to pursue free trade agreements with Colombia. And I said in New York a few months ago that I worry—I worry if the United States in the end refuses this agreement with Colombia.

We have important alliance in Colombia. Colombia is fighting against political violence, against the FARC. They fight against drug traffickers. And I think that a rejection of or turning our backs to such an ally as Colombia is—could create long-term problems for our countries in South America.

[Prime Minister Harper continued in English.]

—free trade agreement to have drug trade with Colombia. You're going to have that anyway. If you want to have legitimate trade and see that country progress economically, we need to have a free trade agreement. We need to have a trade agreement with countries like Colombia.

And I do worry that if the Colombian free trade agreement is rejected, particularly when that country has taken a lot of efforts to fight political violence and corruption and FARC and drug traffickers, if the United States and our allies turn their back on an important ally in this region, that that will have long-term security consequences for all of our countries in North America. So that does worry the Government of Canada.

Trade/Canada-U.S. Relations

Q. If you will allow me, I want to go back to NAFTA. NAFTA is in place for almost 15 years now. Wouldn't it be possible to improve things, perhaps, through renegotiating certain things on NAFTA? Mr. Harper, American President say there's no—we should not renegotiate NAFTA; President Bush says we should not renegotiate. What do you think, Minister?

Prime Minister Harper. We would be ready to do anything that any of our partners wants to do. If one of our partners wants to negotiate NAFTA, we'll do—we'll renegotiate.

But this is not the position that we prefer—the Government of Canada. We have an agreement that worked well, that created jobs—lots of jobs in this continent, and I think that the business community is unanimous about the benefits of this agreement.

And I think that the problems that exist really call us to really, perhaps, improve or deepen NAFTA even more. And the problems also justify that we do what we need to do to have trade that works better than it does now. But the right priority is not to renegotiate something that has been decided. This is not the great challenge that we have. When we meet with businessmen and businesswomen, this is not their concern—their main concern. Their concern is in the future, not renegotiating the past. But Canada will always be ready to any possibilities that may happen.

As I said, we have a very dynamic relationship with—relations with the United States. We are the first—or the greatest exporter of energy products towards the United States. And for the United States, we are the main source of energy security for the United States. And we think that now it's even more important—this relation is even more important now than it was 20 years ago, and it will be more important even in the future. So if we have to discuss these possibilities, we'll be in a good position, but we would prefer to talk about the future than the past.

[Prime Minister Harper continued in English.]

I just said before, we'll be prepared for any possibility. The American people are going to make a decision. The future American administration may have a different view. I can just tell you, when I meet businesspeople not just from our country but from around the continent, the benefits of our NAFTA relationship are without question. And what all the focus is in our discussions is how to make it work better, how to make the borders thinner, how to make commerce flow more quickly, more freely. That's—how to make our relationship more integrated and deeper—those are the real concerns that I experience in Canada and when I deal with people who are focused on

economic development in our trade partners' economies.

But, look, as I said, we'll be prepared for any eventuality. Canada is the United States number-one supplier of energy. And we are a secure and stable supplier. That is of critical importance to the future of the United States. And if we had to look at this kind of an option, I think, quite frankly, we would be in even stronger position now than we were 20 years ago, and we'll be in a stronger position in the future. But my preference is not to renegotiate what we discussed in the past; it's to talk about the future. And I think that's what our respective—that's what, at least, the Canadian population wants us to do.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Good job, Stephen.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:31 a.m. at Gallier Hall. In his remarks, President Bush referred to President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia. President Calderon referred to Secretary of Economy Eduardo Sojo Garza-Aldape of Mexico. Prime Minister Harper referred to his wife, Laureen Harper. A reporter referred to former Mexican Presidential candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. President Calderon spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Portions of Prime Minister Harper's remarks were in French, and an English translation was provided. Some reporters spoke in Spanish and French, and their remarks were translated by interpreters. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this news conference.

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush, President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico, and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada

April 22, 2008

New Orleans

As continental neighbors and partners committed to democratic government, the rule of law and respect for individual rights and freedoms, Canada, Mexico and the United States have shared interests in keeping North America secure, prosperous, and competitive in today's global environment. We met in New Orleans to discuss how we

might collaborate further to achieve these goals, as well as to discuss our hemispheric and global interests and concerns.

The Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP), based on the principle that security and prosperity depend on each other, is a useful mechanism that helps us to identify and pursue practical solutions to shared challenges in North America in a way that respects our individual and sovereign interests. We each remain open and accountable to our own people.

The SPP complements the success of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which has helped to triple trade since 1993 among our three countries to a projected \$1 trillion in 2008. NAFTA has offered our consumers a greater variety of better and less expensive goods and services, encouraged our businesses to increase investment throughout North America, and helped to create millions of new jobs in all three countries. NAFTA is key to maintaining North America's competitive edge in an increasingly complex, fast-paced and connected global marketplace.

Our Ministers responsible for security and prosperity met in Los Cabos, Mexico on February 27, 2008 to advance the five priority areas we identified last year in Montebello. In New Orleans, we decided that our Ministers should renew and focus their work in the following areas:

- To increase the competitiveness of our businesses and economies, we are working to make our regulations more compatible, which will support integrated supply chains and reduce the cost of goods traded within North America. In the auto industry, for example, we are seeking to implement compatible fuel efficiency regimes and high safety standards to protect human health and the environment, and to reduce the costs of producing cars and trucks for the North American market. We also are strengthening efforts to protect our inventors, authors, performers and other innovators by advancing our Intellectual Property Action Strategy. We have forged stronger relationships to support more effective law enforcement

efforts to combat the trade of counterfeit and pirated goods.

- To make our borders smarter and more secure, we are coordinating our long-term infrastructure plans and are taking steps to enhance services, and reduce bottlenecks and congestion at major border crossings. In this regard, we are working to coordinate the efforts of federal agencies to enhance capacity at major border crossing points, such as Detroit-Windsor and San Diego-Tijuana. We are deepening cooperation on the development and application of technology to make our border both smarter and more secure, as well as strengthen trusted traveler and shipper programs. We will seek to allocate resources efficiently so as to avoid unnecessary inspections. We are exploring new customs procedures, such as a more uniform filing procedure, with the aim of reducing transactional costs while enhancing the security of our borders. We are cooperating to install advanced screening equipment at ports of entry to deter and detect the smuggling of nuclear and radiological materials. The United States and Canada are working to finalize a framework agreement to govern cross-border maritime enforcement operations in shared waterways. All of these efforts will help us more effectively facilitate the legal flow of people and goods across our shared borders while addressing threats to our safety.
- To strengthen energy security and protect the environment, we are seeking to develop a framework for harmonization of energy efficiency standards, and sharing technical information to improve the North American energy market. Together we intend to create an outlook for biofuels for the region, work to enhance our electricity networks, and make more efficient use of our energy through increasing fuel efficiency of our vehicles. Building on the gains in technology over the last 5 years, we are exchanging information and exploring opportunities for joint collaboration to further reduce barriers to expanding clean energy technologies, especially carbon dioxide capture and storage to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. We are working to better North America's air quality and working together to improve the safety of chemicals in the marketplace.
- To improve our citizens' access to safe food, and health and consumer products in North America, we are increasing cooperation and information sharing on the safety of food and products. We are working to strengthen our respective regulatory and inspection systems to protect consumers, while maintaining the efficient flow of food and products among our three countries. We are working to make our food and product safety standards more compatible. We are also working to improve continental recall capacities and are engaging the private sector to ensure that our efforts are complementary.
- To improve our response to emergencies, we are updating our bilateral agreements to enable our local, State, Provincial, and Federal authorities to help each other quickly and efficiently during times of crisis and great need, including responding to threats posed by cyber or chemical-biological attacks. We have made significant progress in discussions for new bilateral emergency management agreements to help manage the movement of goods and people across the border during and after an emergency. We will explore ways to expand cooperation in North America to the trilateral level.

Our efforts in these areas have been informed by the insights of interested parties, in particular the North American Competitiveness Council (NACC), representatives from the business community who have helped us identify and develop solutions to the most pressing issues affecting North American competitiveness.

Our citizens represent the true promise and potential of North America. Our governments help best when they act to promote the conditions necessary for the liberty, safety and success of our people. We believe that we should continue and strengthen our regular dialogue and ongoing cooperation. The

partnership among Canada, Mexico and the United States is broader than the sum of our many bilateral and trilateral activities. We share the goals of strengthening democratic governance and reducing barriers to trade within our region and beyond. We also share a common purpose to strengthen our hemispheric institutions and consultative processes.

We will continue working to fight transnational threats that pose challenges to our countries and to the well being of our people, such as organized crime; trafficking in arms, people, and drugs; smuggling; terrorism; money laundering; counterfeiting; and border violence. The transnational nature of these threats makes it imperative that our domestic efforts be complemented and strengthened by our cooperation together, and in international fora.

We reiterate our support for the Bali Action Plan and stress the urgency of reaching agreement to ensure the full, effective and sustained implementation of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change now, up to and beyond 2012. We believe that the Major Economies Leaders Meeting should make a contribution to that outcome. All should redouble efforts to address climate change and to establish nationally appropriate programs and goals to be reflected in binding international commitments based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, to contribute to ensuring global greenhouse gas emission reductions, adaptation measures, energy security, and sustainable development. We are determined to work together to further explore regional cooperation in climate change efforts, including, but not limited to, advancing innovative and suitable clean energy technologies, building the capacity to adopt and deploy them and developing appropriate financial and technical instruments. We reaffirm our shared conviction that increased trade in environmental goods, services, and technologies can have a positive impact on global climate change efforts and encourage the removal of barriers to such trade.

We welcome the invitation of President Calderon to host the next meeting of North American leaders in 2009.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this joint statement. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Community Leaders in New Orleans

April 22, 2008

I want to thank the Governor, thank the mayor, thank the parish presidents, Congressmen. Thank you all very much—city council leaders, compassionate citizens from New Orleans. Thank you very much for briefing me and my team and the new Coordinator from the White House, Doug O'Dell, for keeping us abreast of progress that has been made down here and challenges that remain.

You know, one of the things—I came to New Orleans and spoke about the Federal commitment, and I said, it's been a devastating period, and the Federal Government is committed and will remain committed to helping. Thus far, the Federal Government's committed \$120 billion—little more than that—of taxpayers' money to help all along the coast. I think it's money well spent. I think it's important for our country that the gulf coast region and the great city of New Orleans recover as quickly as possible.

My impression is that—you know, that there's a lot more hope now than there was even from a year ago. I mean, there's just—people have a little different bounce in their step. But there are some significant problems. One is we got to make sure these levees meet the obligations and meet the standards.

Secondly, I am concerned about the health care system that was torn up and needs to be rebuilt in a way that encourages there to be good health care and in a way that recognizes the changing population of New Orleans.

Thirdly, I have been concerned about the stories on crime, just like the citizens have been worried about the stories on crime. And I appreciate the Federal attorney giving me an update, and I appreciate the mayor's efforts to work hard to hold people to account for breaking the law. That's what the average citizen expects; that's what the taxpayers who

are helping the people down here want to see.

All in all—and then, finally, public housing restoration—it's a big issue in New Orleans. It's—but it's an issue where there is a plan, and we just need to follow through on the plan.

So there are some hurdles, but this city has come a long way and—to the point where I felt very comfortable hosting the international conference with the President of Mexico and the Prime Minister of Canada. And I will tell you that not only did the leaders feel welcomed in New Orleans and feel comfortable in New Orleans and feel relaxed in New Orleans, but so did the delegations they brought with them. New Orleans is a great city to host a meeting or host a convention. They know what they're doing down here. The city is recovered; it's on its feet; and it's bouncing back. And it is an honor to be back here.

And I want to thank you all for sharing your thoughts with me. And thank you for being leaders and helping this part of the—vital part of the country recover.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:07 p.m. at Galatoire's Restaurant. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana; Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA; Douglas V. O'Dell, Jr., Federal Coordinator, Office of Gulf Coast Rebuilding; Jim Letten, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Louisiana; President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico; and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada.

Remarks on Arrival in Baton Rouge, Louisiana

April 22, 2008

The President. First of all, it's good to be back in Baton Rouge, home of the LSU Tiger national championship football team. I had the honor of welcoming the team and Coach Les Miles to the White House, and it was a great honor for me, and I enjoyed it. And I do want to congratulate the good folks of Louisiana for supporting a football team that brought great credit to the game.

I'm here with the Governor—the great Governor of Louisiana to lend my support to John Kennedy for the United States Sen-

ate. I thank Becky and Preston for joining us as well. John Kennedy will make a fine Senator for the people of Louisiana. He's a fiscal watchdog. He cares about the taxpayers' money. He's made a career out of making sure that whenever government spends money, it's spent wisely, and that's the kind of Senator Louisiana needs.

He'll support the troops. He'll support those who wear our Nation's uniform. And he'll see our troops are funded without the United States Senate telling our military how to conduct the war. So I appreciate your strong support for our military, John.

You know, one of the issues that the Senate will be faced [with]^{*} is whether or not to raise peoples' taxes. John Kennedy has pledged to keep taxes low. We want the people here in Louisiana to have more of their own money to spend. And we can meet our priorities at the Federal Government without getting into the pockets of the people of Louisiana.

And finally, John Kennedy understands that our most important task is to protect the American people from harm. And if Al Qaida is making a phone call into the United States, he understands we need to know who they're talking to and why they're making the call.

So I look forward to having a man in the Senate who understands the priorities have got to be to protect the American people and understands that the same civil liberties given to our people shouldn't be extended to terrorists who want to do us harm.

So I wish you all the best, Senator-to-be. We got a good fundraiser for you. I'm honored that you would invite me here. And I look—ask the people of Louisiana to give this good man a fair hearing—more importantly, give him their vote, cause he'll do a fine job as the United States Senator.

Thank you, and congratulations.

John N. Kennedy. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you so much.

The President. Good to see you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:19 p.m. at Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana; and Becky, wife, and Preston, son, of senatorial candidate John N. Kennedy.

^{*} White House correction.

Statement on Congressional Action on Farm Legislation

April 22, 2008

I am disappointed that Congress has failed to put forward a good farm bill, leaving farmers and ranchers in a state of continued uncertainty as to how they will be affected by Federal policies.

The farm bill proposal currently being discussed by conferees would fail several important tests that I have set forth. With record farm income, now is not the time for Congress to ask other sectors of the economy to pay higher taxes in order to increase the size of Government. The proposal would increase spending by at least \$16 billion, masked in part by budgetary gimmicks and funded in part by additional tax revenues. These tax revenue provisions are unacceptable, including tax compliance initiatives being considered by the House and Senate conference committee. As important, the proposal also lacks the important reforms I've repeatedly called for.

After last week's short-term extension of the farm bill, Congress now has only 4 days to provide certainty to America's farmers and ranchers. Despite the passage of more than a year since my administration unveiled a responsible and forward-looking farm bill proposal, there are no signs that the conference committee will reach agreement on an acceptable farm bill by Friday. I therefore call on Congress to provide our agricultural producers with the certainty to make sound business and planting decisions about this year's crop by extending current law for at least 1 year.

Statement on the No Child Left Behind Act

April 22, 2008

Today Education Secretary Margaret Spellings took an important step towards strengthening and improving the No Child Left Behind Act. In the 6 years since its enactment, this law has delivered real results for students across the country. Students are achieving record math and reading scores, and African American and Hispanic students

are making significant progress, posting all-time high scores in a number of categories.

No Child Left Behind was a bipartisan achievement. Unfortunately, at this time, Congress hasn't made noteworthy progress toward strengthening the law. In January, I indicated that the Secretary should move forward on reforms she can undertake administratively if Congress fails to act.

Secretary Spellings's announced package of regulations and pilot programs will address the dropout crisis in America, strengthen accountability, improve our lowest performing schools, and ensure that more students get access to high-quality tutoring. Her actions build on a series of administrative steps we've taken to provide additional flexibility to strengthen and improve the law to ensure continued progress toward the goal of every child reading and doing math at grade level by 2014.

Proclamation 8243—Older Americans Month, 2008

April 22, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

During Older Americans Month, we recognize the many ways older citizens have enriched our Nation through their character, wisdom, and love.

Our country remains strong because of the foundation our elders have helped lay. This year's Older Americans Month theme, "Working Together for Strong, Healthy, and Supportive Communities," highlights the importance of building partnerships to ensure that older Americans are able to live with dignity and independence.

Every week thousands of older Americans give back to their communities by volunteering through groups like Senior Corps. From teaching young children how to read, to helping provide relief to those affected by natural disasters, seniors play an important and compassionate role in our Nation.

My Administration is dedicated to ensuring that our seniors are treated with the respect they have earned. They deserve to have

choices and access to the best possible health care, so we have added new preventive care measures and prescription drug benefits as part of our effort to modernize Medicare and make medication more affordable. In this way and many others, our country honors our elders' legacy and recognizes their countless contributions to our Nation.

America's seniors provide an example for younger generations, and during Older Americans Month, we reflect on their efforts toward building a stronger and brighter future for all. Our country remains forever in their debt, as they have provided a guiding light for the rest of the Nation to follow.

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 May 2008 as Older Americans Month. I commend older Americans for the many contributions they have made and continue to make to our Nation. I also commend the Federal, State, local, and tribal organizations, service and health care providers, caregivers, and volunteers who dedicate their time and talents to our seniors. I encourage all citizens to honor their elders, care for those in need, and reaffirm our country's commitment to older Americans this month and throughout the year.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-second day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, 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, 9:11 a.m., April 24, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 23, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on April 25.

Proclamation 8244—National Volunteer Week, 2008

April 22, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Through countless acts of kindness, volunteers across America are changing our Nation for the better. During National Volunteer Week, we recognize those who take the time to help their fellow citizens realize the full potential of America.

Through volunteer work, Americans can demonstrate the kindness and generosity that make our Nation great. Mentoring a child, teaching someone to read, visiting the elderly, feeding the hungry, and finding shelter for the homeless are all examples of how Americans can and do aid those in need. Americans are volunteering in record numbers. Each year, millions of Americans volunteer, and more of our fellow citizens are discovering that the pursuit of happiness leads to the path of service. The cumulative effort of the love and compassion from our Nation's volunteers will help secure a more hopeful future for all our citizens.

My Administration remains committed to building a culture of service, citizenship, and responsibility. The USA Freedom Corps strengthens civic engagement and volunteer service in America and helps people connect with volunteer opportunities. By visiting the USA Freedom Corps website at volunteer.gov, individuals can find information about ways they can help in their local areas and across the country.

The strength of America comes from its compassionate and loving citizens. National Volunteer Week is an opportunity to show appreciation for our Nation's volunteers. The time and energy they dedicate to helping those in need reflect the true spirit of America.

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 April 27 through May 3, 2008, as National Volunteer Week. I call upon all Americans to recognize and

celebrate the important work that volunteers do every day throughout our country. I also encourage citizens to explore ways to help their neighbors in need and serve a cause greater than self.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-second day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, 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, 9:11 a.m., April 24, 2008]

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Proclamation 8245—Loyalty Day, 2008

April 22, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Americans believe that every man, woman, and child has unalienable rights, dignity, and matchless value. Advancing these ideals was the honorable vision of our Founders and the mission that helped shape this great country. On Loyalty Day, we celebrate the legacy of freedom and the shared ideals that bind us together.

Our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen demonstrate their love of country by stepping forward when America needs them most. By putting our country's security before their own, the men and women of the Armed Forces have strengthened our Nation and brought hope to millions around the world. All Americans are grateful to the members of the military and their families for their service, sacrifice, and dedication, and we are proud of their accomplishments.

Through their good works, our Nation's volunteers bear witness to their steadfast love for America, as exemplified in their commitment to service and good citizenship. Loyalty to this country brings with it a commitment to aid our family, friends, and fellow citizens

all across this broad and welcoming land. These volunteers demonstrate their gratitude for the blessings of freedom by helping build a more hopeful future for our children and grandchildren. All Americans can put their loyalty into practice by learning more about the history of our country, flying the American flag, and contributing to our communities.

Two hundred and thirty-two years after the founding of our country, we remain committed to advancing freedom and renewing the values that sustain our liberty. Through the spirit and determination of our people, our Nation will prosper and our liberty will be secure.

The Congress, by Public Law 85–529, as amended, has designated May 1 of each year as “Loyalty Day.” This Loyalty Day, and throughout the year, I ask all Americans to join me in reaffirming our allegiance to our Nation.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 1, 2008, as Loyalty Day. I call upon all people of the United States to join in support of this national observance and to display the flag of the United States on Loyalty Day as a symbol of pride in our Nation.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-second day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, 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, 9:11 a.m., April 24, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 23, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on April 25.

Remarks on Presenting the Congressional Gold Medal to Michael E. DeBakey

April 23, 2008

Madam Speaker, Mr. Leader, Members of Congress, fellow Texans, distinguished guests, Dr. and Mrs. DeBakey: I'm honored to join you on this day of celebration.

Throughout our Nation's history, the Congressional Gold Medal has been awarded sparingly, in recognition of the tremendous accomplishments that it takes to earn this high honor. The recipients of this medal who have come from the world of science are few, but they are iconic. They include Thomas Edison, Walter Reed, and Jonas Salk. Today we gather to recognize that Michael DeBakey's name belongs among them.

I appreciate the members of the Texas delegation, Senator Hutchison, Representative Green, and others, who sponsored this legislation.

As the chancellor emeritus of the Baylor College of Medicine and the director of the DeBakey Heart Center, Dr. DeBakey has given the citizens of the great State of Texas one more reason to be proud. It's a good thing too, because we're usually such a quiet bunch—[laughter]—unassuming people.

In the year that Michael DeBakey was born, Theodore Roosevelt sat in the White House, Henry Ford produced the first Model T automobile, and the average American's life expectancy was a little more than 51 years. That last point is worth noting, because the number today is nearly 78 years. Our lifetimes have been extended by more than 50 percent within the course of a century, and the man we're honoring today is part of the reason why.

It was Hippocrates, the author of the doctor's sacred oath, who said, "Wherever the art of medicine is loved, there also is a love of humanity." Truer words could not be spoken of Michael DeBakey. Growing up in the small town of Lake Charles, Louisiana, he learned the power of compassion at the early age. Every Sunday, as the Speaker noted, Michael's parents and siblings would load the family car with clothes and food for children who lived in an orphanage on the outskirts of town. One weekend, the donations included one of his favorite ball caps. When Michael complained, his mother simply told him, "You have a lot of caps. Those children have none." It was a lesson that he never forgot, and Michael DeBakey has been giving to the world ever since.

The other gift that Dr. DeBakey's parents gave him was a love of learning. In fact, young Michael's mother and father required

their children to check a book out of the library every week. One week, Michael returned home frustrated, and he told his father that he had found a fascinating book, but that the librarians refused to lend it to him. The book was actually a part of a series called the Encyclopedia Britannica. [Laughter] And when his father bought the set for him, Michael read every word of every article in every volume.

The charitable spirit and disciplined mind that Michael developed in his youth have lasted throughout his life. It was his selflessness that caused him to volunteer for World War II, even though he was a successful surgeon and professional. It was his intellect that caused him to help develop the idea of the MASH unit during his service. It was his power of his mind that led him to become one of the pioneers of the heart transplant, bypass surgery, and the artificial heart. And it was his sense of compassion that led him to help create a magnet school in Houston for young people pursuing careers in science.

It's been nearly 40 years since President Lyndon B. Johnson awarded Dr. DeBakey the Presidential Medal of Freedom. At that point four decades ago, he'd already proven himself to be one of the great scientific minds of his generation. In the years since, that status is being reaffirmed by many honors he has received, including the National Medal of Science, induction into the Health Care Hall of Fame, a lifetime achievement award from the United Nations, and a Living Legend citation from the Library of Congress.

But I was most interested in another distinction—it is this: that Dr. DeBakey was the first foreign physician made an honorary member of the Russian Academy of Sciences. That took quite an act to get into the Russian Academy of Sciences; all it took was him saving the life of a President. [Laughter] In 1996, only 5 years after the cold war ended, Dr. DeBakey traveled to Moscow and arranged Boris Yeltsin's quintuple bypass. President Yeltsin spoke for many of Dr. DeBakey's patients when he called him "a man with a gift of performing miracles."

Dr. DeBakey has an impressive resume, but his truest legacy is not inscribed on a medal or etched into stone. It is written on the human heart. His legacy is the unlost

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 to 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.

And I believe helping these children should be a priority of a nation. It's certainly a priority to me. I married a teacher who has worked in inner-city schools; I helped raise one as well. And helping inner-city children receive the education they deserve is so important as we head into the 21st century to make sure every child has got the skills necessary to succeed. That's what a hopeful country is all about.

Over the past 7 years, we have worked to strengthen the public school system. In other words, we haven't given up on public schools. Quite the contrary, we've tried to help them succeed by passing the No Child Left Behind Act. In some circles, it's controversial. I don't think it should be controversial, however, to demand high standards for every child. I don't think it should be controversial to insist upon accountability to see if those children are meeting those standards. And I don't think it should be viewed as controversial to say to a public school, if children are falling behind, here's supplemental services to help that individual child catch up.

As a result of accountability measures, I can now say that eighth graders set a record high for math scores. In other words, in order to be able to say that, you have to measure in the first place. When I was Governor of Texas, I didn't like a system where we just simply guessed—you know, "Do you think the child is learning?" "I don't know. Maybe, maybe not." [*Laughter*] That's unacceptable, particularly when a child's life is at stake.

We've learned that scores for minority and poor students are reaching alltime highs in a number of areas, and that's great. As a matter of fact, there's an achievement gap in America that is unacceptable. The good news is, it's beginning to narrow. The problem is, is that while the No Child Left Behind Act is helping to turn around many struggling schools, there are still children trapped in schools that will not teach and will not change.

Today, nearly one-half of children in America's major urban school districts do not graduate on time—one-half of our children in major urban school districts do not get out of school on time. In Detroit, one student in four makes it out of the public school system with a diploma. When schools like these

fail our inner-city children, it is unfair, it's unacceptable, and it is unsustainable for our country.

And so there are a variety of solutions. One is to work hard to improve the public school system. But also another solution is to recognize that there is a bright future for a lot of children found in faith-based schools.

The faith-based school tradition is not a 21st century phenomenon. A Quaker school opened in Philadelphia in 1689. A Jewish day school opened in New York more than 40 years before the American Revolution. And during the 19th century, Catholic schools in our biggest cities welcomed children of poor European immigrants. Can you imagine what it would—what it's like to be an immigrant coming to America, can't hardly speak the language, and find great solace in two institutions: one, church; and two, schools? And generations of Americans have been lifted up. Generations of the newly arrived have been able to have hopeful futures because of our faith-based schools. It's been a—it's a fact. It's a part of our history. Frankly, it's a glorious part of our history.

Today, our Nation's poorest—in our poorest communities, religious schools continue to provide important services. And as they carry out their historic mission of training children in faith, these schools increasingly serve children, you know, that don't share their religious tradition. That's important for people to know, that there's a lot of students who, for example, may not be Catholic who go to the schools and get a great education. That's what we ought to be focused on, how to get people a great education.

In neighborhoods where some people say, children simply can't learn, the faith-based schools are proving the naysayers wrong. These schools are—provide a good, solid academic foundation for children. They also help children understand the importance of discipline and character.

Yet for all their successes, America's inner-city faith-based schools are facing a crisis. And I use the word crisis for this reason: Between 2000 and 2006, nearly 1,200 faith-based schools closed in America's inner cities. It's affected nearly 400,000 students. They're places of learning where people are

getting a good education, and they're beginning to close, to the extent that 1,200 of them have closed. The impact of school closings extends far beyond the children that are having to leave these classrooms. The closings place an added burden on inner-city public schools that are struggling. And these school closings impoverish our country by really denying a future of children a critical source of learning not only about how to read and write but about social justice.

We have an interest in the health of these institutions. One of the reasons I've come is to highlight this problem and say to our country, we have an interest in the health of these centers of excellence. It's in the country's interest to get beyond the debate of public/private, to recognize this is a critical national asset that provides a critical part of our Nation's fabric in making sure we're a hopeful place.

And so I want to spend a little time talking about what can be done to help preserve these schools and provide, more importantly, a hopeful future. And that's what you're going to do after I leave as well.

First, ensuring that faith-based schools can continue to serve inner-city children requires a commitment from the Federal Government. Federal funds support faith-based organizations that serve Americans in need. So we got beyond the social service debate by saying, you know, it's okay to use taxpayers' money to provide help for those who hurt. My whole theory of life was, we ought to be asking about results, not necessarily process. When you focus on process, you can find all sorts of reasons not to move forward. If you say, focus on results, it then provides an outlet for other options than state-sponsored programs, which is okay.

I mean, what I'm telling you is, is that we're using taxpayers' money to empower faith-based organizations to help meet critical needs throughout the country, critical needs such as helping a child whose parents may be in prison understand there's hope; a critical need is helping a prisoner recently released realize there's a hopeful tomorrow; a critical need is to help somebody whip drugs and alcohol so they can live a hopeful life. And we do that in the social services.

We also provide Federal funds—funding support for institutions of higher learning. We're using taxpayers' money to enable somebody to go to a private university, a religious university. It's a long tradition of the United States of America.

So my attitude is, if we're doing this, if this is a precedent, why don't we use the same philosophy to provide Federal funds to help inner-city families find greater choices in educating their children.

There is a precedent for this called the DC choice initiative act. And we've got some advocates here for the DC Choice Incentive Act—I know; I've worked with them—and I'm surprised they're not yelling again. *[Laughter]* The law created Washington's opportunity scholarship program, which has helped more than 2,600 of the poorest children in our Nation's Capital find new hope at a faith-based or other nonpublic school. In other words, one way to address the closings of schools is to empower parents to be able to send their children to those schools before they close.

And this is a successful program, I think it's safe to say. One way to judge whether it's successful is to look at the demand for the scholarship relative to the supplies of the scholarship. And there's a lot of people who want their children to be able to take advantage of this program. As a matter of fact, demand clearly outstrips supply, which says to me we ought to expand the program and not kill the program. I mean, when you have a—*[applause]*.

So we'll continue to work with Congress to not only reauthorize the program as it exists but hopefully expand it so that parents will be able to—*[applause]*.

I also proposed an idea that I really hope Congress takes seriously, and that is Pell Grants for Kids. We—this would be a \$300 million initiative that would help as many as 75,000 low-income children that are now enrolled in troubled public schools to be able to go to a school of the parents' choice. See, one of the—what's very important to make sure that an accountability system works is there's actual consequences and outlets.

And one of the outlets would be, if you're in a public school that won't teach and won't

change, and you're—qualify—here's a scholarship for you to be able to have an additional opportunity. And, to me, this is a good way to help strengthen the schools that I was talking about that are losing. I mean, one way to make sure you don't lose schools is you have people that are able to afford the education—sustain the cashflow of these valuable American assets.

Pell grants—I want to remind our citizens, Pell grants have helped low-income young adults pursue the dream of a college education. And it is time to apply the same spirit to liberate poor children trapped in public schools that aren't meeting expectations.

State and local governments can help. Today, more than 30 state constitutions include so-called Blaine amendments, which prohibit public support of religious schools. These amendments have their roots in 19th century anti-Catholic bigotry, and today, the legacy of discrimination continues to harm low-income students of many faiths and many backgrounds. And so State lawmakers, if they're concerned about quality education for children and if they're concerned about these schools closing, they ought to remove the Blaine amendments; they ought to move this part of history.

There are other things State and local governments can do. I would call people's attention to the Pennsylvania Educational Improvement Tax Credit—P-E-I-T-C—PEITC—[laughter]—which allows businesses to meet State tax obligations by supporting pre-K through 12 scholarships for low-income students. It's an innovative way to use the tax code to meet a national—in this case, State—objective. The scholarships then allow children to attend the school of their choice, including religious schools. Since 2001, these tax credits have yielded more than \$300 million to help Pennsylvania families. It's an innovative use of the tax code to meet social objectives. All 12 high schools in the diocese—in Pittsburgh, bishop, have seen increased enrollment each year the program has been in place. That's positive.

And so I would call upon State leaders to listen to what comes out of this conference and to think of innovative ways to advance education for all children. Faith-based schools can continue to serve inner-city chil-

dren requires a—to see that that happens requires a commitment from the business community. It's in corporate America's interest that our children get a good education, starting in pre-K through 12th grade.

In Chicago, a group of Jesuit priests found an innovative way to finance children's education called Cristo Rey, and they convinced Chicago's businesses to become involved. It's interesting that the Jesuits took the initiative. I would hope that corporate America would also take initiative. [Laughter] But 4 days of the week, the children go to class, and then on the fifth, they report for work at some of Chicago's most prestigious firms.

The businesses get energetic, reliable workers for high turnover jobs. The students get a topnotch education plus real work experience. They feel a sense of pride when they leave some of the city's most dangerous neighborhoods for the city's tallest skyscrapers. It's a program that is working, and many of the students take that same sense of pride and accomplishment to higher education.

It's interesting to note that Cristo Rey is now involved in 19 cities. In other words, the good ideas can take hold. The job of this conference is to provide a kind of go-by for people who share a sense of concern about our Nation's future. And hopefully, from this summit, good ideas will be spawning other good ideas—at the Federal level, the State and local level, at the corporate level, and then, of course, at the citizen level.

Citizens are—you know, we are a compassionate nation. What I see is America at its very best, which is these millions of acts of kindness and generosity that take place, and it doesn't require a government law. Sometimes it takes a little higher authority than government to inspire people to acts of kindness and mercy. But it happens all the time in America. It truly does. About one-third of Americans who volunteer do so through religious organizations. Many of them happen to be faith-based schools, by the way. When you hear about an America that volunteers, many of the volunteers are at faith-based schools.

I was struck by a interesting story that came out of Memphis, Tennessee. Ten years ago, private donors gave approximately \$15

million to the church in Memphis to help revive Catholic schools in the city's poorest neighborhoods. Assets exists; they're worried about them going away. So rather than just watch schools close, somebody—individuals did something about it by putting up \$15 million. With the seed money, the diocese launched the Jubilee Schools initiative and reopened Catholic schools that had been shuttered, actually in some cases, for decades. Today, 10 Jubilee schools serve more than 1,400 students. Eighty-one percent of these children are not Catholic; nearly 96 percent live at or below poverty level.

With the help from Jubilee scholarship donors, tuition becomes whatever the family can afford. And the schools happen to be working as well, which is really important. The program—and the reason I can tell you is because test scores are up; like, they're not afraid to measure. You've got to be a little worried in our society when somebody says, "I don't think I want to measure." That's like saying, "I don't want to be held to account." The problem with that line of reasoning when it—is that when you're dealing with our children, it's unacceptable. Of course you should be held to account. We ought to praise those who achieve excellence and call upon those who don't to change so they can achieve excellence.

And so this school system is willing to measure, and it has been a great joy for the people of Memphis to watch excellence spread. And I want to thank those who have put forth the money and call on all citizens to find ways they can contribute with their hearts to help educational entrepreneurs succeed—is really what we're talking about, isn't it? Kind of innovation—the willing to challenge the status quo if it's not working. I call it educational entrepreneurship, so I'd consider yourself entrepreneurs—social entrepreneurs.

Faith-based schools can continue to serve inner-city children, and sometimes they can get a good boost from higher education. It seems like to me it's—when I was Governor of Texas, I tried to get our higher education institutions to understand that rather than becoming a source of remediation, they ought to be a source of added value. And one way to do so is to help these schools

early on to make sure that children don't slip behind in the basics.

I was impressed by Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education, known as ACE, which prepares college graduates to work as teachers in underserved Catholic schools. It's an interesting way to participate in making sure the Catholic schools and the faith-based schools stay strong, and that is to educate teachers, actually go in the classrooms and make sure that there's adequate instruction available. The people at Notre Dame commit to teach for 2 years as they earn their master's degree in education. And turns out that when you get a taste for being a teacher, that you tend to stay. And so today, there are about 650 ACE teachers and graduates who work at Catholic schools across the country.

And there's a—I like the idea of these higher education institutions saying, okay, here's what I can contribute to making sure that elementary school and junior high school and high school education has high standards and excellence. And one way to do it is to support our faith-based schools all across the country.

And so that's what I've come to talk to you about. Here are some ways—I mean, these are levels of society that ought to all be involved, and hopefully, out of this meeting, that there's concrete action. We didn't ask you to come to Washington just to opine; we came and asked you to Washington to set good ideas out there for others to go by, because there's a lot of people in our country who share the same concern you share. People understand what we're talking about here. This is pretty practical stuff. This isn't—these are just down-to-earth ideas on how to solve some of our Nation's critical problems.

And so I'm—let me end with a story here about Yadira Vieyra. Yadira's here. She goes to Georgetown University, and she said—I heard—I was asking if Yadira was going to be here so I could ask her to stand here in a minute, and a fellow told me she's a little worried about missing class. So whoever Yadira's teacher is, please blame it on me, not her. *[Laughter]*

She is a—she was born in Mexico—*Mexicana*. And they moved to Chicago, probably to try to realize a better life—I'm confident, to try to realize a better life. Mom and dad had a dream to give their family hope. There's no more hopeful place in the world, by the way, than the United States of America. We shouldn't be surprised when people come to America for a hopeful life. And that's what America has been and should be.

And then we shouldn't be surprised when the parents hope that their children get a great education, because there's nothing more hopeful for a parent than to know their child is receiving a good education. Well, that's what Yadira's folks wanted for her. And so when the time came—time for her to go to high school came, they wanted something better than a low-performing high school. You know, one of the interesting things about the accountability system—a lot of people think that their child goes to the finest school ever, until the results get posted. *[Laughter]*

And it's—the whole purpose, by the way, is not to embarrass anybody; it's not to scold anybody. The whole purpose is to achieve excellence for every person. And so Yadira's parents, I'm sure, took a look at the school system and said, there's a better way. And so guess what? She went to Cristo Rey, the program I just described to you. And she was challenged by the school's rigorous academics.

If you set low standards, guess what you're going to get—low results. If you believe in every child's worth and every child can learn, it's important to set high standards and challenge the children. And that's what happened in the school she went to. She was inspired by great teachers. She said she was motivated by the school's amazing job program. And she is now at Georgetown University, one of the great schools—universities in America. And guess what she wants to do when she leaves Georgetown? She wants to enroll in Notre Dame's ACE program. Yadira, thanks for coming.

You either just got an A—*[laughter]*—or an F. *[Laughter]* Either case, we're glad you're here—*[laughter]*—and I love your example. And the reason why it's important to have examples—so that we get beyond the

rhetoric and realize that we're dealing with the human potential. Someday, no telling what Yadira's going to be in life, but one thing is for certain: It's going to be a productive citizen, and America will be better for it. And so we're glad you're here. Thank you for your spirit. Tell your parents thank you.

And so let me close with what happened at Nationals stadium with His Holy Father. He—when he celebrated mass there, one of the objects he blessed at the end of the mass was the new cornerstone of the Pope John Paul the Great High School in Arlington, Virginia. Isn't that interesting? I mean, I'm sure there was a lot of demands on His Holy Father, but he took time to bless the cornerstone of a school.

And my hope is, is that we're laying cornerstones for new schools here or revived schools; that we take the spirit of the Holy Father and extend it throughout the country and work for excellence for every child; to set high standards, and when we find centers of excellence, not let them go away, but to think of policy that will enable them to not only exist, not only survive but to thrive. It's in our Nation's interests. It's an important summit for America.

I thank you for bringing your talents, your energies, and your efforts. I thank you for caring deeply about our young. And I thank you for being a part of what I believe is a necessary strategy to make sure America continues to be a hopeful place for all.

God bless you. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:23 a.m. at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to Aysia Mayo-Gray, student, St. Ann's Academy, Washington, DC; Donald W. Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington; and Pope Benedict XVI.

Remarks Following a Discussion With President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority

April 24, 2008

President Bush. Thanks for coming, Mr. President. I appreciate your chance to talk about peace. I assured the President that a Palestinian state's a high priority for me and my administration—a viable state, a state that

doesn't look like Swiss cheese, a state that provides hope. It's in—I believe it's in Israel's interest and the Palestinian people's interest to have leaders willing to work toward the achievement of that state.

People that can deliver that state, that vision, to the Palestinian people were sitting right here in the Oval Office, led by the President. The President is a man of peace. He's a man of vision. He rejects the idea of using violence to achieve objectives, which distinguishes him from other people in the region. I'm confident we can achieve the definition of a state. I'm also confident it's going to require hard work.

To that end, I'm going back to the Middle East. I'm looking forward to meeting you, sir. And thank you for making time. I consider you a friend. I also consider you a courageous person. And I'm also will consider—believe strongly that when history looks back at this moment and a state is defined, that the Palestinian people will thank you for your leadership.

There are a lot of issues we discussed, issues of importance: the security of the Palestinian people and the Israeli people, the economic advancement of the Palestinian people. The thing that I'm focused on, and you are: how to define a state that is acceptable to both sides. I'm confident it can get done. I want to thank you for coming. I appreciate your time.

President Abbas. Thank you. Mr. President, thank you very much for receiving us here at the White House these days. And I also would like to thank you very much for the initiative that was launched during the Annapolis conference.

We believe that you actually are truly seeking a true, genuine, and lasting peace in the Middle East. And I am certain that you would like to see an agreement and settlement before the end of your term. And at the same time, we are doing everything we can in order to seriously negotiate and reach a peace that will be satisfactory to both the Palestinian side and the Israeli side, a peace that would be promoted around the world.

There are many parties also that are working very hard to support our efforts and to help us reach that peace. When I talk about your initiative, Mr. President, I also have to

praise the Arab peace initiative—initiative that simply states that peace will be achieved after the Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab and Palestinian Territories. As a result of that, I believe strongly that more than 57 Arab and Islamic countries will normalize their relations with Israel.

I believe very strongly that time is of the essence. We are working very hard and hope not to waste any time and continue these efforts to achieve peace.

Mr. President, your efforts, the efforts of your administration, the various visits—your previous one and your upcoming visit to Sharm el-Sheikh and to the region, all of this is a strong indication that you are very keen to continue to work very hard and to achieve your vision.

I cannot say that the road to peace is paved with flowers. It is paved with obstacles. But together we will work very hard in order to eliminate those obstacles and achieve peace.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you all. *Shokran gazillan.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:51 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Abbas spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks to Members of the Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride

April 24, 2008

Thanks for coming. Doocy, thanks for the introduction. This has got to be one of the most inspiring athletic events in our Nation's history. At least it is for me, and I hope it is for you.

I was going to ride with the guys today, but Laura told me I probably wouldn't be able to keep up. [*Laughter*] I'm—there is no doubt in my mind the people behind me are some of the most bravest people in our country's history. I admire their courage; I admire their determination. We're honored to have you here.

I'm also joined by the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. Thank you for coming, Madam Secretary. Secretary Jim Peake of the Department of Veterans Affairs is with us. Deputy Secretary Gordon England is with

us. Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, are here—other members of my administration and Members of Congress. The reason they're there is the same reason I'm here: We love and respect our military. And I thank you for coming.

I want to thank Granger Smith and the band for joining us today. Thanks for being here.

I appreciate those who wear the uniform who have joined us. I'm proud of you. Thanks for serving. I want to thank the wounded warriors. I want to thank their caregivers from Walter Reed and Bethesda. I appreciate the members of the Wounded Warrior Project. And I want to thank the family members and friends who are here today. Welcome to the White House.

Four years ago, Chris Carney decided to ride coast-to-coast to raise awareness and money for our wounded warriors. In the first year, he biked more than 5,000 miles from Long Island to the Pacific Ocean and raised more than a million dollars for the Wounded Warrior Project. He started what's called the annual Soldier Ride.

Next year, wounded vets started coming along. In 2006, 75 wounded warriors took turns riding portions of the cross-country journey. These service men and women rode to raise money for their fellow soldiers, including those who were hurt too much to ride. And they also rode to show themselves what they could do. And in so doing, they showed the world what they could do.

Americans came out to cheer. More soldiers and supporters came out to ride. More Americans then came out to show their support, so the Soldier Ride started doing different races around the country so even more of our citizens could participate. Today, hundreds of people have gathered here on the South Lawn to kick off this ride, and I want to thank you all for being here.

The 3-day bike ride you're starting today at the White House says a lot. It says that you're showing that even when you're wounded, you're not done fighting. One of the riders today is Marine Corporal Chad Watson. I've gotten to know Chad. I met him when I was at Walter Reed 3 weeks after his Humvee was hit with an IED on patrol in Fallujah. He lost his right leg; he shattered

his left ankle and foot; he took shrapnel to his face. And when I went into his room, he wanted to stand at attention and shake hands with the Commander in Chief, as well as salute.

He got up to his walker—his daddy helped him and so did his brother—he held himself upright with his arm strength while a fellow marine read his accommodation, and I had the honor of giving him the Purple Heart.

I told him to sit down. He didn't want to; he was a marine. And now he's here. He's got a new leg, and thanks to that leg, Chad will be able to start on even a greater journey than the one he begins today. This summer, he's going to walk down the aisle to get married to his beautiful bride. We're glad you're here.

The technology that you're witnessing today is helping our troops regain their lives. And it's state of the art, and that's the way it should be. We owe those who wear the uniform all the support they can possibly have. We'll give them the best medical care. And for the docs and nurses here, there's no doubt in my mind, our troops get the best medical care possible.

We owe them the best prosthesis. And if there's a new advance, it will be made available for our folks. We owe them a Veterans Health Administration that's seamless and works well. We owe them our thanks.

These service members are focused on what you have to give than what you've lost. I appreciate the spirit of those in the Soldier Ride.

I thank my fellow citizens for supporting our troops. I appreciate the fact that the families have stood by those who wear the uniform. I appreciate your loved ones who are here today to cheer you on. The riders represent the spirit of the strongest military in the world and the greatest country on Earth. I'm thankful that we have brave men and women like you who step forward to protect America. I'm proud to be your Commander in Chief.

And now let us get started. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:26 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Steve Doocy, anchor, FOX News Channel "Fox and Friends"; Chris Carney, founder, Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride; and

Jillian Kinsella, fiancée of Cpl. Chad M. Watson, USMC.

Statement on Armenian Remembrance Day

April 24, 2008

On this day of remembrance, we honor the memory of the victims of one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century, the mass killings and forced exile of as many as 1.5 million Armenians at the end of the Ottoman Empire. I join the Armenian community in America and around the world in commemorating this tragedy and mourning the loss of so many innocent lives.

As we reflect on this epic human tragedy, we must resolve to redouble our efforts to promote peace, tolerance, and respect for the dignity of human life. The Armenian people's unalterable determination to triumph over tragedy and flourish is a testament to their strength of character and spirit. We are grateful for the many contributions Americans of Armenian heritage have made to our Nation.

We welcome the efforts by individuals in Armenia and Turkey to foster reconciliation and peace and support joint efforts for an open examination of the past in search of a shared understanding of these tragic events. We look forward to the realization of a fully normalized Armenia-Turkey relationship.

The United States is committed to a strong relationship with Armenia based on shared values. We call on the Government of Armenia to take decisive steps to promote democracy and will continue our support for Armenia to this end. We remain committed to serving as an honest broker in pursuit of a lasting and peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

On this solemn day of remembrance, Laura and I express our deepest condolences to Armenian people around the world.

Remarks on the National Economy

April 25, 2008

Good morning. It's obvious our economy is in a slowdown. But fortunately, we recognized the signs early and took action. I signed

an economic growth package that will provide tax rebates to millions of American families and workers to boost consumer spending.

On Monday, the Treasury Department will begin delivering the first of these tax rebates by direct deposit. During the first week alone, nearly 7.7 million Americans will receive their tax rebates electronically. Then on May 9th, the IRS will begin mailing checks to millions more across America.

By this summer, the Treasury Department expects to have sent rebates to about 130 million American households. These rebates will provide eligible Americans with payments of up to \$600 a person, \$1,200 for couples, and \$300 per child.

If you've already filed your income tax return, your rebate is on the way. Even if you don't owe any income taxes, you may still be eligible for a check, but you need to file a form with the IRS. And it's not too late to do so. Now, you can find out information as to how to proceed by calling your local IRS office, or go to the IRS web site.

We want to make sure everyone who's eligible for a check gets one on a timely basis. This money is going to help Americans offset the high prices we're seeing at the gas pump; at the grocery store. And it will also give our economy a boost to help us pull out of this economic slowdown.

I'm pleased that the Treasury Department has worked quickly to get the money into the hands of the American people. Starting Monday, the effects of the stimulus will begin to reach millions of households across our country.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:16 a.m. on the South Grounds at the White House.

Remarks During a Visit to the Northwest Boys & Girls Club in Hartford, Connecticut

April 25, 2008

Entertainer Melinda Doolittle. I would love—actually, Mr. President, I know that you went to Africa. I got a great chance to go to Africa with your wife and kind of see firsthand in Zambia what the disease does

to people and how much they are appreciative of getting these bed nets. I know you got to travel, so I'd love it if you'd share some things—[*inaudible*—of that.

The President. Sure. I think the thing that I would start with was how appreciative people in Africa were of the fact that total strangers cared about their lives. You see, if you are a mother who is holding a baby that is sick because of a mosquito bite, it creates a lot of hopelessness, and you really wonder whether anybody cares. And the fact that total strangers would come together—in Boys and Girls Clubs or basketball teams or singers—and care about them really lifts their spirits.

And so it's been a—been really interesting to travel to Africa and see how appreciative the people in Africa are of the United States and the citizens. Isn't it interesting that—there's a call to love your neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself, and that's what you're doing. And I'm here really to thank all the people, not only here but across the country, for being so supportive of a humanitarian effort that is worthy of a great nation.

So the trip was great. It was really a lot of fun. You know what it's like there.

Ms. Doolittle. I do; I do.

The President. It's a bit exciting, isn't it?

Ms. Doolittle. Yes, and I think the thing that struck me the most is that in the midst of all of that devastation that you may see in any country, they are the most joyful people you will ever meet in your entire life. And that also is infectious. So that is one thing that I wanted to catch going out of Africa, is that joy that they had in the midst of all that they were going through. So these are people that absolutely love life; they cherish it. And we get to help them cherish that life a little longer. So it's a wonderful, wonderful thing to do.

I would love to have you two come up and look at these bed nets and kind of—

The President. Yes, why don't we get a team picture?

Ms. Doolittle. —kind of see—

The President. I don't think there's enough cameras here. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m.

Remarks on Malaria Awareness Day in Hartford

April 25, 2008

Thank you all. Thank you very much. Thank you for the kind introduction, Roxanne. She wrote it—read it just like I wrote it. [*Laughter*] It's good to be with you. I appreciate the—being here at the Boys and Girls Club here in Hartford. I really enjoyed being with the boys and girls of the Boys and Girls Club. Thank you for greeting us.

I—we do have something in common—at least I do—with the Boys and Girls Club. As Roxanne noted, the Boys and Girls Club were born in Connecticut. Well, so was I, just a little different date, you know. [*Laughter*] The Boys and Girls Clubs are 102. My daughters think I act like I'm 102 at times. [*Laughter*] But I really thank you all for greeting me.

I want to thank the members of this club for your compassionate work in the fight against malaria. And that's what I want to spend some time talking about today. I appreciate being joined by Melinda Doolittle of American Idol. I've gotten to know Melinda because Melinda is not only a great talent; Melinda has got a huge heart. And it's interesting, isn't it, that she has garnered all this publicity and acclaim, all to channel it into helping other people. And I love your example, and I thank you for your leadership.

And I'm also honored to be up here with Tamika Raymond, as well as Charlie Villanueva. They know something about the State of Connecticut because they were stars on their respective University of Connecticut Husky basketball teams. They are professional athletes, one with the Milwaukee Bucks and the other with the Connecticut Sun. But more importantly, they're using their presence on the court to be able to advance important issues. And, in my judgment, a great issue to advance is saving people's lives. And that's what we're here to celebrate today.

Sorry my wife isn't with me. She is a huge supporter of the malaria initiative. She cares a lot, like the people on this stage care a lot, about the human condition here in America and elsewhere. She's getting ready to be the mother of the bride—[*laughter*]—which

I guess that means I'm getting ready to be the father of the bride.

I want to thank Admiral Tim Ziemer. He is the Coordinator for the U.S. Malaria Initiative. You notice I said admiral. He's—when it comes to picking people to get a job done, you want somebody who can go from point A to point Z and plow ahead through the obstacles. You know, I'm really not interested in policies that are long on rhetoric and short on results. I think the taxpayers, as well as the people we're trying to help, need to know our strategy is well-defined, with clear goals, and we hold people accountable. And the great thing about Admiral Ziemer is, he's willing to hold people to account and willing to be held to account himself. And you're about to hear some of the progress we've made, and a lot of it has to do with his leadership. And I'm proud you're here. Thanks for coming.

I also thank Sam Gray—[*applause*—not just your family members who are cheering; that's good. [*Laughter*]

So I've come to herald the Boys and Girls Clubs all across America, and they do fine work. And Roxanne is right; they're saving lives. And I want to thank you for the—for those of you who support the Boys and Girls Clubs here in Hartford and around the country.

But today also marks the second annual Malaria Awareness Day in the United States. And here to help celebrate that day with us is the Congressman from Connecticut, Christopher Shays. Thank you for coming.

On this day, we remember those who've died from malaria. In other words, an awareness day is one in which you recognize the consequences, in this case, of this disease. And so we mourn the loss of life, especially and including the children who have needlessly died on the continent of Africa and elsewhere. They died because of a mosquito bite. Also—this is a day of hope, however, as well. And the reason it is, because nations once trapped in fear because of malaria are now tackling malaria head on. And they're doing so with our help.

It is a day of hope because more Americans are recognizing the timeless truth: To whom much is given, much is required. It should be the corner—and is—the corner-

stone of American foreign policy. Some people say, "Well, what about our own people?" And my answer is, we're plenty rich to help our own and to help others. We've been a blessed nation, and it's in our interest to share our blessings with other. It's a day of hope because compassionate souls are acting on the truth and helping to wipe out malaria in Africa and beyond.

A few moments ago, I presented three Dragonfly Awards. So, like, you say, "Why call some—an award a Dragonfly Award?" Well, the award is named for the natural predator of the mosquito. And each one of this year's winners has shown great determination in working hard and in creative ways to eradicate the disease.

The first Dragonfly Award winner went to Roxanne, who accepted on behalf of the Boys and Girls Club of America. A year and a half ago, Roxanne attended a White House summit on malaria hosted by Laura and me, and she was touched by the suffering that malaria inflicts on African children. And so she pledged to rally American children to help. And she acted on the pledge. Sometimes in life, you get the pledgers and not doers; in this case, it was the pledger and the doer.

More than 150 Boys and Girls Clubs have joined the campaign to raise funds and spread awareness. Local clubs have held events ranging from car washes to bake sales to walkathons. Altogether, Boys and Girls Clubs have raised some \$25,000, more than enough to buy 2,500 bed nets for families in Africa.

I know the boys and girls will probably never meet any of the lives who are being saved. I had the honor of traveling to Africa, and I can assure all who've been helping, the people of Africa are most grateful to the American citizens for their help.

The second Dragonfly Award winner is Zachary Ellenthal, who happens to be from Connecticut. When Zach celebrated his bar mitzvah last October, he asked family and friends not to give him money. Instead, he wrote a letter with facts about malaria in sub-Saharan Africa and asked his guests to consider donating to Malaria No More. He even set up a web page so they could make donations online. As a result of this man's compassion and decency, he raised more than

\$11,000 to purchase bed nets. And Zachary—[*applause*].

The final Dragonfly Award winner is Allyson Brown from Florida. Allyson came up with an innovative way to combine two of her passions: one, fighting malaria in Africa, and school dances. She put together a fundraising dance with the theme Stayin' Alive, and came away with more than \$1,600 in donations. Then she built upon her success by working with Malaria No More to start a nationwide Stayin' Alive campaign. So far, more than 100 schools in 30 States have joined. Together they've raised more than \$30,000 to purchase bed nets. Allyson will be graduating from high school this year, and she's on her way to Florida State University.

The interesting thing is, there are countless stories like this across America. From major corporations, to the NBA and WNBA, to small-town faith-based groups, the American people are rallying to stop a preventable and treatable disease. I try to explain to people that the great compassion of America is defined by the thousands of acts of kindness that take place on a daily basis.

The Federal Government is doing our part; we have a role to play. In 2005, I launched what we've called the President's Malaria Initiative, which is a 5-year, \$1.2 billion initiative to cut the number of malaria-related deaths in 15 African nations by half. In other words, we're focusing our attempt with a clear goal. It's an ambitious goal, but the program is off to a very strong start. In just 2 years, the initiative has helped provide bed nets and antimalaria medicine, insecticide sprays, and prenatal drugs to an estimated 25 million people in sub-Saharan Africa.

Behind these numbers are whole communities looking to the future with renewed hope. Laura and I saw this—as I've mentioned, we went to Africa in February. It was such a touching moment to hold babies in our arms who might have died without the support of our fellow citizens. We visited children your age who can go to school because they're free of malaria. And the good news is, we listened to determined African leaders described how life is being transformed for their people, and how they want to help; how they thank the American people

for their great compassion, but understand it's their responsibility to put strategies in place and to see that they're followed through.

I want to tell you an amazing statistic, and this is what's going to happen all across Africa where we're focusing our efforts. In Tanzania, the percentage of infants in Zanzibar infected with malaria has dropped from about 20 percent to less than 1 percent in 2 years. There are thousands more children who can grow up healthy, who will be able to contribute to their society and reach their potential. Here's—one man said, when he summed up America's efforts to fight malaria—he called it “a godsend.”

America is proud to lead the way, and we are urging other nations to join us. Last summer, we had a meeting, what's called the G-8, and I called upon them to join the United States and match our commitment to cut malaria deaths in half in an additional 15 countries. So we're willing to take the lead on 15 countries where we're needed—where help is needed the most, but we expect you, as well, as nations to whom much is given to be joining us. And they made their pledges; they made their promises. And we're going to have a meeting in July, another G-8 meeting in July, and they need to make sure that they meet their pledges. There are babies dying needlessly on the continent of Africa, and if they have made a pledge to support the efforts to fight malaria, they need to write the checks. And I, of course, will be reminding them of that in a very gentle way—[*laughter*—diplomatic fashion.

Our efforts to fight malaria means that we're answering a moral imperative. It's in our Nation's moral interests to do this. We're a better nation, collectively a better nation, that when we help people, when we save lives—but it's also a strategy that advances our security interests as well. From experience, we understand that the terrorists and extremists can only find fertile recruiting grounds where they find hopelessness. Their ideology is so backwards, so distorted, so hateful, nobody really wants to follow it unless you're so hopeless that it becomes appealing. And so the best way to defeat this ideology of hate is with acts of compassion

and love. The best way to defeat an ideology of darkness is to spread the light of hope.

And that's exactly what we're doing. So, to my fellow citizens, I not only say it's in our moral interest to help; it's in our strategic interests to help defeat these ideologues who murder the innocent to achieve their political objectives.

America is fully committed to this mission of mercy. The United States of America is doing the right thing, and your Government and the people of this country are showing their kindness and compassion and decency. Any American who wants to become involved in this mission can go to fightingmalaria.gov. It's pretty easy. All you got to do is type in fightingmalaria.gov, and you can find out how you can help a worthy and noble and necessary cause.

I thank you for coming and giving me a chance to explain our initiative. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:44 a.m. at the Northwest Boys & Girls Club. In his remarks, he referred to Roxanne Spillett, president and chief executive officer, Boys & Girls Clubs of America; entertainer Melinda Doolittle; and Samuel S. Gray, Jr., president and chief executive officer, Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford, Inc.

Proclamation 8246—Malaria Awareness Day, 2008

April 25, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

On Malaria Awareness Day, our Nation recognizes all who suffer from this devastating disease, and we remember the lives lost to an illness that is entirely preventable and treatable. Today, we renew our commitment to lead the world toward the urgent goal and noble mission of turning the tide against malaria in Africa and around the world.

My Administration and our partners are working together to save lives in Africa

through the President's Malaria Initiative. On a recent trip to Africa, First Lady Laura Bush and I personally saw this Initiative working and making incredible progress against malaria. By distributing insecticide-treated bed nets, expanding indoor insecticide spraying, providing cutting-edge drugs to those in need, and empowering African leaders to determine the best strategy for their country, we have brought an extraordinary achievement within reach: together, we can eradicate a disease that has claimed the lives of children for centuries. Millions of lives are being saved because of the kindness and generosity of the American people, and we will continue to work to ensure that our aggressive and comprehensive strategy achieves its goal.

America is a compassionate country that feeds the hungry and protects the vulnerable because we believe every human life has inherent dignity and matchless value. As the people of Africa continue their struggle against malaria, we offer our support and steadfast commitment. We call on all nations to join us in a great humanitarian effort.

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 April 25, 2008, as Malaria Awareness Day. I encourage Americans to answer the universal call to love a neighbor and join in our goal of eliminating malaria on the African continent and elsewhere.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, 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, 8:45 a.m., April 28, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on April 29.

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.

April 19

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

April 20

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

April 21

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then traveled to New Orleans, LA, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Audrey Browder.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to the Windsor Court Hotel.

In the evening, the President traveled to Commander's Palace restaurant, where he participated in a dinner and entertainment with President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada. Later, he returned to the Windsor Court Hotel.

The White House announced that the President will meet with King Abdullah II of Jordan at the White House on April 23.

April 22

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Dooky Chase's Restaurant, where he had breakfast with President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada. Then, he traveled to Gallier Hall, where he met with the North American Competitiveness Council.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Lafayette Square, where he, President Calderon, and Prime Minister Harper participated in a tree planting ceremony in honor of Earth Day. Later, he traveled to Baton Rouge, LA, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Randy Raggio. Then, at a private residence, he attended a Kennedy Majority Committee reception.

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

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Belfast, Northern Ireland, to attend the U.S.-Northern Ireland Investment Conference: Paula J. Dobriansky (head of delegation); Robert H. Tuttle; Thomas C. Foley; Michael R. Bloomberg; David Scott; and Catherine Brune.

The President announced his intention to nominate C. Steven McGann to be Ambassador to Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga, and Tuvalu.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christine O. Hill to be Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Congressional Affairs).

The President announced his intention to nominate Jeffrey Leigh Sedgwick to be Assistant Attorney General (Office of Justice Programs) at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate T. Vance McMahan to be an Alternate Representative of the United States to the Sessions of the United Nations General Assembly during his tenure of service as the U.S. Representative on the Economic and Social Council to the United Nations.

April 23

In the morning, in the Private Dining Room, the President had breakfast with King Abdullah II of Jordan. Later, he had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Johns Hopkins Hospital organ donors and recipients. Later, also in the Oval Office, he participated in a photo opportunity with recipients of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

April 24

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President-elect Fernando Lugo of Paraguay to congratulate him on his April 21 election victory and discuss Paraguay-U.S. relations. He then had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kristen Silverberg to be Representative of the United States to the European Union, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lyndon L. Olson, Jr., to be a member of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy.

The President announced his intention to appoint Victor Davis Hanson as a member of the American Battle Monuments Commission.

The President declared an emergency in Ohio and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area struck by record snow and near record snow from March 7–9.

April 25

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a signing ceremony for the Malaria Awareness Day Proclamation. He then traveled to Hartford, CT, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteers Kevin Eberly, Jr., and Joe Lapenta.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to South Kent, CT, where, at a private residence, he attended a David Cappiello for Congress and Connecticut Victory 2008 luncheon. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to designate Clay Lowery as Acting U.S. Director of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and Acting U.S. Director of the African Development Bank.

The President announced his intention to designate David Reid Murtaugh as Acting Deputy Director for State, Local and Tribal Affairs in the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

The President announced that he has named Robert R. Hood as Special Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs.

The President announced that he has named Richard Graham Foote O'Donoghue as Associate Counsel to the President.

to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted April 23

Christine O. Hill, of Georgia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Congressional Affairs), vice Thomas E. Harvey, resigned.

C. Steven McGann, of New York, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of the Fiji Islands, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Nauru, the Kingdom of Tonga, Tuvalu, and the Republic of Kiribati.

T. Vance McMahan, of Texas, to be an Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations, during his tenure of service as Representative of the United States of America on the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

Jeffrey Leigh Sedgwick, of Massachusetts, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Regina B. Schofield, resigned.

Submitted April 24

Kristen Silverberg, of Texas, to be Representative of the United States of America to the European Union, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

Lyndon L. Olson, Jr., of Texas, to be a member of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy for a term expiring July 1, 2008, vice Harold C. Pachios, term expired.

Withdrawn April 24

C. Boyden Gray, of the District of Columbia, to be Representative of the United States of America to the

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations

European Union, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, which was sent to the Senate on January 9, 2007.

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 April 21

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino and Paul Conway, chief of staff to the Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan

Released April 22

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President receiving the Office of the Federal Environmental Executive's 2004–2006 report on the Federal Government's environmental and energy efficiency accomplishments

Fact sheet: White House Summit on Inner-City Children and Faith-Based Schools

Released April 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 845

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.J. Res. 70

Released April 24

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on the concern about nuclear weapons programs in Syria and North Korea

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 1858

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Ohio

Fact sheet: Providing Greater Opportunities for Our Children by Ensuring Access to Faith-Based Schools

Released April 25

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino and the President's Malaria Initiative Coordinator R. Timothy Ziemer

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 2903

Fact sheet: 2008 Malaria Awareness Day

Acts Approved by the President

Approved April 23

S. 845 / Public Law 110–202
Safety of Seniors Act of 2007

H.J. Res. 70 / Public Law 110–203
Congratulating the Army Reserve on its centennial, which will be formally celebrated on April 23, 2008, and commemorating the historic contributions of its veterans and continuing contributions of its soldiers to the vital national security interests and homeland defense missions of the United States

Approved April 24

S. 1858 / Public Law 110–204
Newborn Screening Saves Lives Act of 2007

Approved April 25

S. 2903 / Public Law 110–205
To amend Public Law 110–196 to provide for a temporary extension of programs authorized by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 beyond April 25, 2008