

Now, here at home, we're working to ensure that our poorest citizens get the food they need. Since 2001, the administration, in working with Congress, has increased funding for nutrition assistance programs by 76 percent. We've adjusted food stamp benefits annually to cover price increases at the checkout counter. And last month, the Agriculture Department made available an additional \$150 million to respond to the food needs of those who depend on WIC, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children. With this new funding, we will have increased our support for WIC by 18.6 percent this year.

The American people are generous people, and they're compassionate people. We believe in the timeless truth, to whom much is given, much is expected. And so therefore, at home we will work to ensure that the neediest among us can cope with the rising food prices. And with the new international funding I'm announcing today, we're sending a clear message to the world that America will lead the fight against hunger for years to come.

Thank you very much for your interest. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:13 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Statement on the Situation in Burma *May 1, 2008*

The people of Burma have long awaited the opportunity to live in a true democracy. The referendum vote scheduled for May 10, 2008, could have been that opportunity. However, Than Shwe and his regime are ensuring that the referendum vote will be on a dangerously flawed Constitution and will not be free, fair, or credible. They continue to ignore calls from the Burmese people and the international community for a genuine process that could result in a legitimate Constitution reflecting the will of the people, and they continue to carry out a campaign to intimidate voters and to arrest those who dare speak out against the flaws of the referendum and draft Constitution.

The regime has not acted on any of the measures called for by the United Nations

Security Council and does not cooperate with Special Adviser Ibrahim Gambari. We have called for the early release of all political prisoners; implementation of measures to address the political, economic, humanitarian, and human rights issues that are of concern; and the creation of necessary conditions for a genuine dialog with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all concerned parties and ethnic groups in order to achieve an inclusive national reconciliation. Furthermore, the regime has refused offers from Mr. Gambari to provide technical assistance or international monitors for the pending referendum.

Laura and I are committed to work for the people of Burma and help in their struggle to free themselves from the regime's tyranny. I have signed a new Executive order that will block all property and interests in property of designated individuals and entities determined to be owned or controlled by, directly or indirectly, the Government of Burma or an official or officials of the Government of Burma. This Executive order expands existing authorities that allow the United States Government to target those who are responsible for supporting, empowering, and enriching the Burmese regime—a regime that exploits and oppresses the people of Burma.

The United States will continue to pressure Burma's rulers until they respond to the legitimate calls of the Burmese people for a genuine dialog leading to a democratic transition.

NOTE: The statement referred to Senior Gen. Than Shwe, Chairman, State Peace and Development Council of Burma; United Nations Special Envoy for Myanmar Ibrahim Gambari; and Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma.

Statement on World Press Freedom Day

May 1, 2008

May 3 marks World Press Freedom Day. Just and open societies protect and rely on the freedom of the press. That freedom is enshrined in the first amendment to the

United States Constitution, because freedom of speech is integral to a free society.

Brutal regimes and others who seek to stifle liberty often do so by closing down private newspapers and radio and television stations. They kidnap, arbitrarily jail, and beat journalists. Some journalists have been taken from their families for years, and others have been killed for speaking out. Many were killed by terrorists, extremists, and insurgents who seek to deny people even basic access to information as well as the right to free speech.

Journalists should be able to report without fear of persecution. In countries such as Belarus, Burma, China, Cuba, Eritrea, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Syria, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe, repressive laws severely restrict freedom of speech, and those who attempt to report are often imprisoned. In 2007, for the ninth consecutive year, China remained the world's top jailer of journalists, followed by Cuba, Eritrea, Iran, and Azerbaijan.

The United States condemns the harassment, physical intimidation, persecution, and other abuse that journalists, including bloggers and Internet reporters, have faced in China, Cuba, Egypt, Tunisia, Venezuela, and Vietnam, as well as the unsolved murders of journalists in Belarus, Lebanon, and Russia. We call on all governments to guarantee the inalienable rights of their people, including, consistent with article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to freedom of speech and the press.

America stands with those who struggle for their liberty, including those in the press who continue their work in spite of risks. During fiscal year 2007, the United States provided \$78 million in approximately 40 countries to promote media freedom and freedom of information. As President, I have met with many journalists and editors who are struggling against forces that seek to suppress media freedom. We salute these courageous individuals, and we recognize the importance of the right to a free press in spreading freedom around the world.

Statement on Congressional Passage of Student Loans Access Legislation

May 1, 2008

Earlier today Congress passed the "Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act" with overwhelming bipartisan support. I am pleased by Congress's swift action to address this vital issue. In particular, I want to thank the committee chairs and ranking members for their hard work. Millions of students around the country could potentially benefit from this important piece of legislation.

In order to ensure that Americans can continue to compete in the global marketplace, the Federal Government has an obligation to encourage and support people pursuing higher education. By granting the Department of Education greater authority to purchase Federal student loans, today's action should ease the anxiety many students may feel about their ability to finance their education this fall. Thanks to quick and decisive action by my administration and the Congress, Federal student aid will be available in a more timely fashion.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 5715.

Remarks on the National Economy and a Question-and-Answer Session in Maryland Heights, Missouri

May 2, 2008

The President. Thank you very much. Please be seated. Thank you. What he said was, "It's about time you made it." [*Laughter*] Dave was right; I was scheduled here at World Wide, and then the fires hit in California, and I went out there to help the people try to recover from the natural disaster. And I told him at the Christmas party there at the White House, I said, "I'm coming back." I've always felt like if you're a politician and you make a promise, you better keep it. [*Laughter*] And so I have.

And the reason why I wanted to come then and wanted to come back is, I think it's very important for the President to recognize success and for the President to herald entrepreneurship. And so in meeting with Dave and