

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