

We live in extraordinary times. These are exciting times. They are times that require a firm conviction in our beliefs that all people are created equal. We've seen the fall of brutal tyrants and the rise of democracy. We're also seeing women take their rightful place in societies that were once closed and oppressive. And the United States welcomes the arrival of women into these oppressive societies. There's no doubt in my mind, empowering women in new democracies will make those democracies better countries and help lay the foundation of peace for generations to come.

So Laura and I welcome you to the White House. We're really glad you're here. We're so glad you're here, we're about to throw a reception on your behalf. *[Laughter]* And we wish you to enjoy it.

May God bless everybody here. May God bless your families, and may God bless our respective nations. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:44 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; former Supreme Court Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor; President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; President-elect Michelle Bachelet of Chile; President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines; Irina Krasovskaya and Svyatlana Zavadskaya, widows of prodemocracy advocates who disappeared in Belarus; and Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President.

Remarks on Election Day in Crawford, Texas

March 7, 2006

The President. Thank you all.

Q. Was it worth coming?

The President. Yes, you bet. It's always good to come home to vote. And I urge all people to vote when given a chance. It's also good to be home in Texas—get a little rest here in my homestead and then heading over to New Orleans tomorrow and Mississippi.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:43 p.m. at the Crawford Fire Department. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Executive Order 13397— Responsibilities of the Department of Homeland Security With Respect to Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

March 7, 2006

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in order to help the Federal Government coordinate a national effort to expand opportunities for faith-based and other community organizations and to strengthen their capacity to better meet America's social and community needs, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. *Establishment of a Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives at the Department of Homeland Security.*

(a) The Secretary of Homeland Security (Secretary) shall establish within the Department of Homeland Security (Department) a Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (Center).

(b) The Center shall be supervised by a Director appointed by Secretary. The Secretary shall consult with the Director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (WHOFBCI Director) prior to making such appointment.

(c) The Department shall provide the Center with appropriate staff, administrative support, and other resources to meet its responsibilities under this order.

(d) The Center shall begin operations no later than 45 days from the date of this order.

Sec. 2. *Purpose of Center.* The purpose of the Center shall be to coordinate agency efforts to eliminate regulatory, contracting, and other programmatic obstacles to the participation of faith-based and other community organizations in the provision of social and community services.

Sec. 3. *Responsibilities of the Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.* In carrying out the purpose set forth in section 2 of this order, the Center shall:

(a) conduct, in coordination with the WHOFBCI Director, a department-wide audit to identify all existing barriers to the participation of faith-based and other community organizations in the delivery of social and community services by the Department, including but not limited to regulations, rules, orders, procurement, and other internal policies and practices, and outreach activities that unlawfully discriminate against, or otherwise discourage or disadvantage the participation of faith-based and other community organizations in Federal programs;

(b) coordinate a comprehensive departmental effort to incorporate faith-based and other community organizations in Department programs and initiatives to the greatest extent possible;

(c) propose initiatives to remove barriers identified pursuant to section 3(a) of this order, including but not limited to reform of regulations, procurement, and other internal policies and practices, and outreach activities;

(d) propose the development of innovative pilot and demonstration programs to increase the participation of faith-based and other community organizations in Federal as well as State and local initiatives; and

(e) develop and coordinate Departmental outreach efforts to disseminate information more effectively to faith-based and other community organizations with respect to programming changes, contracting opportunities, and other agency initiatives, including but not limited to Web and Internet resources.

Sec. 4. Reporting Requirements.

(a) *Report.* Not later than 180 days from the date of this order and annually thereafter, the Center shall prepare and submit a report to the WHOFBCI Director.

(b) *Contents.* The report shall include a description of the Department's efforts in carrying out its responsibilities under this order, including but not limited to:

- (i) a comprehensive analysis of the barriers to the full participation of faith-based and other community organizations in the delivery of social and community services identified pursuant to section 3(a) of this order and

the proposed strategies to eliminate those barriers; and

- (ii) a summary of the technical assistance and other information that will be available to faith-based and other community organizations regarding the program activities of the agency and the preparation of applications or proposals for grants, cooperative agreements, contracts, and procurement.

(c) *Performance Indicators.* The first report shall include annual performance indicators and measurable objectives for Departmental action. Each report filed thereafter shall measure the Department's performance against the objectives set forth in the initial report.

Sec. 5. Responsibilities of the Secretary. The Secretary shall:

(a) designate an employee within the department to serve as the liaison and point of contact with the WHOFBCI Director; and

(b) cooperate with the WHOFBCI Director and provide such information, support, and assistance to the WHOFBCI Director as requested to implement this order.

Sec. 6. General Provisions. (a) This order shall be implemented subject to the availability of appropriations and to the extent permitted by law.

(b) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by a party against the United States, its agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 7, 2006.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:05 a.m., March 8, 2006]

NOTE: This Executive order was published in the *Federal Register* on March 9.

**Remarks Following a Tour of
Recovery Efforts in the Areas
Damaged by Hurricanes Katrina and
Rita in New Orleans, Louisiana**

March 8, 2006

I want to thank you all for coming. I want to thank Colonel Setliff for the tour that he just gave the Governor and the mayor and myself, along with Laura and part of our party. I want to thank Colonel Wagenaar for the aerial tour. We just flew over affected parts of Orleans Parish and Jefferson Parish and St. Bernard Parish, and getting a view of the progress that is being made.

I particularly want to thank my friend Don Powell for his hard work in coordinating Federal efforts with the Governor and the mayor. Governor Blanco and Mayor Nagin have been by my side when I've come down here, and I really appreciate them being a part of the recovery efforts. I want to thank Walter Isaacson and David Voelker, the members of the Louisiana Recovery Authority. They were on Air Force One today to make sure I fully understood—understand the strategies that the local folks are putting in place to help the good people of this part of the world recover from the devastating storm.

You know, we just came from a neighborhood where people are fixing to—are in the process of cleaning up debris. We went there because the mayor and the Governor thought it was important for me to see firsthand the devastation of the storm in certain neighborhoods and the progress that is being made for cleaning up the debris. There's still a lot of work to be done; no question about it. And obviously, as the plan gets laid out and as the housing plan I'm fixing to discuss comes to fruition, people will feel more comfortable in granting the local authorities the right to remove debris from their homes to be cleaned up.

But I want to share a story about a fellow, Romallice Harris, I met. He was there—was part of the construction crew. I asked him, I said, "Where were you during the storm?" He said he felt like he could ride it out. He heard the evacuation orders but thought it would be all right to ride out the storm. He lived on the third floor of an apartment complex. And he described to me and the Gov-

ernor and the mayor what it was like to see the water start to rise up to the second floor of the building. He and his three children and his wife and another relative were finally rescued by a boat.

I said, "What happened to you?" He said, "Well, I went to Salt Lake City, Utah." In other words, his is an example of what happened to the good folks in this part of the world. He watched the rising waters, and then he just had to abandon the part of the world he loves.

From there, the Federal Government helped fly him to Chicago, where he had some relatives—or a relative. He now has come back to work in the city he loves, New Orleans, with the hopes of rebuilding his life. His wife and children are still in Chicago; they're going to school there. But as he told us, he says he looks forward to bringing them home, bringing them back to Louisiana, to have his children educated right here. And I'm convinced he'll succeed. And our job at all levels of government is to provide the confidence and the help necessary so that people like Romallice Harris come home.

I appreciate the determination by the folks down here to rebuild. I fully understand, and I hope our country understands, the pain and agony that the people of New Orleans and Louisiana and the parishes surrounding New Orleans went through. But I think people would be impressed by the desire of the people in this part of the country to pick up and move on and rebuild. And that's why I'm so pleased that the Governor and the mayor have joined me, so we can discuss the importance of implementing a strategy that will help this part of the world rise again.

The first part of the strategy is to make sure these levees are strong. And we fully understand that if the people don't have confidence in the levee system, they're not going to want to come back. People aren't going to want to spend money or invest. I just got a briefing from the Army Corps of Engineers that said we're on schedule to repair the damage by the June 1st deadline. They're identifying and correcting design and construction deficiencies; so as we go into the start of the hurricane season, the levees will