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President Bush Signs Secure Fence Act

The Roosevelt Room

9:34 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all. Thanks. Please be seated. I'm pleased that you all are here to witness the signature of the Secure Fence Act of 2006. This bill will help protect the American people. This bill will make our borders more secure. It is an important step toward immigration reform.

I want to thank the members of Congress for their work on this important piece of legislation. I welcome you here to the White House. I'm looking forward to signing this bill.

I appreciate the Vice President joining us today. I thank the Deputy Secretary, Michael Jackson, of the Department of Homeland Security. Rob Portman -- he happens to be the Director of OMB. I want to thank Ralph Basham, who is the Commissioner of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection. David Aguilar is the Chief of the U.S. Border Patrol.

I appreciate the fact that Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist has joined us, as well as House Majority Leader John Boehner. I appreciate them coming in from their respective states as I sign this piece of legislation. I want to thank Congressman Peter King, who's the Chairman of the Homeland Security Committee in the House of Representatives. I appreciate you being here, Peter.

Ours is a nation of immigrants. We're also a nation of law. Unfortunately, the United States has not been in complete control of its borders for decades and, therefore, illegal immigration has been on the rise. We have a responsibility to address these challenges. We have a responsibility to enforce our laws. We have a responsibility to secure our borders. We take this responsibility seriously.

Earlier this year, I addressed the nation from the Oval Office. I laid out our strategy for immigration reform. Part of that strategy begins with securing the border. Since I took office we have more than doubled funding for border security -- from \$4.6 billion in 2001 to \$10.4 billion this year. We've increased the number of Border Patrol agents from about 9,000 to more than 12,000, and by the end of 2008, we will have doubled the number of Border Patrol agents during my presidency.

We've deployed thousands of National Guard members to assist the Border Patrol. We've upgraded technology at our borders. We've added infrastructure, including new fencing and vehicle barriers. We're adding thousands of new beds in our detention facilities so we can continue working to end catch and release at our southern border. During the course of my administration we have apprehended and sent home more 6 million people entering our country illegally. And I thank the Border Patrol for their hard work.

The Secure Fence Act builds on this progress. The bill authorizes the construction of hundreds of miles of additional fencing along our southern border. The bill authorizes more vehicle barriers, checkpoints and lighting to help prevent people from entering our country illegally. The bill authorizes the Department of Homeland Security to increase the use of advanced technology, like cameras and satellites and unmanned aerial vehicles to reinforce our infrastructure at the

border. We're modernizing the southern border of the United States so we can assure the American people we're doing our job of securing the border. By making wise use of physical barriers and deploying 21st century technology we're helping our Border Patrol agents do their job.

The Secure Fence Act is part of our efforts to reform our immigration system. We have more to do. Meaningful immigration reforms means that we must enforce our immigration laws in the United States. It is against the law to hire someone who is here illegally. We fully understand that most businesses want to obey that law, but they cannot verify the legal status of their employees because of widespread document fraud. So we're creating a better system for verifying documents and work eligibility, and in the meantime, holding people to account for breaking the law.

We must reduce pressure on our border by creating a temporary worker plan. Willing workers ought to be matched with willing employers to do jobs Americans are not doing for a temporary -- on a temporary basis.

We must face the reality that millions of illegal immigrants are already here. They should not be given an automatic path to citizenship; that is amnesty. I oppose amnesty. There is a rational middle ground between granting an automatic pass to citizenship for every illegal immigrant and a program of mass deportation. And I look forward to working with Congress to find that middle ground.

The bill I'm about to sign is an important step in our nation's efforts to secure our border and reform our immigration system. I thank the members of Congress for joining me as I sign the Secure Fence Act of 2006.

(The bill is signed.)

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President Bush Delivers State of the Union Address

United States Capitol
Washington, D.C.

9:13 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. And tonight, I have a high privilege and distinct honor of my own -- as the first President to begin the State of the Union message with these words: Madam Speaker. (Applause.)

In his day, the late Congressman Thomas D'Alesandro, Jr. from Baltimore, Maryland, saw Presidents Roosevelt and Truman at this rostrum. But nothing could compare with the sight of his only daughter, Nancy, presiding tonight as Speaker of the House of Representatives. (Applause.) Congratulations, Madam Speaker. (Applause.)

Two members of the House and Senate are not with us tonight, and we pray for the recovery and speedy return of Senator Tim Johnson and Congressman Charlie Norwood. (Applause.)

Madam Speaker, Vice President Cheney, members of Congress, distinguished guests, and fellow citizens:

The rite of custom brings us together at a defining hour -- when decisions are hard and courage is needed. We enter the year 2007 with large endeavors underway, and others that are ours to begin. In all of this, much is asked of us. We must have the will to face difficult challenges and determined enemies -- and the wisdom to face them together.

Some in this chamber are new to the House and the Senate -- and I congratulate the Democrat majority. (Applause.) Congress has changed, but not our responsibilities. Each of us is guided by our own convictions -- and to these we must stay faithful. Yet we're all held to the same standards, and called to serve the same good purposes: To extend this nation's prosperity; to spend the people's money wisely; to solve problems, not leave them to future generations; to guard America against all evil; and to keep faith with those we have sent forth to defend us. (Applause.)

We're not the first to come here with a government divided and uncertainty in the air. Like many before us, we can work through our differences, and achieve big things for the American people. Our citizens don't much care which side of the aisle we sit on -- as long as we're willing to cross that aisle when there is work to be done. (Applause.) Our job is to make life better for our fellow Americans, and to help them to build a future of hope and opportunity -- and this is the business before us tonight.

A future of hope and opportunity begins with a growing economy -- and that is what we have. We're now in the 41st month of uninterrupted job growth, in a recovery that has created 7.2 million new jobs -- so far. Unemployment is low, inflation is low, and wages are rising. This economy is on the move, and our job is to keep it that way, not with more government, but with more enterprise. (Applause.)

Next week, I'll deliver a full report on the state of our economy. Tonight, I want to discuss three economic reforms that deserve to be priorities for this Congress.

First, we must balance the federal budget. (Applause.) We can do so without raising taxes. (Applause.) What we need to do is impose spending discipline in Washington, D.C. We set a goal of cutting the deficit in half by 2009, and met that goal three years ahead of schedule. (Applause.) Now let us take the next step. In the coming weeks, I will submit a budget that eliminates the federal deficit within the next five years. (Applause.) I ask you to make the same commitment. Together, we can restrain the spending appetite of the federal government, and we can balance the federal budget. (Applause.)

Next, there is the matter of earmarks. These special interest items are often slipped into bills at the last hour -- when not even C-SPAN is watching. (Laughter.) In 2005 alone, the number of earmarks grew to over 13,000 and totaled nearly \$18 billion. Even worse, over 90 percent of earmarks never make it to the floor of the House and Senate -- they are dropped into committee reports that are not even part of the bill that arrives on my desk. You didn't vote them into law. I didn't sign them into law. Yet, they're treated as if they have the force of law. The time has come to end this practice. So let us work together to reform the budget process, expose every earmark to the light of day and to a vote in Congress, and cut the number and cost of earmarks at least in half by the end of this session. (Applause.)

And, finally, to keep this economy strong we must take on the challenge of entitlements. Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid are commitments of conscience, and so it is our duty to keep them permanently sound. Yet, we're failing in that duty. And this failure will one day leave our children with three bad options: huge tax increases, huge deficits, or huge and immediate cuts in benefits. Everyone in this chamber knows this to be true -- yet somehow we have not found it in ourselves to act. So let us work together and do it now. With enough good sense and goodwill, you and I can fix Medicare and Medicaid -- and save Social Security. (Applause.)

Spreading opportunity and hope in America also requires public schools that give children the knowledge and character they need in life. Five years ago, we rose above partisan differences to pass the No Child Left Behind Act, preserving local control, raising standards, and holding those schools accountable for results. And because we acted, students are performing better in reading and math, and minority students are closing the achievement gap.

Now the task is to build on the success, without watering down standards, without taking control from local communities, and without backsliding and calling it reform. We can lift student achievement even higher by giving local leaders flexibility to turn around failing schools, and by giving families with children stuck in failing schools the right to choose someplace better. (Applause.) We must increase funds for students who struggle -- and make sure these children get the special help they need. (Applause.) And we can make sure our children are prepared for the jobs of the future and our country is more competitive by strengthening math and science skills. The No Child Left Behind Act has worked for America's children -- and I ask Congress to reauthorize this good law. (Applause.)

A future of hope and opportunity requires that all our citizens have affordable and available health care. (Applause.) When it comes to health care, government has an obligation to care for the elderly, the disabled, and poor children. And we will meet those responsibilities. For all other Americans, private health insurance is the best way to meet their needs. (Applause.) But many Americans cannot afford a health insurance policy.

And so tonight, I propose two new initiatives to help more Americans afford their own insurance. First, I propose a standard tax deduction for health insurance that will be like the standard tax deduction for dependents. Families with health insurance will pay no income or payroll tax -- or payroll taxes on \$15,000 of their income. Single Americans with health insurance will pay no income or payroll taxes on \$7,500 of their income. With this reform, more than 100 million men, women, and children who are now covered by employer-provided insurance will benefit from lower tax bills. At the same time, this reform will level the playing field for those who do not get health insurance through their job. For Americans who now purchase health insurance on their own, this proposal would mean a substantial tax savings -- \$4,500 for a family of four making \$60,000 a year. And for the millions of other Americans who have no health insurance at all, this deduction would help put a basic private health insurance plan within their reach. Changing the tax code is a vital and necessary step to making health care affordable for more Americans. (Applause.)

My second proposal is to help the states that are coming up with innovative ways to cover the uninsured. States that make basic private health insurance available to all their citizens should receive federal funds to help them provide this coverage to the poor and the sick. I have asked the Secretary of Health and Human Services to work with Congress to take existing federal funds and use them to create "Affordable Choices" grants. These grants would give our nation's governors more money and more flexibility to get private health insurance to those most in need.

There are many other ways that Congress can help. We need to expand Health Savings Accounts. (Applause.) We need to help small businesses through Association Health Plans. (Applause.) We need to reduce costs and medical errors with better information technology. (Applause.) We will encourage price transparency. And to protect good doctors from junk lawsuits, we passing medical liability reform. (Applause.) In all we do, we must remember that the best health care decisions are made not by government and insurance companies, but by patients and their doctors. (Applause.)

Extending hope and opportunity in our country requires an immigration system worthy of America -- with laws that are fair and borders that are secure. When laws and borders are routinely violated, this harms the interests of our country. To secure our border, we're doubling the size of the Border Patrol, and funding new infrastructure and technology.

Yet even with all these steps, we cannot fully secure the border unless we take pressure off the border -- and that requires a temporary worker program. We should establish a legal and orderly path for foreign workers to enter our country to work on a temporary basis. As a result, they won't have to try to sneak in, and that will leave Border Agents free to chase down drug smugglers and criminals and terrorists. (Applause.) We'll enforce our immigration laws at the work site and give employers the tools to verify the legal status of their workers, so there's no excuse left for violating the law. (Applause.)

We need to uphold the great tradition of the melting pot that welcomes and assimilates new arrivals. (Applause.) We need to resolve the status of the illegal immigrants who are already in our country without animosity and without amnesty. (Applause.) Convictions run deep in this Capitol when it comes to immigration. Let us have a serious, civil, and conclusive debate, so that you can pass, and I can sign, comprehensive immigration reform into law. (Applause.)

Extending hope and opportunity depends on a stable supply of energy that keeps America's economy running and America's environment clean. For too long our nation has been dependent on foreign oil. And this dependence leaves us more vulnerable to hostile regimes, and to terrorists -- who could cause huge disruptions of oil shipments, and raise the price of oil, and do great harm to our economy.

It's in our vital interest to diversify America's energy supply -- the way forward is through technology. We must continue changing the way America generates electric power, by even greater use of clean coal technology, solar and wind energy, and clean, safe nuclear power. (Applause.) We need to press on with battery research for plug-in and hybrid vehicles, and expand the use of clean diesel vehicles and biodiesel fuel. (Applause.) We must continue investing in new methods of producing ethanol -- (applause) -- using everything from wood chips to grasses, to agricultural wastes.

We made a lot of progress, thanks to good policies here in Washington and the strong response of the market. And now even more dramatic advances are within reach. Tonight, I ask Congress to join me in pursuing a great goal. Let us build on the work we've done and reduce gasoline usage in the United States by 20 percent in the next 10 years. (Applause.) When we do that we will have cut our total imports by the equivalent of three-quarters of all the oil we now import from the Middle East.

To reach this goal, we must increase the supply of alternative fuels, by setting a mandatory fuels standard to require 35 billion gallons of renewable and alternative fuels in 2017 -- and that is nearly five times the current target. (Applause.) At the same time, we need to reform and modernize fuel economy standards for cars the way we did for light trucks -- and conserve up to 8.5 billion more gallons of gasoline by 2017.

Achieving these ambitious goals will dramatically reduce our dependence on foreign oil, but it's not going to eliminate it. And so as we continue to diversify our fuel supply, we must step up domestic oil production in environmentally sensitive ways. (Applause.) And to further protect America against severe disruptions to our oil supply, I ask Congress to double the current capacity of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. (Applause.)

America is on the verge of technological breakthroughs that will enable us to live our lives less dependent on oil. And these technologies will help us be better stewards of the environment, and they will help us to confront the serious challenge of global climate change. (Applause.)

A future of hope and opportunity requires a fair, impartial system of justice. The lives of our citizens across our nation are affected by the outcome of cases pending in our federal courts. We have a shared obligation to ensure that the federal courts have enough judges to hear those cases and deliver timely rulings. As President, I have a duty to nominate qualified men and women to vacancies on the federal bench. And the United States Senate has a duty, as well, to give those nominees a fair hearing, and a prompt up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. (Applause.)

For all of us in this room, there is no higher responsibility than to protect the people of this country from danger. Five years have come and gone since we saw the scenes and felt the sorrow that the terrorists can cause. We've had time to take stock of our situation. We've added many critical protections to guard the homeland. We know with certainty that the horrors of that

September morning were just a glimpse of what the terrorists intend for us -- unless we stop them.

With the distance of time, we find ourselves debating the causes of conflict and the course we have followed. Such debates are essential when a great democracy faces great questions. Yet one question has surely been settled: that to win the war on terror we must take the fight to the enemy. (Applause.)

From the start, America and our allies have protected our people by staying on the offense. The enemy knows that the days of comfortable sanctuary, easy movement, steady financing, and free flowing communications are long over. For the terrorists, life since 9/11 has never been the same.

Our success in this war is often measured by the things that did not happen. We cannot know the full extent of the attacks that we and our allies have prevented, but here is some of what we do know: We stopped an al Qaeda plot to fly a hijacked airplane into the tallest building on the West Coast. We broke up a Southeast Asian terror cell grooming operatives for attacks inside the United States. We uncovered an al Qaeda cell developing anthrax to be used in attacks against America. And just last August, British authorities uncovered a plot to blow up passenger planes bound for America over the Atlantic Ocean. For each life saved, we owe a debt of gratitude to the brave public servants who devote their lives to finding the terrorists and stopping them. (Applause.)

Every success against the terrorists is a reminder of the shoreless ambitions of this enemy. The evil that inspired and rejoiced in 9/11 is still at work in the world. And so long as that's the case, America is still a nation at war.

In the mind of the terrorist, this war began well before September the 11th, and will not end until their radical vision is fulfilled. And these past five years have given us a much clearer view of the nature of this enemy. Al Qaeda and its followers are Sunni extremists, possessed by hatred and commanded by a harsh and narrow ideology. Take almost any principle of civilization, and their goal is the opposite. They preach with threats, instruct with bullets and bombs, and promise paradise for the murder of the innocent.

Our enemies are quite explicit about their intentions. They want to overthrow moderate governments, and establish safe havens from which to plan and carry out new attacks on our country. By killing and terrorizing Americans, they want to force our country to retreat from the world and abandon the cause of liberty. They would then be free to impose their will and spread their totalitarian ideology. Listen to this warning from the late terrorist Zarqawi: "We will sacrifice our blood and bodies to put an end to your dreams, and what is coming is even worse." Osama bin Laden declared: "Death is better than living on this Earth with the unbelievers among us."

These men are not given to idle words, and they are just one camp in the Islamist radical movement. In recent times, it has also become clear that we face an escalating danger from Shia extremists who are just as hostile to America, and are also determined to dominate the Middle East. Many are known to take direction from the regime in Iran, which is funding and arming terrorists like Hezbollah -- a group second only to al Qaeda in the American lives it has taken.

The Shia and Sunni extremists are different faces of the same totalitarian threat. Whatever slogans they chant, when they slaughter the innocent they have the same wicked purposes. They want to kill Americans, kill democracy in the Middle East, and gain the weapons to kill on an even more horrific scale.

In the sixth year since our nation was attacked, I wish I could report to you that the dangers had ended. They have not. And so it remains the policy of this government to use every lawful and proper tool of intelligence, diplomacy, law enforcement, and military action to do our duty, to find these enemies, and to protect the American people. (Applause.)

This war is more than a clash of arms -- it is a decisive ideological struggle, and the security of our nation is in the balance. To prevail, we must remove the conditions that inspire blind hatred, and drove 19 men to get onto airplanes and to come and kill us. What every terrorist fears most is human freedom

-- societies where men and women make their own choices, answer to their own conscience, and live by their hopes instead of their resentments. Free people are not drawn to violent and malignant ideologies -- and most will choose a better way when they're given a chance. So we advance our own security interests by helping moderates and reformers and brave voices for democracy. The great question of our day is whether America will help men and women in the Middle East to build free societies and share in the rights of all humanity. And I say, for the sake of our own security, we must. (Applause.)

In the last two years, we've seen the desire for liberty in the broader Middle East -- and we have been sobered by the enemy's fierce reaction. In 2005, the world watched as the citizens of Lebanon raised the banner of the Cedar Revolution, they drove out the Syrian occupiers and chose new leaders in free elections. In 2005, the people of Afghanistan defied the terrorists and elected a democratic legislature. And in 2005, the Iraqi people held three national elections, choosing a transitional government, adopting the most progressive, democratic constitution in the Arab world, and then electing a government under that constitution. Despite endless threats from the killers in their midst, nearly 12 million Iraqi citizens came out to vote in a show of hope and solidarity that we should never forget. (Applause.)

A thinking enemy watched all of these scenes, adjusted their tactics, and in 2006 they struck back. In Lebanon, assassins took the life of Pierre Gemayel, a prominent participant in the Cedar Revolution. Hezbollah terrorists, with support from Syria and Iran, sowed conflict in the region and are seeking to undermine Lebanon's legitimately elected government. In Afghanistan, Taliban and al Qaeda fighters tried to regain power by regrouping and engaging Afghan and NATO forces. In Iraq, al Qaeda and other Sunni extremists blew up one of the most sacred places in Shia Islam -- the Golden Mosque of Samarra. This atrocity, directed at a Muslim house of prayer, was designed to provoke retaliation from Iraqi Shia -- and it succeeded. Radical Shia elements, some of whom receive support from Iran, formed death squads. The result was a tragic escalation of sectarian rage and reprisal that continues to this day.

This is not the fight we entered in Iraq, but it is the fight we're in. Every one of us wishes this war were over and won. Yet it would not be like us to leave our promises unkept, our friends abandoned, and our own security at risk. (Applause.) Ladies and gentlemen: On this day, at this

hour, it is still within our power to shape the outcome of this battle. Let us find our resolve, and turn events toward victory. (Applause.)

We're carrying out a new strategy in Iraq -- a plan that demands more from Iraq's elected government, and gives our forces in Iraq the reinforcements they need to complete their mission. Our goal is a democratic Iraq that upholds the rule of law, respects the rights of its people, provides them security, and is an ally in the war on terror.

In order to make progress toward this goal, the Iraqi government must stop the sectarian violence in its capital. But the Iraqis are not yet ready to do this on their own. So we're deploying reinforcements of more than 20,000 additional soldiers and Marines to Iraq. The vast majority will go to Baghdad, where they will help Iraqi forces to clear and secure neighborhoods, and serve as advisers embedded in Iraqi Army units. With Iraqis in the lead, our forces will help secure the city by chasing down the terrorists, insurgents, and the roaming death squads. And in Anbar Province, where al Qaeda terrorists have gathered and local forces have begun showing a willingness to fight them, we're sending an additional 4,000 United States Marines, with orders to find the terrorists and clear them out. (Applause.) We didn't drive al Qaeda out of their safe haven in Afghanistan only to let them set up a new safe haven in a free Iraq.

The people of Iraq want to live in peace, and now it's time for their government to act. Iraq's leaders know that our commitment is not open-ended. They have promised to deploy more of their own troops to secure Baghdad -- and they must do so. They pledged that they will confront violent radicals of any faction or political party -- and they need to follow through, and lift needless restrictions on Iraqi and coalition forces, so these troops can achieve their mission of bringing security to all of the people of Baghdad. Iraq's leaders have committed themselves to a series of benchmarks -- to achieve reconciliation, to share oil revenues among all of Iraq's citizens, to put the wealth of Iraq into the rebuilding of Iraq, to allow more Iraqis to re-enter their nation's civic life, to hold local elections, and to take responsibility for security in every Iraqi province. But for all of this to happen, Baghdad must be secure. And our plan will help the Iraqi government take back its capital and make good on its commitments.

My fellow citizens, our military commanders and I have carefully weighed the options. We discussed every possible approach. In the end, I chose this course of action because it provides the best chance for success. Many in this chamber understand that America must not fail in Iraq, because you understand that the consequences of failure would be grievous and far-reaching.

If American forces step back before Baghdad is secure, the Iraqi government would be overrun by extremists on all sides. We could expect an epic battle between Shia extremists backed by Iran, and Sunni extremists aided by al Qaeda and supporters of the old regime. A contagion of violence could spill out across the country -- and in time, the entire region could be drawn into the conflict.

For America, this is a nightmare scenario. For the enemy, this is the objective. Chaos is the greatest ally -- their greatest ally in this struggle. And out of chaos in Iraq would emerge an emboldened enemy with new safe havens, new recruits, new resources, and an even greater determination to harm America. To allow this to happen would be to ignore the lessons of September the 11th and invite tragedy. Ladies and gentlemen, nothing is more important at this

moment in our history than for America to succeed in the Middle East, to succeed in Iraq and to spare the American people from this danger. (Applause.)

This is where matters stand tonight, in the here and now. I have spoken with many of you in person. I respect you and the arguments you've made. We went into this largely united, in our assumptions and in our convictions. And whatever you voted for, you did not vote for failure. Our country is pursuing a new strategy in Iraq, and I ask you to give it a chance to work. And I ask you to support our troops in the field, and those on their way. (Applause.)

The war on terror we fight today is a generational struggle that will continue long after you and I have turned our duties over to others. And that's why it's important to work together so our nation can see this great effort through. Both parties and both branches should work in close consultation. It's why I propose to establish a special advisory council on the war on terror, made up of leaders in Congress from both political parties. We will share ideas for how to position America to meet every challenge that confronts us. We'll show our enemies abroad that we are united in the goal of victory.

And one of the first steps we can take together is to add to the ranks of our military so that the American Armed Forces are ready for all the challenges ahead. (Applause.) Tonight I ask the Congress to authorize an increase in the size of our active Army and Marine Corps by 92,000 in the next five years. (Applause.) A second task we can take on together is to design and establish a volunteer Civilian Reserve Corps. Such a corps would function much like our military reserve. It would ease the burden on the Armed Forces by allowing us to hire civilians with critical skills to serve on missions abroad when America needs them. It would give people across America who do not wear the uniform a chance to serve in the defining struggle of our time.

Americans can have confidence in the outcome of this struggle because we're not in this struggle alone. We have a diplomatic strategy that is rallying the world to join in the fight against extremism. In Iraq, multinational forces are operating under a mandate from the United Nations. We're working with Jordan and Saudi Arabia and Egypt and the Gulf States to increase support for Iraq's government.

The United Nations has imposed sanctions on Iran, and made it clear that the world will not allow the regime in Tehran to acquire nuclear weapons. (Applause.) With the other members of the Quartet -- the U.N., the European Union, and Russia -- we're pursuing diplomacy to help bring peace to the Holy Land, and pursuing the establishment of a democratic Palestinian state living side-by-side with Israel in peace and security. (Applause.) In Afghanistan, NATO has taken the lead in turning back the Taliban and al Qaeda offensive -- the first time the Alliance has deployed forces outside the North Atlantic area. Together with our partners in China, Japan, Russia, and South Korea, we're pursuing intensive diplomacy to achieve a Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons. (Applause.)

We will continue to speak out for the cause of freedom in places like Cuba, Belarus, and Burma - and continue to awaken the conscience of the world to save the people of Darfur. (Applause.)

American foreign policy is more than a matter of war and diplomacy. Our work in the world is also based on a timeless truth: To whom much is given, much is required. We hear the call to take on the challenges of hunger and poverty and disease -- and that is precisely what America is

doing. We must continue to fight HIV/AIDS, especially on the continent of Africa. (Applause.) Because you funded our Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the number of people receiving life-saving drugs has grown from 50,000 to more than 800,000 in three short years. I ask you to continue funding our efforts to fight HIV/AIDS. I ask you to provide \$1.2 billion over five years so we can combat malaria in 15 African countries. (Applause.)

I ask that you fund the Millennium Challenge Account, so that American aid reaches the people who need it, in nations where democracy is on the rise and corruption is in retreat. And let us continue to support the expanded trade and debt relief that are the best hope for lifting lives and eliminating poverty. (Applause.)

When America serves others in this way, we show the strength and generosity of our country. These deeds reflect the character of our people. The greatest strength we have is the heroic kindness, courage, and self-sacrifice of the American people. You see this spirit often if you know where to look -- and tonight we need only look above to the gallery.

Dikembe Mutombo grew up in Africa, amid great poverty and disease. He came to Georgetown University on a scholarship to study medicine -- but Coach John Thompson got a look at Dikembe and had a different idea. (Laughter.) Dikembe became a star in the NBA, and a citizen of the United States. But he never forgot the land of his birth, or the duty to share his blessings with others. He built a brand new hospital in his old hometown. A friend has said of this good-hearted man: "Mutombo believes that God has given him this opportunity to do great things." And we are proud to call this son of the Congo a citizen of the United States of America. (Applause.)

After her daughter was born, Julie Aigner-Clark searched for ways to share her love of music and art with her child. So she borrowed some equipment, and began filming children's videos in her basement. The Baby Einstein Company was born, and in just five years her business grew to more than \$20 million in sales. In November 2001, Julie sold Baby Einstein to the Walt Disney Company, and with her help Baby Einstein has grown into a \$200 million business. Julie represents the great enterprising spirit of America. And she is using her success to help others -- producing child safety videos with John Walsh of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Julie says of her new project: "I believe it's the most important thing that I have ever done. I believe that children have the right to live in a world that is safe." And so tonight, we are pleased to welcome this talented business entrepreneur and generous social entrepreneur -- Julie Aigner-Clark. (Applause.)

Three weeks ago, Wesley Autrey was waiting at a Harlem subway station with his two little girls, when he saw a man fall into the path of a train. With seconds to act, Wesley jumped onto the tracks, pulled the man into the space between the rails, and held him as the train passed right above their heads. He insists he's not a hero. He says: "We got guys and girls overseas dying for us to have our freedoms. We have got to show each other some love." There is something wonderful about a country that produces a brave and humble man like Wesley Autrey. (Applause.)

Tommy Rieman was a teenager pumping gas in Independence, Kentucky, when he enlisted in the United States Army. In December 2003, he was on a reconnaissance mission in Iraq when his team came under heavy enemy fire. From his Humvee, Sergeant Rieman returned fire; he used

his body as a shield to protect his gunner. He was shot in the chest and arm, and received shrapnel wounds to his legs -- yet he refused medical attention, and stayed in the fight. He helped to repel a second attack, firing grenades at the enemy's position. For his exceptional courage, Sergeant Rieman was awarded the Silver Star. And like so many other Americans who have volunteered to defend us, he has earned the respect and the gratitude of our entire country. (Applause.)

In such courage and compassion, ladies and gentlemen, we see the spirit and character of America -- and these qualities are not in short supply. This is a decent and honorable country -- and resilient, too. We've been through a lot together. We've met challenges and faced dangers, and we know that more lie ahead. Yet we can go forward with confidence -- because the State of our Union is strong, our cause in the world is right, and tonight that cause goes on. God bless. (Applause.)

See you next year. Thank you for your prayers.

###

President Bush's Plan For Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Tonight, President Bush Will Call On Congress To Pass Comprehensive Immigration Reform. The President believes that America can simultaneously be a lawful, economically dynamic, and welcoming society. We must address the problem of illegal immigration and deliver a system that is secure, productive, orderly, and fair. The President calls on Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform that will secure our borders, enhance interior and worksite enforcement, create a temporary worker program, resolve – without animosity and without amnesty – the status of illegal immigrants already here, and promote assimilation into our society. All elements of this problem must be addressed together – or none of them will be solved.

1. The United States Must Secure Its Borders

Border Security Is The Basic Responsibility Of A Sovereign Nation And An Urgent Requirement Of Our National Security. We have more than doubled border security funding from \$4.6 billion in FY 2001 to \$10.4 billion in FY 2007. We will have also increased the number of Border Patrol agents by 63 percent – from just over 9,000 agents at the beginning of this Administration to nearly 15,000 at the end of 2007. We are also on track to increase this number to approximately 18,000 by the end of 2008, doubling the size of the Border Patrol during the President's time in office.

- **To Supplement The Border Patrol As Its Numbers Increase, Approximately 6,000 National Guard Members Have Been Sent To Our Southern Border In Coordination With Governors.** National Guard units are assisting the Border Patrol by operating surveillance systems, analyzing intelligence, installing fences and vehicle barriers, and building patrol roads. The National Guard is increasing the operational capacity of the Border Patrol to gain control of our Southern border.
- **The President's Secure Border Initiative (SBI) Is The Most Technologically Advanced Border Enforcement Initiative In American History.** Last year, we initiated a multi-year plan to secure our borders and reduce illegal immigration through comprehensive upgrading of technology used in controlling the border, including improved communications assets, expanded use of manned and unmanned aerial vehicles, and state-of-the-art detection technology.
- **The Administration Is Increasing Infrastructure Investment At The Border.** We are expanding detention capacity and developing rapidly deployable fencing technology that will be rolled out this year. In addition, the President is committed to building hundreds of miles of integrated, tactical infrastructure along the Southern border, which includes vehicle barriers, checkpoints, and lighting to help detect, deter, and prevent people from entering our country illegally.
- **The Administration Has Effectively Ended "Catch And Release" For Illegal Aliens Apprehended At The Borders.** In FY06 and FY07 the Administration funded 6,700 new detention beds, for a total of 27,500 detention beds this fiscal year.

- **The Administration Expanded The Use Of "Expedited Removal," Which Allows Us To Send Illegal Immigrants Home More Quickly.** The President is also working with Congress to mitigate court-imposed requirements that the Federal government release dangerous criminal aliens if their home countries do not take them back within a certain period of time.
- **The Administration Is Working Closely With State And Local Law Enforcement To Stop Illegal Immigration. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has the resources to train 1,500 State and local law enforcement officers under the 287(g) program in 2006 and 2007.** DHS will work with its State and local partners to expand these programs, and received \$50 million in 2006 supplemental funding for this effort. In addition, DHS is expanding to State and local law enforcement agencies the Criminal Alien Program (CAP) previously in place with the Federal Bureau of Prisons to identify illegal aliens who are incarcerated in Federal, State, and local jails.

2. We Must Hold Employers Accountable For The Workers They Hire

In A Sharp Break From The Past, The Administration Is Addressing The Illegal Employment Of Undocumented Workers With A Tough Combination Of Criminal Prosecution And Forfeitures. Previously, worksite enforcement relied on a combination of administrative hearings and fines. The fines were so modest that some employers treated them as merely a cost of doing business, and employment of undocumented workers continued unabated.

- **The Number Of Arrests In Worksite Enforcement Cases Has Increased Dramatically During The President's Time In Office.** There were more than 4,300 arrests in worksite enforcement cases for 2006, more than seven times the arrests in 2002. In addition, the two largest worksite enforcement actions in U.S. history were conducted last year by ICE.
- **In Fall 2005, The President Signed A Bill Doubling Federal Resources For Worksite Enforcement.** In addition, the Administration has launched law enforcement task forces in 11 major cities to dismantle criminal rings that produce fake documents.
- **DHS Has Issued A Proposed "No-Match" Regulation To Assist Employers In Ensuring A Legal Workplace And To Help The Government Identify And Crack Down On Employers Who Knowingly Hire Illegal Workers.** In cases in which an employer has ten or more employees with inaccurate information, the Social Security Administration (SSA) sends the employer a "No-Match" letter. DHS's proposed "No-Match" regulation clarifies that employers may be held civilly and criminally liable when a letter is sent and employers ignore the discrepancies between SSA databases and the information provided about their employees.

Comprehensive Immigration Reform Must Include The Creation Of A New, Tamper-Proof Identification Card For Every Legal Foreign Worker So Businesses Can Verify The Legal Status Of Their Employees. A tamper-proof card would help us enforce the law and leave employers with no excuse for violating it. We will also work with Congress to expand "Basic

Pilot" – an electronic employment eligibility verification system – and mandate that all employers use this system.

3. To Secure Our Border, We Must Create A Temporary Worker Program

America's Immigration Problem Will Not Be Solved With Security Measures Alone. There are many people on the other side of our borders who will do anything to come to America to work and build a better life. This dynamic creates tremendous pressure on our border that walls and patrols alone cannot stop.

As We Tighten Controls At The Border, We Must Also Address The Needs Of America's Growing Economy. The rule of law cannot permit unlawful employment of millions of undocumented workers in the United States. Many American businesses, however, depend on hiring willing foreign workers for jobs that Americans are not doing.

To Provide A Lawful Channel For Employment That Will Benefit Both The United States And Individual Immigrants, The President Has Called For The Creation Of A Temporary Worker Program. Such a program will serve the needs of our economy by providing a lawful and fair way to match willing employers with willing foreign workers to fill jobs that Americans have not taken. The program will also serve our law enforcement and national security objectives by taking pressure off the border and freeing our hard-working Border Patrol to focus on terrorists, human traffickers, violent criminals, drug runners, and gangs.

The Temporary Worker Program Should Be Grounded In The Following Principles:

- **American Workers Must Be Given Priority Over Guest Workers.** Employers should be allowed to hire guest workers only for jobs that Americans have not taken.
- **The Program Must Be Truly Temporary.** Participation should be for a limited period of time, and the guest workers must return home after their authorized period of stay. Those who fail to return home in accordance with the law should become permanently ineligible for a green card and for citizenship.
- **Participation Should Fluctuate With Market Conditions.** When the economy is booming, and there are not enough American workers available to help businesses grow, the program should be open to more participants. But when times are tough and Americans struggle to find jobs, the economy cannot and should not support as many guest workers.

4. We Must Bring Undocumented Workers Already In The Country Out Of The Shadows

Comprehensive Immigration Reform Must Account For The Millions Of Immigrants Already In The Country Illegally. Illegal immigration causes serious problems, putting pressure on public schools and hospitals and straining State and local budgets. People who have worked hard, supported their families, avoided crime, led responsible lives, and become a part of American life should be called in out of the shadows and under the rule of American law.

The President Opposes An Automatic Path To Citizenship Or Any Other Form Of Amnesty. Amnesty, as a reward for lawbreaking, would only invite further lawbreaking.

Amnesty would also be unfair to those lawful immigrants who have patiently waited their turn for citizenship and to those who are still waiting to enter the country legally.

The President Supports A Rational Middle Ground Between A Program Of Mass Deportation And A Program Of Automatic Amnesty. It is neither wise nor realistic to round up and deport millions of illegal immigrants in the United States. But there should be no automatic path to citizenship. The President supports a rational middle ground founded on the following basic tenets:

- **No Amnesty.** Workers who have entered the country illegally and workers who have overstayed their visas must pay a substantial penalty for their illegal conduct.
- **In Addition To Paying A Meaningful Penalty, Undocumented Workers Must Learn English, Pay Their Taxes, Pass A Background Check, And Hold A Job For A Number Of Years Before They Will Be Eligible To Be Considered For Legalized Status.**
- **Any Undocumented Worker Seeking Citizenship Must Go To The "Back Of The Line."** The program should not reward illegal conduct by making participants eligible for citizenship ahead of those who have played by the rules and followed the law. Instead, program participants must wait their turn at the back of the line.

5. We Must Promote Assimilation Into Our Society By Teaching New Immigrants English And American Values

Those Who Swear The Oath Of Citizenship Are Doing More Than Completing A Legal Process – They Are Making A Lifelong Pledge To Support The Values And The Laws Of America. Americans are bound together by our shared ideals, our history, and the ability to speak and write the English language. Every new citizen has an obligation to learn the English language and the customs and values that define our Nation, including liberty and civic responsibility, appreciation for our history, tolerance for others, and equality. When immigrants assimilate, they advance in our society, realize their dreams, and add to the unity of America.

New Citizens Need Guidance To Succeed. The Office of Citizenship is creating new guides for immigrants and introducing a new pilot civics examination designed to foster a deeper understanding of civic virtues and the founding ideals. The President's Task Force on New Americans is fostering volunteerism through volunteer.gov and exploring partnerships with local organizations. Public libraries and faith-based and community groups will be encouraged to offer English language and civics instruction to immigrants who are seeking to make America their home.

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Fact Sheet: Acting This Year to Pass Comprehensive Immigration Reform *President Bush Discusses Progress Securing Our Border And Outlines Five Objectives For Comprehensive Immigration Reform*

Today, President Bush Toured The Yuma Sector Of The Border In Arizona And Made Remarks On Comprehensive Immigration Reform. In May 2006, President Bush visited the Yuma Sector Border and announced Operation Jump Start, under which up to 6,000 National Guard troops have been deployed to the Southern border to complement the work of the Border Patrol. Today, President Bush checked on progress in securing the Yuma Sector Border and dedicated the new Yuma Border Patrol Station.

- **The President Called On Congress To Act This Year To Pass Comprehensive Immigration Reform That He Can Sign Into Law.** Our Nation deserves an immigration system that secures our borders and honors our proud history as a Nation of immigrants. There is a desire on the part of Republicans and Democrats alike to get this problem solved, and by working together, we can enact comprehensive immigration reform into law this year.
- **The Lessons Of Past Experience Is Clear: All Elements Of This Issue Must Be Addressed Together – Or None Of Them Will Be Solved At All.** Illegal immigration is a serious problem that has been growing for decades. Past efforts to address it have failed because they did not do enough to secure our Nation's borders, failed to address the underlying economic reasons behind illegal immigration, and failed to provide sensible ways for employers to verify the legal status of the workers who they hire.
- **Thanks To The Coordinated Efforts Of The Border Patrol And National Guard Members Deployed Under Operation Jump Start And Other Enforcement Efforts, Illegal Border Crossings In The Yuma Sector Are Down.** More than 600 National Guard members are serving at the Yuma Sector as part of Operation Jump Start. In the months before Operation Jump Start, an average of more than 400 people a day were apprehended trying to cross the Yuma Sector Border. That number has dropped to fewer than 140 a day since the start of the operation.

Comprehensive Immigration Reform Must Accomplish Five Clear Objectives

1. Securing The Border

Securing The Border Is A Critical Part Of Our Strategy For Comprehensive Immigration Reform, And We Are Increasing Manpower And Improving Infrastructure And Technology At The Border. Since the President took office in 2001, we have more than doubled funding for border security – from \$4.6 billion in 2001 to \$10.4 billion in 2007. We have expanded the Border Patrol from about 9,000 agents in 2001 to about 13,000 agents today. By the end of 2008, we will have a total of more than 18,000 agents, doubling the size of the Border Patrol under the President's leadership.

Under Operation Jump Start, National Guard Members Are Supporting The Border Patrol In Texas, California, Arizona, And New Mexico. As we work to complete upgrades at

the border, Operation Jump Start is providing the Border Patrol with immediate reinforcements. National Guard Troops deployed under Operation Jump Start are assisting the Border Patrol with surveillance, intelligence, construction, and logistics.

- **Operation Jump Start Has Put More Manpower On The Border And Allowed The Border Patrol To Move 563 Agents Into Front-Line Positions.** The number of people apprehended for illegally crossing our Southern border is down by nearly 30 percent in 2007 from this point in 2006.

We Have Effectively Ended The Practice Of "Catch And Release" For Every Non-Mexican Apprehended At The Southern Border. More than 85 percent of the illegal immigrants caught crossing the Southern border are Mexicans, and virtually all are sent back home within 24 hours. For years, however, most apprehended non-Mexican illegal immigrants were released back into society on this side of the border – with a notice to appear at a future court date – because the government did not have enough detention space to hold them. The President believes this practice is unacceptable, and we have effectively ended it for every non-Mexican apprehended at the Southern border.

- **We Have Added Thousands Of New Beds At Detention Centers Across The Country.** Since the President took office, we have provided funding for 7,798 new beds to accommodate apprehended illegal immigrants – a 40 percent increase over 2001.
- **We Have Expedited The Legal Process To Cut The Average Deportation Time.** We are also making it clear to foreign governments that they must accept back their citizens who violate U.S. immigration laws.

2. Creating A Temporary Worker Program

We Cannot Fully Secure The Border Unless We Take Pressure Off The Border – And That Requires A Temporary Worker Program. By creating a lawful and orderly channel for foreign workers to come to America on a temporary basis, a temporary worker program would help reduce the number of people trying to sneak past the Border Patrol, freeing agents to focus on apprehending violent criminals and terrorists who pose a threat to our security.

3. Holding Employers Accountable For The Workers They Hire

Enforcing Immigration Laws At The Worksite Is A Vital Part Of Any Successful Reform. We are cracking down on employers who knowingly violate the law. To make worksite enforcement practical on a large scale, the President has called for the creation of a tamper-proof identification card for legal foreign workers and a better system for businesses to verify the legal status of their workers. By taking these steps, we will make it easier for businesses to obey the law – and leave them no excuse for violating it.

4. Resolving The Status Of The Millions Of Illegal Immigrants Already In The Country

The Administration Is Working With Democrats And Republicans To Find A Practical Answer That Lies Between Granting Automatic American Citizenship To Every Illegal Immigrant And Deporting Every Illegal Immigrant.

- **The President Opposes Amnesty.** Amnesty is the forgiveness of an offense without penalty. It should not be given to people who entered our country illegally.
- **Illegal Immigrants Who Have Roots In Our Country And Want To Stay Should Have To Pay A Meaningful Penalty For Breaking The Law, Pay Their Taxes, Learn English, And Work In A Job For A Number Of Years.** People who meet a reasonable number of conditions and pay a penalty of time and money should be able to apply for citizenship, but approval would not be automatic, and they will have to wait in line behind those who played by the rules and followed the law.

5. Finding New Ways To Help Newcomers Assimilate Into Our Society

We Will Honor The American Tradition Of The Melting Pot And Help Immigrants Assimilate By Learning Our History, Our Values, And The English Language.

- **Last June, The President Created The Task Force On New Americans To Look For Ways To Help Newcomers Assimilate And Succeed In Our Country.** Many organizations, from churches to businesses to civic associations, are already working to answer this call.

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President Bush Discusses Comprehensive Immigration Reform in Yuma, Arizona

U.S. Border Patrol - Yuma Station Headquarters
Yuma, Arizona

10:21 A.M. MST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all. Thank you all very much, please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. Thanks for the warm weather. (Laughter.)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Twenty-eight degrees in Washington.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, 28 degrees in Washington, that's right. I appreciate you sharing that with me. (Laughter.) Sometimes it's a little hotter than that in Washington. But I'm glad to be back here in Yuma. Thank you so very much for your hospitality. Thanks for your service to the country. I appreciate so very much the work you're doing day and night to protect these borders. And the American people owe you a great debt of gratitude.

The Border Patrol is really an important agency. I know some people are wondering whether or not it makes sense to join the Border Patrol. My answer is, I've gotten to know the Border Patrol, I know the people serving in this fine agency -- I would strongly urge our fellow citizens to take a look at this profession. You're outdoors, you're working with good people; and you're making a solid contribution to the United States of America. And I want to thank you all for wearing the uniform and doing the tough work necessary, the work that the American people expect you to do.

Last May, I visited this section of the border, and it was then that I talked about the need for our government to give you the manpower and resources you need to do your job. We were understaffed here. We weren't using enough technology to enable those who work here to be able to do the job the American people expect. I returned to check on the progress, to make sure that the check wasn't in the mail -- it, in fact, had been delivered.

I went to a neighborhood that abuts up against the border when I was here in May. It's the place where a lot of people came charging across. One or two agents would be trying to do their job and stopping a flood of folks charging into Arizona, and they couldn't do the job -- just physically impossible. Back at this site, there's now infrastructure, there's fencing. And the amount of people trying to cross the border at that spot is down significantly.

I appreciate very much Ron Colburn and Ulay Littleton. They gave me the tour. Colburn, as you know, is heading up north. He's going to miss the weather. More importantly, he's going to miss the folks he worked with down here. I appreciate both of their service, I appreciate the tour. The efforts are working -- this border is more secure, and America is safer as a result.

Securing the border is a critical part of a strategy for comprehensive immigration reform. It is an important part of a reform that is necessary so that the Border Patrol agents down here can do their job more effectively. Congress is going to take up the legislation on immigration. It is a matter of national interest and it's a matter of deep conviction for me. I've been working to bring Republicans and Democrats together to resolve outstanding issues so that Congress can pass a comprehensive bill and I can sign it into law this year. (Applause.)

I appreciate the hard work of Secretary Michael Chertoff, the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. I appreciate Commissioner Ralph Basham, he's the main man in charge of U.S. Customs and Border Protection. David Aguilar, Chief of the Border Patrol is with us. David, thank you for the job you're doing. Lieutenant General Steven Blum, Chief of the National Guard Bureau. I want to thank the governor of the state of Arizona, Janet Napolitano. I appreciate you being here, Governor, thank you for taking time from the session to be down here. It means a lot when the governors take an active interest in what's going on in the borders of their respective states.

I appreciate so very much Senator Jon Kyl. Kyl is one of the most respected United States senators and I'm proud to be with him today -- and glad to give him a ride back to Washington, I might add. (Laughter.)

I appreciate members of the congressional delegation who have joined us: John Shadegg; Jeff Flake -- from Snowflake, Arizona, I want you to know -- and I appreciate you working on this immigration issue; Congressman Trent Franks, and Congressman Harry Mitchell. I appreciate you all taking time for being with me here today, it means a lot that you'd come.

I want to thank Senator Tim Bee, he's the president of the Arizona State Senate, for being here. Mr. Mayor, thank you for coming. Larry Nelson, the Mayor of Yuma, Arizona. I appreciate you being here, Mr. Mayor.

I do want to thank Major General David Ratacheck, the Adjutant General of the state of Arizona; thank all the local and state officials; and, most importantly, I want to thank the Border Patrol agents and I want to thank the National Guard folks for wearing the uniform. I am proud to be the Commander-in-Chief of all these units here today and I appreciate your service to the United States of America. (Applause.)

I hope by now the American people understand the need for comprehensive immigration reform is a clear need. Illegal immigration is a serious problem -- you know it better than anybody. It puts pressure on the public schools and the hospitals, not only here in our border states, but states around the country. It drains the state and local budgets. I was talking to the governor about how it strained the budgets. Incarceration of criminals who are here illegally strains the Arizona budget. But there's a lot of other ways it strains the local and state budgets. It brings crime to our communities.

It's a problem and we need to address it aggressively. This problem has been growing for decades, and past efforts to address it have failed. These failures helped create a perception that America was not serious about enforcing our immigration laws and that they could be broken without consequence. Past efforts at reform did not do enough to secure our nation's borders. As a result, many people have been able to sneak into this country.

If you don't man your borders and don't protect your borders, people are going to sneak in, and that's what's been happening for a long time. Past efforts at reform failed to address the underlying economic reasons behind illegal immigration. People will make great sacrifices to get into this country to find jobs and provide for their families.

When I was the governor of Texas I used to say family values did not stop at the Rio Grande River. People are coming here to put food on the table, and they're doing jobs Americans are not

doing. And the farmers in this part of the world understand exactly what I'm saying. But so do a lot of other folks around the country. People are coming to work, and many of them have no lawful way to come to America, and so they're sneaking in.

Past efforts at reform also failed to provide sensible ways for employers to verify the legal status of the workers they hire. It's against the law to knowingly hire an illegal alien. And as a result, because they couldn't verify the legal status, it was difficult for employers to comply. It was difficult for the government to enforce the law at the work site. And, yet, it is a necessary part of a comprehensive plan. You see, the lessons of all these experiences -- the lesson of these experiences is clear: All elements of the issue must be addressed together. You can't address just one aspect and not be able to say to the American people that we're securing our borders.

We need a comprehensive bill, and that's what I'm working with members of Congress on, a comprehensive immigration bill. And now is the year to get it done. The first element, of course, is to secure this border. That's what I'm down here for, to remind the American people that we're spending their taxpayer -- their money, taxpayers' money, on securing the border. And we're making progress. This border should be open to trade and lawful immigration, and shut down to criminals and drug dealers and terrorists and coyotes and smugglers, people who prey on innocent life.

We more than doubled the funding for border security since I've been the President. In other words, it's one thing to hear people come down here and talk; it's another thing for people to come down and do what they say they're going to do. And I want to thank Congress for working on this issue. The funding is increasing manpower. The additional funding is increasing infrastructure, and it's increasing technology.

When I landed here at the airport, the first thing I saw was an unmanned aerial vehicle. It's a sophisticated piece of equipment. You can fly it from inside a truck, and you can look at people moving at night. It's the most sophisticated technology we have, and it's down here on the border to help the Border Patrol agents do their job. We've expanded the number of Border Patrol agents from about 9,000 to 13,000, and by the end of 2008, we're going to have a total of more than 18,000 agents.

I had the privilege of going to Artesia, New Mexico, to the training center. It was a fantastic experience to see the young cadets getting ready to come and wear the green of the Border Patrol. By the time we're through, we will have doubled the size of the Border Patrol. In other words, you can't do the job the American people expect unless you got enough manpower, and we're increasing the manpower down here.

This new technology is really important to basically leverage the manpower. Whether it be the technology of surveillance and communication, we're going to make sure the agents have got what is necessary to be able to establish a common picture and get information out to the field as quickly as possible so that those 18,000 agents, when they're finally on station, can do the job the American people expect.

But manpower can't do it alone. In other words, there has to be some infrastructure along the border to be able to let these agents do their job. And so I appreciate the fact that we've got double fencing, all-weather roads, new lighting, mobile cameras. The American people have no

earthly idea what's going on down here. One of the reasons I've come is to let you know, let the taxpayers know, the good folks down here are making progress.

We've worked with our nation's governors to deploy 6,000 National Guard members to provide the Border Patrol with immediate reinforcements. In other words, it takes time to train the Border Patrol, and until they're fully trained, we've asked the Guard to come down. It's called Operation Jump Start, and the Guard down here is serving nobly.

I had the chance to visit with some of the Guard, and Mr. Mayor, you'll be pleased to hear they like being down here in Yuma, Arizona. They like the people, and they like the mission. More than 600 members of the Guard are serving here in the Yuma Sector. And I thank the Guard, and, equally importantly, I thank their families for standing by the men and women who wear the uniform during this particular mission. You email them back home and tell them how much I appreciate the fact they're standing by you.

I appreciate very much the fact that illegal border crossings in this area are down. In the months before Operation Jump Start, an average of more than 400 people a day were apprehended trying to cross here. The number has dropped to fewer than 140 a day. In other words, one way that the Border Patrol can tell whether or not we're making progress is the number of apprehensions. When you're apprehending fewer people, it means fewer are trying to come across. And fewer are trying to come across because we're deterring people from attempting illegal border crossings in the first place.

I appreciate what Colburn said -- he puts it this way, they're watching -- "They see us watching them," that's what he said, "and they have decided they just can't get across." And that's part of the effort we're doing. We're saying we're going to make it harder for you, so don't try in the first place.

We're seeing similar results all across the southern border. The number of people apprehended for illegally crossing our southern border is down by nearly 30 percent this year. We're making progress. And thanks for your hard work. It's hard work, but necessary work.

Another important deterrent to illegal immigration is to end what was called catch and release. I know how this discouraged some of our Border Patrol agents. I talked to them personally. They worked hard to find somebody sneaking in the country, they apprehended them; the next thing they know, they're back in society on our side of the border. There's nothing more discouraging than have somebody risk their life or work hard and have the fruits of their labor undermined. And that's what was happening with catch and release. In other words, we'd catch people, and we'd say, show up for your court date, and they wouldn't show up for their court date. That shouldn't surprise anybody. But that's what was happening. And the reason why that was happening is because we didn't have enough beds to detain people.

Now, most of the people we apprehend down here are from Mexico. About 85 percent of the illegal immigrants caught crossing into -- crossing this border are Mexicans -- crossing the southern border are Mexicans. And they're sent home within 24 hours. It's the illegal immigrants from other countries that are not that easy to send home.

For many years, the government didn't have enough space, and so Michael and I worked with Congress to increase the number of beds available. So that excuse was eliminated. The practice

has been effectively ended. Catch and release for every non-Mexican has been effectively ended. And I want to thank the Border Patrol and the leaders of the Border Patrol for allowing me to stand up and say that's the case.

The reason why is not only do we have beds, we've expedited the legal process to cut the average deportation time. Now, these are non-Mexican illegal aliens that we've caught trying to sneak into our country. We're making it clear to foreign governments that they must accept back their citizens who violate our immigration laws. I said we're going to effectively end catch and release, and we have. And I appreciate your hard work in doing that.

The second element of a comprehensive immigration reform is a temporary worker program. You cannot fully secure the border until we take pressure off the border. And that requires a temporary worker program. It seems to make sense to me that if you've got people coming here to do jobs Americans aren't doing, we need to figure out a way that they can do so in a legal basis for a temporary period of time. And that way our Border Patrol can chase the criminals and the drug runners, potential terrorists, and not have to try to chase people who are coming here to do work Americans are not doing.

If you want to take the pressure off your border, have a temporary worker program. It will help not only reduce the number of people coming across the border, but it will do something about the inhumane treatment that these people are subjected to. There's a whole smuggling operation. You know this better than I do. There's a bunch of smugglers that use the individual as a piece of -- as a commodity. And they make money off these poor people. And they stuff them in the back of 18-wheelers. And they find hovels for them to hide in. And there's a whole industry that has sprung up. And it seems like to me that since this country respects human rights and the human condition, that it be a great contribution to eliminate this thuggery, to free these people from this kind of extortion that they go through. And one way to do so is to say you can come and work in our country for jobs Americans aren't doing for a temporary period of time.

The third element of a comprehensive reform is to hold employers accountable for the workers they hire. In other words, if you want to make sure that we've got a system in which people are not violating the law, then you've got to make sure we hold people to account, like employers. Enforcing immigration is a vital part of any successful reform. And so Chertoff and his department are cracking down on employers who knowingly violate the law.

But not only are there coyotes smuggling people in, there are document forgers that are making a living off these people. So, in other words, people may want to comply with the law, but it's very difficult at times to verify the legal status of their employees. And so to make the work site enforcement practical on a larger scale, we have got to issue a tamper-proof identification card for legal foreign workers.

We must create a better system for employers to verify the legality of the workers. In other words, we got work to do. And part of a comprehensive bill is to make sure work site enforcement is effective.

Fourth, we've got to resolve the status of millions of illegal immigrants already here in the country. People who entered our country illegally should not be given amnesty. Amnesty is the forgiveness of an offense without penalty. I oppose amnesty, and I think most people in the

United States Congress oppose amnesty. People say, why not have amnesty? Well, the reason why is because 10 years from now you don't want to have a President having to address the next 11 million people who might be here illegally. That's why you don't want amnesty. And, secondly, we're a nation of law, and we expect people to uphold the law.

So we're working closely with Republicans and Democrats to find a practical answer that lies between granting automatic citizenship to every illegal immigrant and deporting every illegal immigrant.

It is impractical to take the position that, oh, we'll just find the 11 million or 12 million people and send them home. It's just an impractical position; it's not going to work. It may sound good. It may make nice sound bite news. It won't happen.

And, therefore, we need to work together to come up with a practical solution to this problem, and I know people in Congress are working hard on this issue. Illegal immigrants who have roots in our country and want to stay should have to pay a meaningful penalty for breaking the law, and pay their taxes, and learn the English language, and show work -- show that they've worked in a job for a number of years. People who meet a reasonable number of conditions and pay a penalty of time and money should be able to apply for citizenship. But approval would not be automatic, and they would have to wait in line behind those who played by the rules and followed the law.

What I've described is a way for those who've broken the law to pay their debt to society and demonstrate the character that makes a good citizen.

Finally, we have got to honor the tradition of the melting pot, and help people assimilate into our society by learning our history, our values and our language. Last June I created a new task force to look for ways to help newcomers assimilate and succeed in our country. Many organizations, from churches to businesses to civic associations, are working to answer this call, and I'm grateful for their service.

And so here are the outlines for a comprehensive immigration reform bill. It's an emotional issue, as I'm sure you can imagine. People have got deep convictions. And my hope is that we can have a serious and civil and conclusive debate. And so we'll continue to work with members of both political parties. I think the atmosphere up there is good right now. I think people generally want to come together and put a good bill together -- one, by the way, that will make your job a lot easier.

It's important that we address this issue in good faith. And it's important for people to listen to everybody's positions. It's important for people not to give up, no matter how hard it looks from a legislative perspective. It's important that we get a bill done. We deserve a system that secures our borders, and honors our proud history as a nation of immigrants.

And so I can't think of a better place to come and to talk about the good work that's being done and the important work that needs to be done in Washington, D.C., and that's right here in Yuma, Arizona, a place full of decent, hardworking, honorable people. May God bless you all.
(Applause.)

###

President Bush Visits Yuma Sector Border Patrol in Arizona

Yuma Sector Border Patrol

Yuma, Arizona

 In Focus: Immigration

9:36 A.M. MST

THE PRESIDENT: You know, it's interesting, this is the spot I came to in May of 2006. Colburn told me then that we were in the process of developing a modernization strategy; none of this existed prior to my arrival in May. They told me they were developing a strategy that would prevent people from charging across to try to get to the neighborhood over here. And that strategy has been implemented.

It's a combination of roads, lighting and fencing, all aiming at making sure that we have a border that's protected. And it's amazing progress that's been made. We have come back to this spot because it's where I was the last time. And I was most impressed by your strategy, even more impressed by the fact that it's now being implemented. And the men have reported that the number of arrests are down, which is an indication that fewer people are trying to cross the border at this part of -- along the border. So we're making some pretty good progress.

And the reason we've come here is to show the American people that the plan that we've announced is now being implemented. And there is still more work to be done. But, nevertheless, a lot of progress is being made. I'm going to talk a little bit later about making sure that we complete the strategy to have a comprehensive immigration bill. I will save my words until then. But in the meantime, I wanted you to see the progress -- see firsthand the progress that we're making here on the border.

So thank you.

Q What most impresses you, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: The hard work being done.

###

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FORM	SUBJECT/TITLE	PAGES	DATE	RESTRICTION(S)
Memorandum	Immigration Reform Status Report - To: POTUS - From: Joel Kaplan	2	04/16/2007	P5;

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COLLECTION:

Staff Secretary, White House Office of the

SERIES:

Von Der Heydt, Thomas (Tommy) - Bush Record Policy Memos

FOLDER TITLE:

Immigration: A Timeline (2001 - 2008) [3]

FRC ID:

13894

OA Num.:

14457

NARA Num.:

14246

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
- P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
- P5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
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FORM	SUBJECT/TITLE	PAGES	DATE	RESTRICTION(S)
Memorandum	Policy Time - Domestic - To: POTUS - From: Karl Zinsmeister	2	04/16/2007	P5;

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President's Radio Address

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. This weekend, I am traveling to Florida to address the graduating class of Miami Dade College. This college serves one of our Nation's most vibrant and diverse communities. Miami is home to people whose families have been in our country for generations -- and to people who have only just arrived. This diversity is one of the great strengths of that city -- and it is one of the great strengths of our country.

The opportunities America offers make our land a beacon of hope for people from every corner of the world. America's ability to assimilate new immigrants has set us apart from other nations. In this country, our origins matter less than our dreams. What makes us Americans is our shared belief in democracy and liberty. Our Nation now faces a critical challenge: to build an immigration system that upholds these ideals and meets America's needs in the 21st century.

In Washington, we are in the midst of an important discussion about immigration. Our current immigration system is in need of reform. We need a system where our laws are respected. We need a system that meets the legitimate needs of our economy. And we need a system that treats people with dignity and helps newcomers assimilate into our society.

We must address all elements of this problem together, or none of them will be solved at all. And we must do it in a way that learns from the mistakes that caused previous reforms to fail. So I support comprehensive immigration reform that will allow us to secure our borders and enforce our laws, keep us competitive in the global economy, and resolve the status of those already here -- without amnesty, and without animosity.

I know convictions run deep on the matter of immigration. Yet I am confident we can have a serious, civil, and conclusive debate. My Administration is working closely with Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle. We are addressing our differences in good faith, and we are working to build consensus. And I am pleased that some of those who had doubts about comprehensive reform last year are now open to supporting it.

There is a desire on the part of Republicans and Democrats alike to get this problem solved. And by working together, we can enact comprehensive immigration reform this year.

Our Nation deserves an immigration system that secures our borders and honors our proud history as a nation of immigrants. By working together, we will enforce our laws and ensure that America forever remains a land of opportunity and a great hope on the horizon.

Thank you for listening.

###

President Bush Discusses Comprehensive Immigration Reform with Clergy in Washington, D.C.

Asamblea de Iglesias Cristianas, Centro Evangelistico
Washington, D.C

11:26 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: I want to thank my fellow Americans for joining me today to discuss a very important issue, and that is immigration.

In my discussions I've talked to clergy that recognize that our country needs a comprehensive immigration reform, and part of that is to help people learn English. I've talked to people who work for corporate America -- Andy works for Marriott International, a corporation that understands that it's very helpful, it's in their interest to help people assimilate.

I've talked to Emilio, who works for the government, he's the head of the old INS, U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services. He has the opportunity often to swear in new citizens, and he sees the great -- the great hope that people have. I've talked to church workers who are reaching out in their communities to help people learn the benefits of the language, the English language. And thank you for tutoring and being kind.

I've talked to people that are raising families that have come from other countries, that are now U.S. citizens and understand the benefit of what it means to have learned English. Francisco said, when you learn English, doors open up for you. And I appreciate that beautiful sentiment, because it's true.

I strongly support comprehensive immigration reform. One aspect of comprehensive immigration reform is to help people assimilate into America. Part of that is to have a comprehensive strategy to help people learn the English language and to learn the history and traditions of the United States. Comprehensive immigration reform requires us to uphold law and enforce our borders in a humane way.

Comprehensive immigration reform means that you need a temporary worker program for workers who will be coming into our country. It's a program that treats people with respect, a program that helps meet the economic needs of our country. Comprehensive immigration reform means that employers would have to obey the law. Comprehensive immigration reform means that we've got to be humane about the nearly 11 or 12 million people who are already here. As I said in a speech down in Miami, we need to treat these people not with amnesty, and not with animosity. So it's got to be a rational way forward.

I'm looking forward to working with both Democrats and Republicans to get a comprehensive immigration bill done this year. We have a good chance to get it done. It's important for our fellow citizens to understand comprehensive immigration reform is in the nation's interest. And I'll continue working with members of Congress to encourage them to do the hard work necessary to make sure a system that is not working is reformed in a way that meets our national needs and listens to our national heart. After all, America is a land of immigrants. Immigration helps renew our soul. It helps redefine our spirit in a positive way.

And I'm so proud to be with you and I thank you for your time.

###

President Bush Celebrates Cinco de Mayo, Discusses Immigration

The Rose Garden

2:54 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all. Please be seated. Siéntese. Bienvenidos. Thank you for coming. Welcome to El Jardin de las Rosas. It's a great place to celebrate Cinco de Mayo. As a matter of fact, I've been looking forward to celebrating this so much that we decided to have our own Cuatro de Mayo. (Laughter.)

Thanks for coming. Welcome. I'm honored to celebrate this important holiday with you all. On Cinco de Mayo, we remember our close friendship with Mexico, and we honor and remember the many contributions Mexican Americans have made to our nation.

I'm sorry Laura couldn't be here. She's coming back from having camped out in a national park with high school classmates. I'm honored to be here with the Attorney General of the United States, mi amigo, Alberto Gonzales. (Applause.) Y tambien, the Secretary of Commerce, Carlos Gutierrez. (Applause.) Y su esposa, Edi. (Applause.) I'm glad to be here with Dr. Emilio Gonzalez, Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and Gloria. (Applause.) I appreciate my friend Emilio Estefan for arranging this entertainment here in the Rose Garden. I welcome the Ambassador to Mexico, Arturo. Bienvenidos. I'm glad you're here. Thanks for coming. (Applause.)

As you can see, I'm standing up here with a mariachi band, initially from Monterrey, Mexico -- Los Hermanos Mora Arriaga. Welcome. (Applause.) Brothers and sisters -- I think you told me you had 13 brothers and -- 15 brothers and sisters. (Laughter.) We believe in family values. (Laughter.)

I want to thank those who wear the uniform of the United States. Thank you for serving. (Applause.)

Cinco de Mayo celebrates a great Mexican victory at the battle of Puebla. On May 5, 1862, an outnumbered band of Mexican soldiers held their ground against a professional European army. They triumphed against overwhelming odds. The victory inspired Mexican patriots in their heroic fight for liberty, and for democracy. Cinco de Mayo is a joyful day in Mexican history, and it's an important milestone in the history of freedom.

The people of the United States are proud to celebrate Cinco de Mayo with our Mexican neighbors. Our two countries continue to stand for the principles that the Mexico army defended at Puebla. We believe that democracy represents the true will of people. We believe that freedom is God's gift to every man, woman and child on the face of this Earth. (Applause.)

We believe that both our nations have a responsibility to share the blessings of liberty. The United States and Mexico are bound by strong family ties. Mexican Americans have enriched our culture by sharing their musical and artistic talents. They've strengthened our economy by opening new businesses and expanding trade. And they have made our nation more hopeful by leading lives of faith and family.

Mexican Americans have also defended the United States by wearing our nation's uniform. Today, Mexican Americans in uniform answered the call to advance the cause of liberty, and this nation is really grateful for your service and your sacrifice. (Applause.)

The patriotism of Mexican Americans reminds us that one of our greatest strengths is the character and diversity of our nation's immigrants. Immigration has made our land a great melting pot of talent and ideas. It has made America a beacon of hope for people in search of a better life.

In Washington, we're now in the midst of an important discussion about immigration. Our current immigration system is in need of reform. It is not working. We need a system where our laws are respected. We need a system that meets the needs of our economy. And we need a system that treats people with dignity and helps newcomers assimilate into our society. (Applause.)

We must address all elements of this problem together, or none of them will be solved at all. We must do it in a way that learns from the mistakes that caused previous reforms to fail. I support comprehensive immigration reform that will allow us to secure our borders and enforce our laws, to keep us competitive in the global economy, and to resolve the status of those already here, without amnesty and without animosity.

Comprehensive immigration reform is a vital goal for our nation, and it is a matter of deep conviction for me. I will continue to work closely with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to build a consensus for reform, so Congress can pass, and I can sign, a comprehensive immigration bill into law este a o. (Applause.)

The United States and Mexico share a great border, and we share a hopeful future. Tomorrow, people on both sides of that border will celebrate freedom and the courage of all who defend it. I wish you a happy Cinco de Mayo. Que Dios los bendiga a las Estados Unidos y tambien Mexico. (Applause.)

And now, Los Hermanos Mora Arriaga. (Applause.)

###

President's Radio Address

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. Next week, the Senate will take up an important priority for our Nation: comprehensive immigration reform.

Over the past few weeks, leaders from both parties have met at the White House and on Capitol Hill to find areas of agreement and iron out our differences. These meetings have been productive. We've been addressing our differences in good faith, and we're building consensus. Both Republicans and Democrats understand that successful immigration reform must be bipartisan.

Democrats and Republicans agree that our current immigration system is in need of reform. We agree that we need a system where our laws are respected. We agree that we need a system that meets the legitimate needs of workers and employers. And we agree that we need a system that treats people with dignity and helps newcomers assimilate into our society.

We must address all elements of this problem together, or none of them will be solved at all. We must not repeat the mistakes that caused previous efforts at immigration reform to fail. So I support a comprehensive immigration reform bill that accomplishes five clear objectives:

First, America must continue our efforts to improve security at our borders.

Second, we must hold employers to account for the workers they hire, by providing better tools for them to verify documents and work eligibility.

Third, we must create a temporary worker program that takes pressure off the border by providing foreign workers a legal and orderly way to enter our country to fill jobs that Americans are not doing.

Fourth, we must resolve the status of millions of illegal immigrants who are here already, without amnesty and without animosity.

Finally, we must honor the great American tradition of the melting pot. Americans are bound together by our shared ideals, an appreciation of our history, and an ability to speak and write the English language. And the success of our country depends upon helping newcomers assimilate into our society and embrace our common identity as Americans.

Coming together on a good bill that includes all five elements, we will make America more secure. We will make our economy more competitive. And we will show the world that America can be a lawful society and a welcoming society at the same time.

Reforming our immigration system is an important opportunity to show that elected officials in Washington can work together to find practical solutions to the problems that matter most. I thank the Senators who have been working hard on this issue. I am optimistic we can pass a comprehensive immigration bill and get this problem solved for the American people this year.

Thank you for listening.

###



President Bush Participates in Roundtable on Employment Eligibility Verification System

Embassy Suites
Washington, D.C.

11:35 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: I appreciate the discussion we just had on immigration. With us are people who are employers, people who provide work for citizens who are in our country legally. They know full well it's against the law to hire somebody who is here illegally. They need help from the government to make sure the person they hire is here legally, that they're not dealing with forged documents.

And so we've been reviewing the upgrading of the basic pilot program, which is the government's attempt to help small business owners and larger business owners make sure that the people they're finding work for are not breaking the law. In other words, we can't ask our employers to verify somebody here unless we help them. And the reason why we're talking about this subject is that holding employers to account for violating the law is an integral part of a comprehensive immigration reform package.

I thank members of my Cabinet, Secretaries Gutierrez and Chertoff, for taking the White House lead in working with members of the United States Senate to get a comprehensive immigration bill to the floor as quickly as possible, that can pass the Senate. And it's been hard work. This is a very emotional issue. I firmly believe that the bill needs to be comprehensive. You can't have one aspect of immigration reform passed and not other aspects, otherwise we'll be back to where we were in the past, and that is reform efforts have failed because it hadn't been comprehensive enough.

The best way, and, frankly, the only way to get a comprehensive bill done that will matter and deal with this issue once and for all is for the bipartisan approach that we're now working on to come to fruition, that it's got to be a bipartisan bill that is -- is that bill our Secretaries are working on with members from both parties in the Senate. Hopefully, that bill can get to the floor as quickly as possible, and hopefully we can get a positive vote so we can get the bill over to the House of Representatives.

But there is a good chance, I'm optimistic that we can get comprehensive immigration reform, one, that enforces our borders; two, holds employers to account; three, recognizes we've got workers here who are doing jobs Americans aren't doing, and they ought to have a -- there ought to be a temporary worker permit to do so; four, to make sure that we treat people who are here already with respect and dignity, without amnesty, without animosity; and, five, to continue the assimilation program so necessary to make sure our country continues to move forward in an optimistic way.

And so I want to thank you all for sharing with me your stories. I appreciate the fact that you're deeply concerned about upholding the law. I thank you for sharing with me your desire to see that Congress get a comprehensive immigration bill done soon. And I assure you that the White

House, along with the decent, honorable members of the Senate, are working very hard to bring that bill to a conclusion.

Thank you.

###

President Bush Discusses Comprehensive Immigration Bill

South Lawn

3:25 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Secretary Gutierrez and Secretary Chertoff have just briefed me about the negotiations on the comprehensive immigration bill that just concluded in the Senate. I want to thank, first of all, my Secretaries for being involved in the process, being engaged in this important issue, and helping move the process forward. I congratulate members of the Senate, both political parties, who decided it was time to work together to come up with a comprehensive immigration bill that addresses a major problem facing our country. After weeks of long work, these negotiations came to a successful conclusion.

I want to thank the members of the Senate who worked hard. I appreciate the leadership shown on both sides of the aisle. As I reflect upon this important accomplishment, important first step toward a comprehensive immigration bill, it reminds me of how much the Americans appreciate the fact that we can work together -- when we work together they see positive things.

Immigration is a tough issue for a lot of Americans. The agreement reached today is one that will help enforce our borders, but equally importantly, it will treat people with respect. This is a bill where people who live here in our country will be treated without amnesty, but without animosity.

And so I want to thank you all very much for representing the White House. I thank the senators for working hard. I look forward to a good vote out of the United States Senate as quickly as Leader Reid can get the bill moving, and then of course we look forward to working with the House of Representatives to take this first step and convert it into a successful second step. I really am anxious to sign a comprehensive immigration bill as soon as I possibly can. Today we took a good step toward that direction.

Thank you.

###

President's Statement on Bipartisan Immigration System Proposal

Today, Republicans and Democrats in the United States Senate came together and agreed upon a proposal that offers a much needed solution to the problem of illegal immigration in this country. This proposal delivers an immigration system that is secure, productive, orderly and fair. I applaud the Senators who worked in the spirit of bipartisanship over the past months to address this issue, which is critically important to the American people.

Our immigration system is badly in need of reform. The bipartisan solution the senators agreed to today requires us to meet important goals in addressing border security and enhancing interior and worksite enforcement. Once those goals are met, the plan would create a temporary worker program to address the needs of our growing economy and take pressure off the border by allowing workers to come to this country for a short period of time and fill jobs Americans are not doing. For immigrants wishing to come to our country permanently in the future, it would also establish a new merit-based system, which takes into account job skills, education, English proficiency and family ties.

The plan would bring undocumented workers already in this country out of the shadows without amnesty and without animosity. It would require workers to pay a meaningful penalty, learn English, pay their taxes, and pass a background check before they can be considered for legalized status. If they achieve this legalized status and decide they want to apply for a green card, they must return home to file an application in order to get in line behind all of those who have played by the rules and followed the law.

Finally, our country has been a melting pot for over 200 years and that has given us much strength. We must continue to help immigrants assimilate into our society. This proposal would further that effort by affirming that English is the language of the United States and would help immigrants learn our language by directing the Department of Education to make English instruction freely available over the Internet.

Convictions run deep on the matter of immigration, but with this bipartisan agreement I am confident leaders in Washington can have a serious, civil and conclusive debate so I can sign comprehensive reform into law this year. I urge all members to support this bipartisan immigration reform proposal.

###

Press Briefing on Immigration Reform

Room 450

Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building

PARTICIPANTS:

Secretary of Homeland Security Chertoff

Secretary of Commerce Gutierrez

Assistant to the President and Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy Joel Kaplan

4:15 P.M. EDT

MR. SNOW: We are a little bit pressed for time. We've got about a half an hour. Secretaries Chertoff and Gutierrez have to appear at Pebble Beach to start doing some media appearances. So without further ado, we'll get a quick brief first from Secretary Chertoff, then a few words from Secretary Gutierrez. Joel Kaplan also here to answer questions about the negotiation, and when the proper time comes, I will wrap it up. We're also in the process of producing fact sheets, which we hope we will have available by the end of the briefing -- if not, we will get them to you in very short order.

SECRETARY CHERTOFF: Thanks, Tony. Let me really briefly run through the outline of the bill. The bill has not yet been introduced: I can't take you section by section through it. And then I have one announcement which I do think is important to make, which will be news, maybe, and is important to get out.

As you know, the bill starts with triggers on border enforcement: complete 370 miles of fence; get the 18,000 Border Patrol recruited and in training; continue to maintain catch and detain, as opposed to catch and release; and get an electronic verification system up that is operational and can start to provide to the employers an ability to verify who is an American citizen: tough interior enforcement with penalties; a requirement that you have secure identification for temporary workers and people who are going to be allowed to work here who were previously undocumented; and a system that allows you to verify that all of your people who come in to work are, in fact, American citizens by checking against databases on vital statistics.

Then we have to talk about how we deal with the economic needs that have been feeding illegal migration. That is a temporary worker program which allows people to come in and work either seasonally or on a temporary basis, up to two years, go back for a year, then they can come back and apply to work two years again, go back for a year, and apply to work two years again. But temporary means temporary. It's not meant to be kind of an under-the-table path to a green card.

We do have a green card system, but that is a separate system. And part of what all of this is about, it has got to be above board and transparent. We're not doing things under the table.

In terms of the green card system, we're talking about reconfiguring that system going forward. We begin with a proposition that two-thirds of our current green cards are based on family connections, including extended family connections, your adult children, their spouses, your adult siblings, their spouses. And, frankly, that promise of family reunification under the existing law has been pretty much a false promise, because even those who are eligible for those green

cards far outweigh the number of green cards that are available, so you wind up waiting decades before that green card comes in.

We're trying to get this system on an honest footing, but also, and as important, if not more important, recalibrate it going forward, so that it is based on national needs -- what we need in terms of educating people, employment skills, other kinds of experience that are good for America on the merits, and reduce the extent to which family connections in and of themselves get you a green card. That would move us more in the direction of where the rest of the West is and the rest of the world is, in terms of how they allocate their immigration system.

So how do we square that goal with the need to be fair to those who have waited on line in the existing system, the need, ultimately, to find a fair way, but a realistic way to deal with the undocumented workers who are here? We do it first by clearing the family backlog, the people with the extended preferences currently on line who have applied as of March 2005. That cutoff was picked because that was the date the original Kennedy-McCain bill was dropped. Those people, assuming they otherwise qualify and don't have criminal records, can get their green cards within eight years. And we're going to increase the number of green cards to let that happen.

That is basic fairness. If you waited on line, we're not going to change the rules of the game on you; we're going to let you get in under the rules of the game as they then existed. And it's actually going to be a benefit for those who have been waiting to reunify with their families because what was 20 or 30 years in some instances will be eight years or less.

But once we've cleared that backlog, the system is going to change going forward. Nuclear families, meaning your spouse and your minor children, will still be able to come in, uncapped, if you are a U.S. citizen -- or capped, but with a reasonable cap if you are a legal permanent resident. But extended family connections will no longer be, in and of themselves, a basis for a preference.

Rather, most of the green cards that will exist after we clear the backlog -- and there will be about 400,000 -- most -- those will be based on a merit system, with most weight going to education, employment, experience in the U.S. -- if you've been a temporary worker, that's going to count for a lot. If you're in a field where there is a need, like the health care field, that's going to give you points. And family will come in -- can be kind of a tie-breaker, but it's not going to be a basis to overwhelm the other merit-based system.

So that once we've cleared the backlog of people who have been playing under the old system, the new system will be one that looks to the merits and what you bring to the table in terms of the national interest of the United States, with family as a component, but not as the overwhelming component.

Also, once we clear the backlog we will be in a position to start to talk about how we address this issue of undocumented workers who are in the country, and their opportunity to get a green card. Again, the plan is tough, but it's fair and it's realistic. When the law is enacted, we will begin the process of enrolling people who are here illegally on a probationary basis. Now, if you're here illegally and you've committed a crime, you're out. If you're here illegally and you've committed -- and you're a gang member, you're out. If you're here illegally and you're a terrorist, you're out.

But assuming your only violation is a status violation, you entered illegally, you can get a probationary visa to continue to work while we complete the process of your background check, while we hit the triggers. Once the triggers are hit, you will hit -- you will convert to a Z visa, which is a four-year visa that allows you to work in this country. You've got to pay your taxes, you've got to keep your nose clean, but you can come back -- go back and forth to your home country as much as you want.

It's renewable after four years, and if you've played by the rules, you can renew from year five to year eight. And if you do the math, you'll see once you've got that second renewal done, you will then be at a point where there will be green cards that will become available to deal with the undocumented workers. And the way this plan works is, once everybody has cleared the family backlog in year eight, we will make sure there are enough green cards available so that anybody who has paid the fines that are required, satisfactorily completed two terms as a Z visa worker, gone back home and filed an application, we'll be able to accommodate those people who qualify, getting green cards within the following five years.

So if you do everything that's required of you, if you pay your debt to society, if you pay your fine, if you pay your taxes, and if you go back to your home country, or if that's somehow impracticable, you go outside the country, and you file your application from overseas, you will then be able to get a green card sometime between the year nine and year 13, depending again on the characteristics and points you bring to the table.

This satisfies the requirement that you go to the back of the line, because the line will have been cleared; that you pay your debt to society, so it's not an amnesty, but it is a realistic opportunity for people who are here and have done nothing more than commit a status violation. And then those people will be able to get their green cards between year nine and year 13.

And here's the really important announcement I want to make -- it needs to get out there. There is a cutoff date for Z visas for people who are undocumented. The only people who will be eligible to get a Z visa as a person who is here illegally is someone who arrived in this country prior to January 1 of 2007. You're going to have to prove that you were in the country prior to January 1, 2007. I reckon right now there are some people who, tomorrow, will pick up the paper in other parts of the world, and will think, well, maybe I can cross the border now and then try to pretend that I was here prior to January 1, 2007.

So I'm going to explain why that would be the absolute dumbest thing to do if you ever want to have a prayer of getting any kind of a benefit under the temporary worker program. We catch a very significant number of people who cross the border illegally. We now fingerprint them. If you cross the border, we catch you, we fingerprint you, you will never get into this program, because that fingerprint, dated tomorrow or dated a week from now or dated a month from now is going to be conclusive proof that you were not in this country as of the cutoff date; that you broke the law after the cutoff date. And that will take you out of the program for life.

So for those who are weighing in their minds whether they want to take a crack at coming in and trying to fool the system, here's the warning -- the warning is, the existence of the fingerprint system, which we use for everybody that's apprehended, guarantees that a person who is caught crossing the border now or since January 1 of this year is going to take themselves out of ever getting any benefit under this for the rest of their lives. That is a very powerful sanction, and it

ought to counsel anybody who is thinking of rushing for the border that that would be the absolute worst thing to do if you ever want to participate in this kind of program.

So that's the overview of the program.

SECRETARY GUTIERREZ: I'll just make a very brief comment about the overall plan and just the generalities of the plan. The President, from the very beginning, said we want a plan that is not amnesty, and we want a plan that is not animosity. So it's not about automatic amnesty and it's not about a mass deportation. That middle ground is very difficult to find. We believe we have found that middle ground. This is not amnesty; there is no automatic path to citizenship. Secretary Chertoff mentioned there are fines. If you want a path to a green card, you have to wait in line, you have to qualify, you have to apply. So there's nothing automatic about it.

The other part here that is very important, that I hope you just please recognize how big it is, it's this idea of moving from a system that traditionally has been based on having family connections to a system that is primarily driven by job skills and national need -- what does the country need, and therefore, that's what we would like to bring in through our immigration system. If you have family members, that can only help. But that is a very big shift. And what we're doing here is designing a system that's going to help our economy, it's going to help us grow. We've said before many times that every developed economy in the world has to embrace immigration if they want to grow.

We're going to do this right, we're going to do this in a bipartisan way, and this is going to give our country a tremendous advantage over the rest of the world.

And the last thing I'll say is, this has been a tremendous bipartisan effort. We had senators from both sides working on this, going through the details, paying a tremendous amount of attention. This is the only path to comprehensive reform. So if people want to support comprehensive reform, this is the bill. There is no other game in town, this is it.

So we'll take some questions.

MR. SNOW: Okay, since we have 15 minutes, I'm going to ask all three of you gentlemen to come up here, and then you can sort of step up as necessary to answer the questions. If you can keep the questions brief, we'll try to keep the answers brief.

Terry, you start.

Q How many illegal immigrants would get legal status under this bill?

SECRETARY CHERTOFF: That's going to depend on how many pay the fines, how many otherwise qualify. I mean, the estimate is that we currently have about 12 million in the country, maybe between 11 million and 12 million. Obviously, those who committed crimes are out, gang bangers are out. Of the remainder it depends, A, how many want it, how many pay the fines, how many complete the two years -- the two separate terms of temporary work. So it's going to be some number between one and several million.

Q You don't have anything -- you can't -- as you look at this, you haven't been able to identify a number more specific?

SECRETARY CHERTOFF: Well, it depends on --

Q I understand that --

SECRETARY CHERTOFF: Your -- I can tell you what the -- the general estimate is about 11 million to 12 million. What I can't -- and we estimate, could be anywhere from 15 to 20 percent will be disqualified based on problems with respect to criminality, or things of that sort. What I can't tell you is what people want. Historically, if you look back to '86, about 37 percent of the people opted for citizenship. So that may be telling, but it may not be telling. And that's speculative.

MR. STANZEL: Terry -- I'm sorry, just to clarify -- Terry, you were asking about legal status, not citizenship.

SECRETARY CHERTOFF: I'm sorry, you were asking about citizenship or green cards or legal status? Well, I would say that if you take 11 million to 12 million, and you take an estimate that somewhere between 15 and 20 percent can be disqualified for criminality or other grounds, then the balance are people who would be eligible to take that first step, which is the Z visa.

MR. KAPLAN: If I could, there will also be some of that 12 million who had been previously removed by court order, or -- and had left the country and reentered illegally. That's a felony and those people would not be eligible for the program.

Q What's the real number?

SECRETARY GUTIERREZ: Well, one of the great things about this -- having comprehensive immigration reform is that we will be able to find out. There are estimates -- if you have 11 million, 12 million people who are here illegally, this will enable them to come out of the shadows so that we know who is here and who is working here, so we'll know what the number is. But the estimate at this point is somewhere between 11 million and 12 million.

MR. SNOW: One further point. It not only allows them to come out of the shadows, it creates a positive incentive for doing so because employers face stiff sanctions for not having fully documented workers. Furthermore, if somebody is here without documentation, they're out, they don't get to come back. So keep in mind, there are very strong incentives for people to come forward.

Q Would there be a requirement for people here to carry some type of ID card?

SECRETARY CHERTOFF: Part of this process is that once we enroll people and people get the Z visa, we will have distributed tamper-proof cards with a fingerprint and a photograph for each of the people who qualify to get a Z visa, and that will be their identification.

Q Two questions. One is, how involved -- does the administration consider this its bill? How involved were you guys, and who was involved in the day-to-day negotiations? I was kind of under the impression that you guys were in the room, but let the senators hash it out. So how much of this is your bill? And secondly, do you -- can you help us understand, or at least explain to our readers and viewers how the point system would work, what are the various metrics?

MR. KAPLAN: Well, first question, I'll say that there's been extremely intensive involvement by the administration, starting with the President laying out the framework and the goals of comprehensive immigration reform, and then sending up his two Cabinet Secretaries, Secretary Chertoff and Secretary Gutierrez, to engage, first, in some listening sessions with members of Congress on both sides of the aisle as we started this process this year to figure out where the areas of potential agreement would be, and then very significant sessions on Capitol Hill over the last, I would say, probably two or three months, involving 10 to 12 senators at a time, and the two Cabinet Secretaries.

There's no question that this is a Senate product and reflects a bipartisan agreement among those senators, but with the, as I said, extensive involvement of the administration, and the framework that the President laid out at the outset.

SECRETARY CHERTOFF: I mean, without getting into excruciating detail on the points, the points are arranged to reward or to acknowledge various kinds of positive merits: education, engagement in a specialty occupation, engagement in an occupation which has high demand, where there's a labor shortage, positive experience working with a U.S. firm, employer vouching for the person's qualifications and retaining them, levels of education, vocational training, apprenticeships, learning English. And those are arrayed in a way so as to give an opportunity for different paths, all of which are merit based.

Q How much is this bill -- if it passes, how much would it cost to implement when you add fencing, Border Patrol, and then clearing the backlogs? The agency has had trouble clearing backlogs in the past.

SECRETARY GUTIERREZ: We're still costing out, and we're still getting into those details. And I'd rather not throw out a number now, but we'll be working with OMB to cost out the bill. I can tell you this, that --

Q What about ballpark?

SECRETARY GUTIERREZ: Well, but let me just say this, that whatever that final number will be, it will be a lot less costly than to remain in a system that is socially unsustainable and where we can't even identify the cost. So we'll have a cost number at some point.

Q Okay, but just to follow up on the backlogs point, the immigration system, for years and years, has had trouble clearing green cards, clearing citizenship applications, huge backlogs. What makes them -- what makes you think you can do it now when you're saying you're going to clear the whole backlog that built up for years and years and years?

SECRETARY CHERTOFF: Well, of course, one of the issues is when you get your green card, getting to citizenship. That backlog actually got cleared except for background checks. We do anticipate there will be processing fees for people who are applying, which are meant to defray a significant part of the cost.

But there will have to, obviously, be an investment in upgrading your IT and all the other structures that allow you to process people more quickly.

I think what Secretary Gutierrez said is completely right -- we're paying a huge cost now; it's just a hidden cost. It's a cost in terms of enforcement dollars, frustration, all the collateral damage that's done to society from having a system that's unregulated. And I think it's pretty clear that whatever we pay to get it fixed is going to be a lot less than we're paying now.

Q How long can somebody get essentially a free ride -- if they're here illegally now, but they don't want to jump the hoops to get the green card, and you get the Z visa by doing nothing right away -- right? -- and that's for four years. I guess they'd have to go home and then come back, and then you get another one for four more years --

SECRETARY GUTIERREZ: You mentioned free ride and do nothing, which I think needs to be clarified --

Q Well, you don't have to do anything to get it, right? Just say, well, I was here before --

SECRETARY CHERTOFF: You have to enroll, you have to demonstrate that you were here prior to the cutoff date, obviously not be a felon or otherwise have violated the law, and then you get it. And then, in order to continue to stay here, you've got to work. It's not a retirement thing. You've got to pay a fine. Eventually --

Q You've got to pay a fine to get your Z visa?

SECRETARY CHERTOFF: Yes, you've got to pay a fine to get your Z visa, \$1,000. And there will be a processing fee, as well, which is cost-based. It's not meant to be a punishment. At the renewal stage, you have to demonstrate you've performed the work requirement, you've kept your nose clean. Then you can renew.

Sometime between the time you start and -- you've got to go back and apply for a green card, if you want one, and that means going back home or at least leaving the country.

Q At the end of the four years, or the end of the eight years?

SECRETARY CHERTOFF: By the eighth year you will have to -- if you want a green card.

Q If you're a law-abiding illegal worker in this country, you pay \$1,000 and work here for eight more years --

SECRETARY CHERTOFF: Correct. And you actually could work further than that. You don't have to get a green card.

SECRETARY GUTIERREZ: Did you say law-abiding legal?

Q Illegal.

Q Because we're not --

Q Law-abiding illegal -- law-abiding --

SECRETARY GUTIERREZ: They will be legal.

Q It starts to sound like amnesty, is what I'm getting at. It's an eight-year, nine-year amnesty program. And then at the end of that, you've got to go, assuming you can find them at the workplace. Is that how it works?

SECRETARY CHERTOFF: No, here's what it is. It is -- in order to come out of what is currently a system that is broken, where there are millions of undocumented workers, in order to get regulated, you have to come forward, you have to pass a background check, you have to demonstrate you were here prior to January 2007, you've got to pay a fine. At that point, you can continue to renew in four-year increments, as long as you're working, you're paying your taxes and you're abiding by the law.

So is it -- now, if you don't want a green card, you're right, you don't have to pay an additional fine, you'll have paid one fine. We'll have done your background check and we'll have then periodically checked to make sure you that you are working, you're satisfying the work requirement.

If you don't do that, you have the same person doing the work, not paying the taxes, maybe stealing someone's identity, and you are perpetuating a system where that person can be victimized. And we're going to have more raids and more of what we have now. So is it harshly punitive? No. We're not treating this as a capital offense. But here's what it does.

First and foremost, it means that my agents who go out and enforce the law can spend their time looking for drug dealers and gang bangers, instead of maids who are working in hotels. I only have so many agents. I suggest you ask the American people, would you rather have the agent track down a gang banger and a drug dealer, or a maid? I think pretty much all of them will say, let's go get the gang banger and the drug dealer.

So we're going to bring everybody into a regulated system. We'll get the taxes. They'll pay the fine. They'll have to learn English at the end of year eight. And then they'll have an opportunity, but not a guarantee of getting a green card.

SECRETARY GUTIERREZ: Somebody, someone mentioned today -- this word "amnesty" is thrown out as if though it's the answer to all the questions and all the quandaries. We made sure that this was not amnesty. This is not an unconditional pardon. And very importantly, there is no automatic path to citizenship. And if you go back and look at a lot of the bills that were around last year, there was a sense that there was an automatic green card somewhere in the future. There is no automatic path.

But if you call something like this "amnesty," then where does that take you? We can't stand still and keep on throwing one-liners at each other, the system is just going to continue getting worse. So I think we have found that middle ground that the President has been asking for.

Q Can you talk a little bit about the path forward in terms of the legislation? Are you now -- is this like now the administration's plan? Are you now going to try to negotiate with the House? And then, number two, are you going to -- what do you see as the biggest political threat to this, from Democrats who think this is too -- you know, not easy enough? Or from Republicans who think it's not hard enough?

MR. KAPLAN: Well, first of all, the President made some remarks a half hour, an hour or so ago, heralding this moment, which is a big landmark in getting a bill which will, itself, be an historic achievement. The administration, as I said before, has been intensively involved up until now, and I expect will continue to be intensively involved as it moves to the Senate floor next week.

We're keeping our eye, first, on getting the bill passed in the Senate, and the President urged members from both parties to support this bipartisan product. Obviously, once we get to that point of Senate passage, that will be another landmark and we'll turn our attentions to the House, where Speaker Pelosi has previously indicated that she's interested in moving a bipartisan product through that body.

So there are a few more steps along the way, but reaching this moment is an important milestone and reflects just very intensive, thoughtful work by a bipartisan group of senators. There is going to be people on both sides of the aisle who think they didn't get everything they want in this bill. That's the nature of a bipartisan agreement -- you're going to have to make -- no one is going to get everything that they wanted in the bill. But what both sides were able to achieve here was, as the Secretary talked about, the middle ground that accomplishes the principles the President laid out. There will be people who try to pull it apart, from both sides, but we think that people who look at this -- Democrats and Republicans who look at this and want a permanent fix to this problem will think that this is a good product and will support it.

SECRETARY GUTIERREZ: The political opponents -- I think the question was who are the political opponents. I would say the political opponents are those who would demand perfection and those who would demand that they get 100 percent of what they want out of a comprehensive bill. The political allies are those who understand compromise and bipartisanship, and that's what's going to get this done.

SECRETARY CHERTOFF: And let me put my two cents in. The question is do you want to solve the problem, or do you want to complain about it? This is the solution to the problem. There will be people who want to complain and will miss the problem if they can't complain about it. This is about solving it.

Q Given the broad support that there already is in the Senate, looking to the House, do you know how many Republican votes you can get at this point? I mean, are you at that stage where you can say we can get this amount of Republicans?

SECRETARY CHERTOFF: I don't think we're at the point of counting votes. First of all, we did talk to members of the House as we went through our listening process, to try to get a sense of what their concerns were. And I think that when we put the bill together, working with the Senate, as we started to talk about the proposal we certainly had in mind that you have to have something that passes both Houses.

My observation over the last couple of years is that legislation is a dynamic process, and people's willingness to join something changes as they observe it get fleshed out and they see who else is part of it. So I think that certainly when you look at the range of people who support this, it ought to at least suggest to people they should have an open mind, look at the bill and see whether it doesn't achieve a good deal of what people want, even if it's not everything.

Q Isn't the Senate road the easy and first step in the whole process? The House is where they had -- there were so many problems last year. The Senate seemed very much -- much more amenable toward the President's -- the framework the President had laid down. So don't you really have the bigger battle ahead?

SECRETARY CHERTOFF: You know, I don't think one is easier than another. There are certain characteristics of the way each house works. I mean, the Senate requires, in a sense, greater agreement, because you have to really get -- deal with the issue of filibuster, and there are all kinds of procedural things that are not present in the House. The House really allows things to move more rapidly.

In terms of where people are on the merits, I think, you know, a year has passed, people will evaluate what's presented. This is not the same thing that was produced last year, and we'll see where we are.

Q Having the Democrats in charge in the House now might make it easier?

SECRETARY CHERTOFF: I don't know -- you can speculate. I think we have to deal with that on the merits. I'll tell you -- let me just say -- I'll tell you one reason there's a bill in the Senate is because I don't think anybody came in with preconceptions about what was achievable. There are all kinds of people who can tell you, it can't be done, it will never be done, it's too hard. I've heard that not only since I've been here, but before. Everybody sat down and said, if we want to solve the problem, how do we make it work? And if that spirit continues, there's no limit on what you can do.

MR. SNOW: Okay, I'm we're going to have to call it on that. We'll have plenty more on this the next few days. Thanks guys.

Do we have the fact sheets yet? Okay, we'll get fact sheets to you as soon as they're available.

###

Fact Sheet: Border Security and Immigration Reform

Administration And Bipartisan Group Of Senators Reach Bipartisan Agreement On Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Today, Administration Officials And A Bipartisan Group Of Senators Reached Agreement On Comprehensive Immigration Reform Legislation. The proposal includes:

- **Putting Border Security And Enforcement First:** Border security and worksite-enforcement benchmarks must be met before other elements of the proposal are implemented.
- **Providing Tools For Employers To Verify The Eligibility Of The Workers They Hire:** Employers will be required to verify the work eligibility of all employees using an employment eligibility verification system, while all workers will be required to present stronger and more verifiable identification documents. Tough new anti-fraud measures will be implemented and stiff penalties imposed on employers who break the law.
- **Creating A Temporary Worker Program:** To relieve pressure on the border and provide a lawful way to meet the needs of our economy, the proposal creates a temporary worker program to fill jobs Americans are not doing. To ensure this program is truly "temporary," workers will be limited to three two-year terms, with at least a year spent outside the United States between each term. Temporary workers will be allowed to bring immediate family members only if they have the financial ability to support them and they are covered by health insurance.
- **No Amnesty For Illegal Immigrants:** Illegal immigrants who come out of the shadows will be given probationary status. Once the border security and enforcement benchmarks are met, they must pass a background check, remain employed, maintain a clean criminal record, pay a \$1,000 fine, and receive a counterfeit-proof biometric card to apply for a work visa or "Z visa." Some years later, these Z visa holders will be eligible to apply for a green card, but only after paying an additional \$4,000 fine; completing accelerated English requirements; getting in line while the current backlog clears; returning to their home country to file their green card application; and demonstrating merit under the merit-based system.
- **Strengthening The Assimilation Of New Immigrants:** The proposal declares that English is the language of the United States and calls on the United States Government to preserve and enhance it, as well as enacting accelerated English requirements for many immigrants. In addition, the DHS Office of Citizenship will be expanded to include coordinating assimilation efforts in its mission, and the Education Secretary will make an English instruction program freely available over the Internet.
- **Establishing A Merit System For Future Immigration:** The proposal establishes a new merit-based system to select future immigrants based on the skills and attributes they will bring to the United States. Under the merit-based system, future immigrants applying for permanent residency in the U.S. will be assigned points for skills, education, and other attributes that further our national interest including: ability to speak English; level of

schooling, including added points for training in science, math, and technology; job offer in a specialty or high-demand field; employer endorsement; and family ties to the U.S.

- **Ending Chain Migration:** The immigration system would be reformed to better balance the importance of family connections with the economic needs of our country by replacing the current system, where nearly two-thirds of green cards are awarded to relatives of U.S. citizens, with a system in which future family immigration will focus on the nuclear family and parents.
- **Clearing The Family Backlog In Eight Years:** Millions of family members of U.S. citizens now wait years in line for a green card, with some waits estimated at as long as 30 years. Family members who have applied legally and have lawfully waited their turn in line will receive their green card within eight years.

Putting Border Security And Enforcement First

Border Security And Worksite Enforcement Benchmarks Must Be Met Before A Temporary Worker Program Is Implemented. These benchmarks include:

- Miles of fence constructed.
- Number of Border Patrol Agents hired.
- "Catch and Return" continues at the border.
- Employment Eligibility Verification System ready to process all new hires.

The Proposal Establishes New Penalties For Border Crimes And Gives The Border Patrol Additional Tools To Stop Illegal Border Crossings. Through the deployment of additional Border Patrol agents with supporting equipment, the construction of additional fencing and vehicle barriers in targeted areas, and the development of a proper mix of sensors, radar, and cameras, the proposal establishes a true commitment to securing our borders.

Providing Tools For Employers To Verify The Eligibility Of The Workers They Hire

Employers Will Be Required To Verify The Work Eligibility Of All Employees, While All Workers Will Be Required To Present Stronger And More Verifiable Identification Documents. Tough new anti-fraud measures will be implemented and stiff penalties imposed on employers who break the law.

- The Employment Eligibility Verification System will allow for real-time verification of employee photos and documents.
- The Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration will be able to share "no-match" information to ensure that illegal immigrants cannot use the Social Security information of Americans to pose as legal workers.
- Employer audits will serve as an additional check on employer compliance with the system.

Creating A Temporary Worker Program

To Relieve Pressure On The Border And Provide A Lawful Channel To Meet The Needs Of Our Economy, The Proposal Creates A Temporary Worker Program. The program allows workers to enter the country to fill jobs that Americans are not doing. The temporary worker program:

- Protects American workers by requiring U.S. employers to advertise the job in the United States at a competitive wage before hiring a temporary worker.
- Provides additional labor protections for temporary worker program participants.
- Allows temporary workers to enter the United States to work for three two-year terms, with at least a year spent outside the United States between each term.
- Sets a cap of 400,000 on the temporary worker program, which can be adjusted up or down in the future depending on demand.
- Requires temporary workers who want to bring their immediate family to show that they have the financial means to support them and that they are covered by health insurance.
- Recognizes the unique needs of agriculture by establishing a separate seasonal agriculture component under the temporary worker program.

No Amnesty For Illegal Immigrants

Illegal Immigrants Who Come Out Of The Shadows Will Be Given Probationary Status.

To maintain their probationary status, they must pass a background check, remain employed, and maintain a clean criminal record.

Illegal Immigrants Who Fulfill Their Probationary Requirements Can Apply For A Z Card, Which Will Enable Them To Live, Work, And Travel Freely. Z card holders will be required to pay a \$1,000 fine, meet accelerated English and civics requirements, remain employed, and renew their visa every four years.

Z Card Holders Will Have An Opportunity To Apply For A Green Card, But Only After:

- Paying an additional \$4,000 fine,
- Applying at the back of the line and waiting until the current backlog is cleared,
- Returning to their home country to file their green card application, and
- Demonstrating merit under the merit-based system.

Strengthening The Assimilation Of New Immigrants

The Proposal Declares That English Is The Language Of The United States And Calls On The United States Government To Preserve And Enhance It, As Well As Enacting Accelerated English Requirements For Some Immigrants. The success of our country

depends upon helping newcomers assimilate into our society and embrace our common identity as Americans – our shared ideals, an appreciation of our history, and an ability to speak and write the English language. Therefore, the Secretary of Education is directed to make an English

instruction program freely available over the Internet. The DHS Office of Citizenship is expanded to include coordinating assimilation efforts in its mission, and additional funding is authorized for the Office.

Establishing A Merit System For Future Immigration

The Proposal Establishes A New Merit-Based System To Select Future Immigrants Based On The Skills And Attributes They Will Bring To The United States. A merit system is used by many other countries.

- **Under The Merit System, Future Immigrants Applying For Permanent Residency In The United States Will Be Assigned Points For Skills, Education, Employment Background And Other Attributes That Further Our National Interest.** These skills include:
 - Ability to speak English.
 - Level of schooling, including added points for training in science, math, and technology.
 - Job offer in a high-demand field.
 - Work experience in the United States.
 - Employer endorsement.
 - Family ties to the United States.

Ending Chain Migration

In Place Of The Current System Where Nearly Two-Thirds Of Green Cards Are Awarded To Relatives Of U.S. Citizens, Our Immigration System Will Be Reformed To Better Balance The Importance Of Family Connections With The Economic Needs Of Our Country.

- Visas for parents of U.S. citizens are capped, while green cards for the siblings and adult children of U.S. citizens and green card holders are eliminated.
- A new Parents Visitor visa is created to ensure that parents are allowed to visit their children in the United States regularly and for extended periods of time.
- The Diversity Lottery Program, which grants 50,000 green cards per year through random chance, is ended.
- These rebalanced green cards are used to clear the Family Backlog in eight years and then applied to the new Merit System for future immigration once the backlog is cleared.

Clearing The Family Backlog Within Eight Years

Family Members Who Have Applied Legally, And Lawfully Waited Their Turn In Line, Will Receive Their Green Card Within The Next Eight Years. Today, millions of family

members of U.S. citizens wait years in line for a green card, with some waits estimated at as long as 30 years.

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President's Radio Address

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. This week, my Administration reached an agreement with Republicans and Democrats in the Senate on immigration reform. I thank the leaders in both parties who worked hard to produce legislation that will secure the border, restore respect for the law, and meet the legitimate needs of our economy.

This legislation includes all the elements required for comprehensive immigration reform. It will improve security at our borders. It will give employers new tools to verify the employment status of workers and hold businesses to account for those they hire. It will create a temporary worker program. It will help us resolve the status of millions of illegal immigrants who are here already, without animosity and without amnesty. And it will honor the great American tradition of the melting pot by strengthening our efforts to help new arrivals assimilate into our society.

Here's how the bill works: First, it will require that strong border security and enforcement benchmarks are met before other elements of the legislation are implemented. These benchmarks include completing our plan to double the number of Border Patrol agents, improving border infrastructure, and maintaining enough beds in our detention facilities so that all those apprehended at the border can be held and returned to their home countries. We will also improve work site enforcement by implementing an effective system to verify worker eligibility using tamper-resistant identification cards, and by imposing stiffer penalties on companies that knowingly violate the law. Once these benchmarks are met, they will trigger other provisions of comprehensive reform.

The legislation will create a new temporary worker program. Such a program will help our economy and take pressure off the border by providing foreign workers with a legal and orderly way to enter our country to fill jobs that Americans are not doing. To ensure that this program is truly temporary, workers will be limited to three two-year terms, with at least a year spent outside the United States between each term. Temporary workers will be allowed to bring immediate family members only if they demonstrate that they can support them financially, and that their family members are covered by health insurance.

This legislation will also help resolve the status of illegal immigrants who are already in our country without amnesty. Those who come out of the shadows will be given probationary status. If they pass a strict background check, pay a fine, hold a job, maintain a clean criminal record, and eventually learn English, they will qualify for and maintain a Z visa. If they want to become citizens, they have to do all these things, plus pay an additional fine, go to the back of the line, pass a citizenship test, and return to their country to apply for their green card.

This legislation will also strengthen our efforts to help new immigrants assimilate. The key to unlocking the full promise of America is the ability to speak English. This bill affirms that English is the language of the United States. And it provides new opportunities for immigrants to learn English and embrace the shared ideals that bind us as a nation.

In addition, this legislation will clear the backlog of family members who've applied to come to our country lawfully, and have been waiting patiently in line. This legislation will end chain migration by limiting the relatives who can automatically receive green cards to spouses and minor children. And this legislation will transform our immigration system so that future

immigration decisions are focused on admitting immigrants who have the skills, education, and English proficiency that will help America compete in a global economy.

I realize that many hold strong convictions on this issue, and reaching an agreement was not easy. I appreciate the effort of Senators who came together to craft this important legislation. This bill brings us closer to an immigration system that enforces our laws and upholds the great American tradition of welcoming those who share our values and our love of freedom.

Thank you for listening.

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Fact Sheet: Securing the Border First

Bipartisan Immigration Reform Bill Includes Meaningful Border Security And Worksite Enforcement Triggers

"...[T]he fundamental question is, will elected officials have the courage necessary to put a comprehensive immigration plan in place that makes it more likely we can enforce our border and, at the same time, uphold the great ... immigrant traditions of the United States of America. ... Those determined to find fault with this bill will always be able to look at a narrow slice of it and find something they don't like. If you want to kill the bill, if you don't want to do what's right for America, you can pick one little aspect out of it, you can use it to frighten people. Or you can show leadership and solve this problem once and for all..."

- President George W. Bush, 5/29/07

Today, President Bush Discussed The Bipartisan Immigration Reform Bill At The Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) In Glynco, Georgia. The United States depends on Federal agents like those trained at FLETC to enforce immigration laws at the border and across the country. By making enforcement of immigration laws the highest priority and addressing all elements of comprehensive reform, the bipartisan immigration bill now under consideration by the Senate will help put an end to illegal immigration and keep the U.S. economy strong.

Three Key Points On The Bipartisan Immigration Bill's Commitment To Border Security And Worksite Enforcement

- 1. Under The Bipartisan Immigration Reform Bill, Temporary Worker And Z Visas Will Not Be Issued Until Meaningful Benchmarks For Border Security And Worksite Enforcement Are Met.**
- 2. The Bill Commits The Most Resources To Border Safety And Security In U.S. History.**
- 3. The Bill Recognizes That Enforcement Alone Will Not Work To Secure The Borders And Meet The Needs Of The U.S. Economy.** The temporary worker program will help immigration enforcement officers control the border by creating a lawful and orderly channel for foreign workers to fill jobs that Americans are not doing.

Enforcing Immigration Laws Is The Bill's Highest Priority

Under The Bipartisan Immigration Reform Bill, Temporary Worker And Z Visas Will Not Be Issued Until Border Security Benchmarks Are Met. These triggers include:

- Increasing border fencing.
- Increasing vehicle barriers at the Southern border.
- Increasing the size of the Border Patrol.
- Installing ground-based radar and camera towers along the Southern border.

- Ensuring resources are available to maintain the effective end of "Catch and Release" for every non-Mexican apprehended at the borders.

A Reliable Employment Eligibility Verification System (EEVS) Must Also Be Ready To Process New Hires Before Any Temporary Worker Or Z Visas Are Issued. Employers will be required to verify the work eligibility of all employees using the EEVS, and all workers will be required to present stronger and more readily verifiable identification documents. Tough new anti-fraud measures will be implemented to restrict fraud and identity theft.

- **The EEVS Will Require Workers To Present A Limited Range Of Secure Government-Issued Or Government-Authorized IDs, Which Will Be Checked Electronically Against Federal And State Databases.**
- **Employers Who Knowingly Hire Illegal Workers Will Face Stiff New Criminal And Civil Penalties.** The maximum civil fine for hiring illegal workers will rise from \$2,000 to \$5,000 for first offenders and from \$10,000 to \$25,000 for three-time offenders. The maximum criminal penalty for a pattern or practice of hiring illegal workers will increase 25-fold, from \$3,000 per alien to \$75,000 per alien.

The Bill Builds Upon The Administration's Record Of Achievement In Border Security And Worksite Enforcement

Since The President Took Office In 2001, The Administration Has More Than Doubled Funding For Border Security From \$4.6 Billion In 2001 To \$10.4 Billion In 2007. As a result of this investment and other deterrence factors, the number of people apprehended for illegally crossing the southern border is down by nearly 27 percent in 2007 from this point in 2006.

The Administration Is Expanding Manpower And Improving Infrastructure And Technology At The Border.

- The Administration has expanded the Border Patrol from approximately 9,000 agents in 2001 to more than 13,000 agents today – and by the end of 2008, there will be a total of more than 18,000 agents, doubling the size of the Border Patrol since the President took office.
- Today, there are in place 78 miles of permanent vehicle barrier and 86 miles of primary fencing, part of 370 miles of fencing planned by the end of 2008.

Immigration And Customs Enforcement (ICE) Has Adopted A Much More Aggressive Approach Toward Cracking Down On Employers Who Knowingly Hire Illegal Aliens. Arrests for criminal violations brought in worksite enforcement actions – the most effective means of enforcement and best measures of ICE's new approach – have increased significantly from 24 in FY 1999 to a record 716 in FY 2006. There have been 588 criminal arrests since the beginning of FY 2007.

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President Bush Discusses Comprehensive Immigration Reform in Glynco, Georgia

Tom Steed Building
Federal Law Enforcement Training Center
Glynco, Georgia

11:31 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all very much. (Applause.) Please be seated -- unless, of course, you don't have a chair. Thanks for having me. I'm honored to be here at the headquarters of the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center.

I don't know whether you realize this, or not, but the government originally planned to open this center inside the Capital Beltway. No one looks very sad that they didn't open it inside the Capital Beltway. (Laughter.) It's a spectacular place to have this center. It is a glorious place to live. I'm honored to be in your presence. Thanks for letting me come by and share some thoughts with you.

I want to thank Director Patrick for her strong leadership and her kind introduction. I appreciate very much the tour I have just taken. A lot of our fellow citizens probably don't know what goes on here, but this is a center full of smart, capable instructors who are helping to train men and women who've volunteered to serve our country on the front lines of protecting the homeland. I am grateful to be in your midst. I thank those of you who work here; I thank those of you who are being trained here; and I thank your families, as well.

We have a mission, a vital mission, and that's to protect our country. And you all are on the front lines of that protection. And it gives me great confidence when I meet you to tell the American people there's a lot of decent souls doing everything they can to provide security for the American people. So, thanks.

I appreciate the folks at FLETC that I met that are working the border and helping train people to secure this border of ours. And I've come today not only to thank you, but to talk about immigration. Immigration is a vital issue facing this country. And the fundamental question is, will elected officials have the courage necessary to put a comprehensive immigration plan in place that makes it more likely we can enforce our border and, at the same time, uphold the great traditions of -- immigrant traditions of the United States of America. And that's what I want to discuss with you.

Before I do, I do want to introduce some people. I want to introduce Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez -- I appreciate you coming, Mr. Secretary. (Applause.) Carlos wasn't born here, see. He was born in another country -- Cuba. And now he sits in the Cabinet of the President of the United States. There's something great about a country that welcomes people, people who uphold our laws and realize the great blessings of America.

With us, as well, is Senator Mel Martinez. He wasn't born in America. He's a Senator from Florida. He was born in Cuba. I don't know if you know his story, but his mother and father put him on an airplane to come to the United States of America, to be raised by total strangers because they didn't want their son to grow up under a tyrant named Fidel Castro. He used to sit

in the Cabinet of the President of the United States; now he sits in the United States Senate. What a wonderful country it is, where people can come to live in a country based upon liberty, and realize the great blessings of our country.

And I want to mention those two men because, to me, they represent what the immigration debate is all about: Will we be a welcoming place, a place of law, that renews our spirit by giving people a chance to succeed?

So, Senator, thank you for coming, as well. (Applause.)

I saved the other two traveling with me because they were born here -- starting with the United States Senator from Georgia, a south Georgian named Saxby Chambliss, one of the finest senators in the United States Senate. (Applause.)

Finally, I asked Secretary Mike Chertoff to leave the bench to become the Director of the Department of Homeland Security. It's a big job. It's a job that requires organizing various agencies under one task, and that's to provide protection to the American people. Secretary Chertoff is doing a fine job. I'm glad he's joined us today. Thanks for coming, Mr. Secretary. (Applause.)

I thank all the state and local officials here who have joined us. I appreciate you taking time to come over and say hello. I thank the citizens from this part of the world who have joined us, as well. Thanks for supporting this good institution. I know you know this, but FLETC provides an important role for this country of ours, and I thank you for supporting it.

Before I talk about immigration, I do want to offer condolences for Agent Robert Smith. He died last week from injuries in a helicopter crash. He was a Customs and Border Protection agent. He reminds us on a regular basis that those who are on the front line of protecting the country take danger as a part of their job. And, therefore, we offer our deepest condolences for Robert Smith's family and his friends, and we ask for God's blessings on them.

Our nation depends on our federal agents to enforce our immigration laws at the border and across the country. You've got a big job to do; we're counting on you to enforce those laws. And when you graduate from FLETC, you're going to be an important part of that role. That's why you're here; it's to upgrade your skills so you have the capacity to do the job the country expects you to do. You're going to safeguard our ports of entry, you'll investigate workplace immigration violations, and you'll arrest those breaking the law. We are a nation of laws, and we expect people to keep the laws. And if they break the laws, there will be a consequence.

This administration of mine is committed to ensuring that our federal agents have the resources you need to carry out your responsibilities. For some of the older hands here -- I'm not going to pick you out of the crowd -- I'm sure you will tell some of the younger folks that things have changed significantly over the past years. One way to measure how things have changed is look at the budget. We've doubled the funding for border security since I took office. We now spend \$10 billion a year to protect this border. One commitment to the American people that we're serious about helping you do your job is to spend more money on the job. It's a way to measure whether or not our -- we're meeting our words with commitment. And we are.

We've used additional money. People say, what are you spending it on? Well, we're expanding the number of Border Patrol agents from about 9,000 to 13,000, and by the end of -- we have expanded it -- and by the end of 2008, we're going to have 18,000 agents. We will have more than doubled the Border Patrol in a relatively quick period of time. We believe the more manpower is on the border, the more likely it is we'll be able to enforce the border, like the American people expect us to do.

We're investing in new technology, we're strengthening infrastructure. In other words, we've taken our duty seriously to protect the border of the United States of America. As a matter of fact, we take it so seriously that I asked the governors to put some National Guard troops down there until our Border Patrol agents got trained.

And we're beginning to see some results. In this immigration debate, oftentimes people say, well, they're not doing anything to protect the border. Well, that's not -- those folks just simply don't know what's going on. You do. Men and women who wear the uniform understand what's going on. There's a focused, concerted effort to enforce our border.

As a matter of fact, you can tell when the border is better defended because the number of arrests go down. In other words, when people know there's a consequence to trying to sneak across, there's less likely to be people sneaking across. Arrests have gone down by 27 percent over the past year on the southern border. That's a sign of progress. It should say to the American people that we're doing what the people expect us to do.

The new infrastructure is making a difference. The Predators make a difference. The number of Border Patrol agents make a difference. I don't know if any of you spent time out in Artesia, New Mexico, if you're working for the Border Patrol, but I was impressed with boot camp. And they're training these Border Patrol agents to do the hard work that the American people expect them to do.

One of the problems we had prior to the administration addressing the problem was we had what was called -- what happened was called catch and release. You had your Border Patrol working hard, finding somebody trying to sneak into our country illegally, they'd catch him, and then they say, well, you know, look, you need to come back for your hearing; we're going to let you out, but come back for your hearing. Well, the problem was, the people didn't want to come back for their hearing. They generally wanted to go work. And so they would just disappear.

And it discouraged our Border Patrol agents. I talked to too many agents and heard too many stories about people saying, wait a minute, I'm tired of doing my job on the front line of protecting the border only to have the people that I have stopped coming in meld into our society.

And so we worked with Congress and we've got a lot of detention facilities now along the border. We didn't have space before. Now we do have space. And as a result, catch and release has virtually been eliminated. It sends a strong -- getting rid of the catch and release program sends a strong signal to people: If you come to the country, we will find you, and we're going to send you home, so don't try to come in the first place.

In other words, we're working hard to enforce the border. And we're stepping up enforcement inside the country. I see a lot of ICE hats. These are the folks that are charged with making sure

that people who knowingly hire somebody who's here illegally pay a price. In other words, part of making sure our country is a rule of law, we've got to have people enforce the law. It's against the law to hire somebody who is here illegally. That's the law. And we're training people here to make sure that they know how to enforce that law. And the message to employers, if you're hiring somebody here that you know is illegal, we're going to -- there's a consequence to be paid. That's what a nation that bases its system on rule of law does. That's what we'll continue to do.

And ICE is active. Your folks are working hard. ICE investigations have led to more than 3,000 arrests for immigration violations since the beginning of this fiscal year; nearly 600 arrests for criminal violations, including fraud and identity theft; and nearly \$30 million in penalties against businesses that have violated the law.

We're working hard to enforce the border. The immigration debate, you hear people say, well, they're not doing anything to enforce the border. They're wrong, and you know they're wrong. And I'm here to thank you for doing -- for working as hard as you can.

And now we've got to build on the progress. It's important for our American citizens to understand that the immigration system is in desperate need for comprehensive reform. And Congress has a historic window to act. The system isn't working. Think about a system that encourages smugglers to stuff people in 18-wheelers, people that want to work, people that want to provide for their families. Think about a system in which there's tremendous document forgery.

You've got a person out here in south Georgia who needs somebody to help them on their farm. The person shows up with documents. They don't know whether they're real, or not. There's a lot of forgery going on. We've got people -- in my judgment, this isn't what America should be about. And yet the system is broken to the point where people are being used as human cargo, being exploited, simply because most want to come and provide for their families; most are willing to do jobs Americans aren't doing. The system needs to be fixed.

I appreciate the Republicans and Democrats in the United States Senate, starting with Saxby Chambliss and Mel Martinez, who put politics aside and put courage first to work on a comprehensive bill. It takes a lot of courage in the face of some of the criticism in the political world to do what's right, not what's comfortable. And what's right is to fix this system now before it's too late. And I thank you two for your courage. (Applause.)

And Carlos and Mike Chertoff spent a lot of time sitting with the senators from both political parties. I don't know if you're tired of it, but a lot of Americans are simply tired of this endless political bickering, that we can't work together because it might make somebody else look good. I tried to change the system. It's not working. (Applause.) So I sent the two Secretaries in there with the senators from both parties, and said, okay, why don't we sit down and see if we can't figure something -- something that's good for the country. Each side is going to have to give a little bit. Not everybody is going to get everything they want, but what matters more is fixing the problem now.

And we're making some progress. Most Americans -- many Americans say their primary concern is border security and ensuring that those who violate our laws face consequences. That's what you're hearing out there when you're listening to the debate.

Others say their chief concern is keeping this economy strong. There's a -- a lot of employers need a legal way to fill jobs that Americans simply aren't doing. There's a lot of jobs here in Georgia that require people from -- that are willing to do the work that Americans aren't doing. It's just the way it is.

You talk to your farmer friends, or your nursery friends -- I remember the peach grower, Saxby, that you sent over to the White House. He's there saying to me, you've got to understand something, Mr. President, my business won't go forward unless I have some of these good people that are willing to work long hours in my peach orchard helping me harvest the crop. So a lot of people in this debate are concerned about getting a bill in place that will help keep the economy growing.

Others say their main concern is to bring hardworking, decent people out of the shadows of our society. All of these concerns are part of the same issue, and it's important for American citizens to understand that the legislation now before Congress addresses them all as one. Our view is, is that you can't solve the problem unless you address all aspects of the problem. We've tried to address immigration reform in the past by talking about only one aspect of immigration reform. To make it work, to address the concerns of the American people, there must be a comprehensive approach.

A lot of Americans are skeptical about immigration reform primarily because they don't think the government can fix the problems. And my answer to the skeptics is, give us a chance to fix the problems in a comprehensive way that enforces our border and treats people with decency and respect. Give us a chance to fix this problem. Don't try to kill this bill before it gets moving. Give us a chance to make it easier for the folks who wear the uniform along our borders to do their job.

I believe the bill before Congress learns from the mistakes of the past. It is the best hope for lasting reform. If people are interested in fixing a system that's broken, this bill is the best hope to do so. It answers the longstanding concerns of the American people. It deserves widespread support. And I strongly back it.

If you're serious about securing our borders, it makes sense to support legislation that makes enforcement our highest priority. And that's what this bill does. For decades, we have not been in complete control of the borders, and many people have lost faith in our capacity to get control of the borders. I ask them to look at what's taken place over the past years, recent years. I wish they could talk to some of your Border Patrol friends, and talk about the advances that have been made and the good work they're doing down there.

The first step to comprehensive reform must be to enforce immigration laws at the borders and at work sites across America. And this is what this bill does. For the skeptics who say that we're not concerned about border security or workplace enforcement, they need to read the bill. The bill prioritizes enforcing our laws at the border, and saying to employers, we'll hold you to account for employing somebody who's here illegally -- knowingly employing somebody who's here illegally.

This bill sets enforcement benchmarks that have got to be met before other aspects of the comprehensive bill are triggered. In other words, there has to be certain accomplishments in

place before other aspects of the bill come into being. And here are some of those markers: Increasing the number of Border Patrol agents. We said we're going to double them; they've got to get doubled, until other aspects of the bill come into being. We're going to build miles of state-of-the-art fencing. We're going to improve surveillance with advanced technologies. We will do a better job of holding employers accountable for the workers they hire.

Most employers want to comply with the law. The peach grower wanted to comply with the law. Believe me, he's a law-abiding, decent man. His attitude is, why don't you help me verify the legal status of a potential employee, as opposed to holding me to account -- which we will do, of course, if he knowingly hires somebody -- give me a hand with the verification system.

And that's why we're going to promote tamper-resistant identification cards. In other words, if you're here working, you're going to have a card that you can't tamper with, that some document forger can't foist off as a document for somebody to come and pick peaches here in Georgia.

In other words, we've got a serious attempt in this bill, and a real attempt, to do what a lot of Americans want us to do, and that's enforce the border. If you're serious about keeping our economy strong, it makes sense to support legislation that gives foreign workers a legal path to jobs in America. There are people doing jobs here Americans aren't doing.

The peach man said to me, he said, I can't find somebody from my home town who wants to pick peaches, but I can find somebody who wants to put food on their table for a family from Mexico, for example. It seems to me it makes sense to give those people a chance to come and work here on a temporary basis. This bill says, temporary, it means temporary. You'll be here for a number of years, and you'll go back home. That's what a temporary worker plan does. In the meantime, it helps meet the needs of our economy.

This bill -- aspect of the bill will allow federal agents to focus on apprehending violent criminals and terrorists who are a threat to our country rather than people who want to work here. In other words, if you can come to our country on a temporary basis legally, you're not going to sneak across the border. Who wants to pay a coyote hundreds of dollars, or thousands of dollars, when you can walk across, and say, I'm going to have a temporary job here in this country, and here's my tamper -- my tamper-resistant card?

If you're interested in securing the border, wouldn't you rather have Border Patrol agents chasing down terrorists and gun runners and dope runners as opposed to people who are coming to do jobs Americans aren't doing? A temporary worker plan, that is truly temporary, is going to make it easier for us to enforce the border. Border enforcement and having a rational worker plan go hand-in-hand. And that's what the American people have got to understand.

A temporary worker program will not begin until our border security measures are in place, and until we have a reliable system for verifying employment eligibility. That's the way the bill works. Oh, I'm sure you've heard some of the talk out there about people defining the bill. It's clear they hadn't read the bill. They're speculating about what the bill says, and they're trying to rile up people's emotions. This is a good piece of legislation. It addresses the border security needs, and it addresses the employment needs of our country.

If you're serious about bringing hardworking illegal immigrants out of the shadows of our society, it makes sense to support legislation that will resolve their status without animosity, and without amnesty.

Others -- I don't -- they estimate 11 million to 12 million people have been here for, some, quite a while. They're in an underground in America. It's not right, as far as I'm concerned. That's not what this country stands for. I know there are some people out there hollering and saying, kick them out. That is simply unrealistic. It won't work. There are some people saying, give them automatic citizenship. I oppose that. It won't work. I don't think it makes any sense to do that.

Amnesty is forgiveness for being here without any penalties -- that's what amnesty is. I oppose it. The authors -- many of the authors of this bill oppose it. This bill is not an amnesty bill. If you want to scare the American people, what you say is, the bill is an amnesty bill. It's not an amnesty bill. That's empty political rhetoric, trying to frighten our fellow citizens. People in Congress need the courage to go back to their districts and explain exactly what this bill is all about, in order to put comprehensive immigration reform in place.

Let me explain how it works. Under the bill, those who want to stay in our country who have been here can apply for a Z visa. At some point in time, those who are coming to work will get temporary work visas. Those who have been here already can apply for a Z visa. To receive the visa, illegal workers must admit they violated the law and pay a meaningful penalty, pass a strict background check, hold a job, maintain a clean record, and eventually learn English -- learn English. That's how it works.

It says, if you want to be here, here's what you have to do. There is a consequence for having broken the law. As a result of a recent Senate amendment, they have to pay back taxes if they haven't paid taxes, too. You're working hard, you pay taxes. People who have been here in this country ought to pay taxes. That's what it says.

The hurdles to citizenship are going to be even higher. In other words, if somebody says, fine, I'll take my Z visa, I'm out of the shadows now, I've got an opportunity to not hide in America. I'll continue doing the work I'm doing, I'm going to keep my record clean. I'll pay the penalties necessary so I can stay here -- that's what it says -- but if you want to be a citizen, there's more hurdles. It says, the Z visa worker would first have to pay an additional fine. In other words, you have broken the law and there's a consequence for breaking the law. That's what the bill says.

Secondly, you've got to return home to file an application for your green card. If you want to be a citizen, you pay a fine, you touch base home to apply for a green card, and then you take your place behind those who have played by the rules and have been waiting in line, patiently, to become a citizen.

This is a good bill. It recognizes that we've got to treat people with respect, and it also recognizes we're a nation of law. And as we go forward, the legislation creates a new system for admitting new immigrants to our country, people who want to come here legally. The system is going to reward applicants based upon skills and education, in addition to family ties, so we can ensure America continues to have the world's most talented work force.

This legislation is also going to help newcomers assimilate into our society. One of the great aspects of American society is people have been able to assimilate.

You know, I was at the Coast Guard Academy the other day, giving a speech there, and the president of the class, a Latino, talked with great pride in his voice about the fact that this grandfather was a migrant to the United States of America, and here he is addressing the Coast Guard Academy. I think it speaks volumes about the great promise of America. One of the reasons why is because his family assimilated into our society and into our culture. The key to unlocking the full promise of America is the ability to speak English. That's the language of our country. If you can speak English in this country and work hard and have dreams, you can make it. That's the great story of America. I believe it's true today like it was true yesterday, as well.

We expect opportunities to help -- we will expand opportunities to help new immigrants learn the language, learn about the ideals that make us a wonderful country. If you're serious about reform, it makes sense to support comprehensive legislation that addresses all aspects of the problem. You cannot solve the problem unless we address all aspects of the problem at the same time.

This reform is complex. There's a lot of emotions around this issue. Convictions run deep. Those determined to find fault with this bill will always be able to look at a narrow slice of it and find something they don't like. If you want to kill the bill, if you don't want to do what's right for America, you can pick one little aspect out of it, you can use it to frighten people. Or you can show leadership and solve this problem once and for all, so the people who wear the uniform in this crowd can do the job we expect them to do.

Now is the time for comprehensive immigration reform. Now is the time for members of both political parties to stand up and show courage, and take a leadership role and do what's right for America.

Thanks for letting me come by, and God bless. (Applause.)

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President's Radio Address

Good morning. This week I am traveling in Europe, where I am meeting with world leaders to discuss ways to address challenges like climate change, to work together to combat diseases like malaria and HIV/AIDS and help advance freedom throughout the world.

Back at home, America is engaged in an important discussion about immigration. Most Americans agree that the 1986 immigration law failed. It failed because it did not secure our border, it did not include tough worksite enforcement, it did not help people assimilate, and it encouraged more people to come here illegally. Today, illegal immigration is supported by criminal enterprises dedicated to document forgery, human trafficking, and labor exploitation. This is unacceptable, and we need to fix it in a way that honors our finest traditions.

People have strong feelings on this issue. I believe we can express our feelings, disagree on certain elements, and still come together on a solution. We can accomplish that through the bipartisan Senate bill. It is based on months of negotiation. The result is legislation that puts border security first, establishes a temporary worker program to meet the legitimate needs of our growing economy, sets up a mandatory system for verifying employment eligibility, and resolves the status of the estimated 12 million people who are here illegally. If this bill becomes law, America will finally have in place a system that addresses all these problems -- and can be adjusted to address future problems that may arise.

I understand the skepticism some members of Congress have regarding certain aspects of this legislation. Like any legislation, this bill is not perfect. And like many Senators, I believe the bill will need to be further improved along the way before it becomes law. In the heat of the debate, critics and supporters can sometimes talk past each other. So I want to speak to members about some of the concerns I have heard.

I know some of you doubt that the Federal government will make good on the border security and enforcement commitments in this bill. My Administration is determined to learn from the mistakes of the past decades. And that is why we are now committing more resources than ever before to border security, doubling the number of Border Patrol agents, building hundreds of miles of fencing, and employing advanced technology, from infrared sensors to unmanned aerial vehicles. The bill builds on this progress by requiring that we meet border security objectives before certain other provisions can take effect.

This bill also addresses other problems with the 1986 reform. Unlike the 1986 law, this bill includes a temporary worker program to ensure that those who come here to work do so in a legal and orderly way. Unlike the 1986 law, this bill gives honest employers the tools they need to ensure that they are hiring legal workers -- beginning with a tamper-resistant identity card. Businesses that knowingly hire illegal aliens will be punished. Workers who come here illegally will be sent home. And unlike the 1986 law, this bill does not grant amnesty for those who are already here.

Amnesty is forgiveness with no penalty for people who have broken our laws to get here. In contrast, this bill requires illegal workers to pay a fine, register with the government, undergo background checks, pay their back taxes, and hold a steady job. And if at the end of eight years they want to apply for a green card, they will have to pay an additional substantial fine, show

they have learned English, and return to their home country so they can apply from there. In short, they will have to prove themselves worthy of this great land.

I also want to say a word to those in Congress concerned about family unification. This bill will create a merit-based point system that recognizes the importance of family ties by granting points to some applicants who have family members here legally. More than half of new green cards will go to family members, immigrants will be allowed to bring in their spouses and minor children, and we will clear the backlog for millions of people who have been waiting patiently in line.

Securing the border and upholding family values are not partisan concerns. They are important to all Americans. They must be addressed, and this bill is the best way to do it. I urge Senator Reid to act quickly to bring this bill back to the Senate floor for a vote, and I urge Senators from both parties to support it. The immigration debate has divided too many Americans. By coming together, we can build an immigration system worthy of this great Nation -- one that keeps us safe and prosperous, welcomes dreamers and doers from across the globe, and trusts in our country's genius for making us all Americans -- one Nation under God.

Thank you for listening.

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President Bush Attends Senate Republican Policy Committee Meeting at U.S. Capitol

United States Capitol

 In Focus: Immigration

1:54 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: I just had a good exchange with my fellow Republicans. We talked about a lot of issues. I briefed them on my trip to Europe. We talked about -- they were very interested in the Ahtisaari plan for Kosovo. They were interested in my conversations with Vladimir Putin on missile defense. We talked about the energy bill. We talked about the appropriations process, and we talked about immigration.

Some members in there believe that we need to move a comprehensive bill, some don't, I understand that. This is a highly emotional issue, but those of us standing here believe now is the time to move a comprehensive bill that enforces our borders and has good workplace enforcement, that doesn't grant automatic citizenship, that addresses this problem in a comprehensive way.

I would hope that the Senate Majority Leader has that same sense of desire to move the product that I do, or the bill that I do and these senators do, because now is the time to get it done. It's going to take a lot of hard work, a lot of effort. We've got to convince the American people that this bill is the best way to enforce our border. I believe without the bill that it's going to be harder to enforce the border. The status quo is unacceptable. I want to thank those senators on both sides of the aisle who understand the time is now to move a comprehensive piece of legislation. The White House will stay engaged.

Thank you very much.

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President Bush Discusses Comprehensive Immigration Reform with Associated Builders and Contractors

Capital Hilton Hotel Washington, D.C.

10:39 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, all. Thank you. Thanks for coming. I'm proud to be with you, glad to be back with the Associated Builders and Contractors. I appreciate your organization. I didn't realize you were founded in 1950 -- about the same time a piano nearly fell through the roof at the White House. (Laughter.) Thereby causing Harry Truman to decide to renovate it. And for that, Laura and I are very grateful. (Laughter.)

I am grateful for your organization, as well. I thank you for being builders, doers and dreamers. I thank you for being people who are willing to take risk to help build our nation and, at the same time, employ people. I want to talk to you today about how to keep the entrepreneurial spirit strong, how to keep this economy growing, and our need to protect the American people from harm. And I appreciate you giving me a chance to come and do so.

David Meyer, thank you, and I thank your board for inviting me. Joining us today is one of my finest Secretaries, Secretary Carlos Gutierrez, Secretary of the Department of Commerce. I appreciate you coming, Carlos, and thank you for being here. (Applause.) Carlos was born in Cuba. His folks decided that it would be best that he and they come to a free society. He rose to become the CEO of a major U.S. corporation, and now he sits in the Cabinet of the United States of America. That's what the American Dream is all about. (Applause.) And it's in this nation's interest to preserve dreams.

I want to thank Congressman Todd Platts from Pennsylvania for joining us. There you are -- how you doing, Todd? Thanks for being here; honored you're here. (Applause.) His mother is a manufacturer -- she manufactures peanut fudge. And Platts always brings me some of it. (Laughter.) I can't ride enough mountain bikes to -- (laughter.) Give her my best.

Thanks for letting me come by. I love entrepreneurs and I like to be with them. Entrepreneurs are folks that really work hard. Nothing more exciting than having your own business. I'm sure some of you probably wondered growing up whether it'd be possible, whether you'd be able to have the ingenuity and the capacity to say, this is my business. But you've obviously overcome the difficult hurdles that face small business owners and business owners, and you're succeeding. And I'm grateful. The role of government is to make your jobs easier, not harder. It makes sense to encourage entrepreneurship.

That begins with tax policy. I believe if you have more money in your pocket, you're more likely to buy a piece of equipment, or hire a new worker. I think the best way to overcome economic difficulties that we've had in the past is to cut the taxes on everybody who pays taxes. (Applause.) It requires fundamental trust, for those of us in government, in your capacity to send your money better than the government can spend it. But that's what I believe.

And I also believe that with more money in circulation in private hands, it encourages small business growth and activity and commerce. And that's why we cut taxes not only on people with children and people who are married, but we cut taxes on small businesses. As a matter of fact, I

thought it was fair to cut taxes on everybody who pays taxes, not to say, okay, this group pays and you get a tax cut, but this group pays and you don't get a tax cut. That's not good tax policy, as far as I'm concerned.

We put the -- cut taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We put the death tax on the road to extinction. I say, on the road to extinction -- it's not totally extinct. And I would hope that you would prioritize getting rid of the death tax, as part of your legislative agendas for not only this year, but next year and the years to come, to make sure that we get rid of the death tax once and for all. It would be good for our farmers and small business owners. (Applause.) I don't think you ought to be taxed twice, once when you're living and once when you die. (Laughter.)

There is a lot of political debate in Washington about tax cuts, as you can imagine. Some would rather have your money to increase the size of government. Others, like me, say, well, we got plenty of money, you ought to have more money. I just want to point out the facts. Since we enacted major tax relief in 2003, in the face of recession and corporate scandals and attacks, our economy has added more than 8 million new jobs in 45 months of uninterrupted job growth. Unemployment is low, inflation is down. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong, small businesses are growing. This economy is good. And the way to keep it good, and to keep it strong, is to make the tax cuts we passed permanent. (Applause.) You'll hear people say, no, we can't do that because we must balance the budget. Really, I've been around here long enough to know how it works in Washington, and that is, they'll say, well, we're going to raise your taxes; don't worry, we're just only going to tax the rich. Well, first of all, it doesn't work that way. You can't raise enough money on the so-called rich in order to wet the appetite of some of the spenders here. (Laughter.)

And secondly, the money is not going to go to balance the budget. The money inevitably goes to new programs, expanded government. The best way to balance the budget, in my judgment, is to keep taxes low so the economy grows and be wise about how we spend your money. And our strategy is working. This just isn't theory, it's actually working. This year the Treasury Department reported that federal revenues through May are up 8 percent over the same period last year. In other words, a revenue stream is growing because of economic activity. And because we worked with the Congress last year to hold down spending, the budget deficit this year is about a third lower than it was at this time last year.

And if we continue to be wise about how we spend the money, and keep the economic vitality alive, we can balance the budget by 2012. Now this is going to take discipline here in Washington, D.C. Sometimes this city may be short of fiscal discipline, but that's why they give the President the veto. And I'm looking forward to working with the Congress to make sure that we're wise about how we spend your money. (Applause.)

A couple of other issues I want to talk briefly about. Look, I understand the health care issues you face. Health care needs to be affordable and available, no question. But we've got to make sure we do it without asking the federal government to run the health care program. (Applause.) We want decisions made by providers and patients.

I heard the word they've said about regulation and red tape. I understand your concerns. I also understand your concerns about these junk lawsuits. The country needs to make sure we put an end to junk lawsuits that threaten job providers and job creators such as yourself. (Applause.)

You know, I just returned this week from Poland -- Gdansk, Poland. We had a great trip, by the way. And it was -- it was really fantastic to represent the United States of America overseas. It's such a beacon of hope and a beacon of liberty. And anyway, we just came -- that's a city, by the way, where trade union activists once risked and gave their lives for the right to elect their government freely under a secret ballot. (Laughter and applause.)

For the last 60 years in our country, secret ballots have allowed workers to vote their conscience on whether to form a union or remain unaffiliated. The House has passed, as you well know, and the Senate is considering what they call "card check" legislation. It simply means that workers would be denied the right to have a secret ballot. The legislation would expose workers to intimidation. It violates the principle of our democracy. And if it ever makes it to my desk, I'm going to veto it. (Applause.)

Supporting free enterprise also means building an immigration system that upholds our laws and keeps this economy strong. You have made comprehensive immigration reform one of your top legislative priorities, and I thank you for your commitment on this vital issue. And it is a vital issue. We have worked -- Carlos Gutierrez and Michael Chertoff, two members of my Cabinet, have worked very closely with others in my administration with Republicans and Democrats in the United States Senate to produce a bipartisan immigration bill. And it took a lot of work. It took -- many months of intense negotiations. And it represents the best hope for lasting reform.

I was disappointed last week when the bill was temporarily withdrawn by the Senate Majority Leader. Leaders of both parties since then have expressed their commitment to resolving the issues that led to the setback and bring the bill back to the floor. And I appreciate that commitment and I urge them to do so as quickly as possible so Congress can pass, and I can sign this year, comprehensive immigration reform. (Applause.)

The need for reform is urgent. Our immigration system has been broken for many years. Most Americans agree that the 1986 immigration law failed; it didn't work. It failed because it did not secure our border. It failed because it did not create a reliable system for employers to verify the legal status of their workers. And it encouraged more people to come to America illegally. It didn't work, and it needs to be fixed. When you find something that doesn't work, you have a responsibility to fix it.

The number of illegal immigrants in our country has continued to grow. And illegal immigration is now supported by criminal enterprises. In other words, there are people who are preying on these folks that are coming to do work that Americans aren't doing. You've got a whole system of coyotes -- those are smugglers -- human smugglers taking advantage of a broken system. You've got document forgers -- people wanting to work and they know they've got to have some papers, and there are people, a whole industry of people providing them with false documents. People are being exploited as a result of a broken system, and this isn't right. We can do better.

I understand Americans are skeptical about immigration reform. There's a lot of people saying, well, there's just no possible way that they can achieve important objectives -- after all, they tried

in '86 and they failed. People are -- have got a lot of emotions on this issue. You probably hear it in coffee shops, talking about the issue. People are very emotional about immigration reform. And people have got different perspectives on a course of action. Most say -- many say the most important issue is to secure the border. Others say an important part of immigration reform is to find the workers they need to help a growing economy. Still others say that it's important to resolve the status of 12 million people already here illegally, and help immigrants assimilate into our society. There are varieties of opinions about this subject.

I believe that we must address all these concerns in order to have an effective system. And that's why I strongly support comprehensive immigration reform. And I appreciate you understanding that in order to have a system that works, all the issues must be addressed. (Applause.) By moving forward with the bill in the Senate, we will make our border more secure. In other words, if you're worried about border security, you ought to be supporting this bill.

For decades, we have not been in complete control of the border. I was honored to be the governor of Texas; I know something about a large border with Mexico. And we weren't in control of that border. A lot of people then say, well, if you hadn't been in control, do you have the capacity to secure the border? You'll hear a lot of people here say, well, since you didn't do it in the past, you can't do it in the future. In other words, people are worried about that issue.

The first step to comprehensive reform must be to enforce immigration laws at the border and at work sites across the country. The administration -- our administration has taken significant steps, by the way, to increase border security and work site enforcement. Since I've took office we've more than doubled funding for border security. There's a focused effort, by the way, to do what many Americans want us to do, which is to secure the border. We've expanded the number of Border Patrol agents from about 9,000 to about 13,000. We've set our nation on the course to double the size of the Border Patrol during my presidency. In other words, we're going to add another 5,000 agents.

I was in Artesia, New Mexico, to a border training center. I watched these good folks prepare for this very important job. We've increased the number of Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents -- I'm sure you understand what an ICE agent is -- from about 8,000 in 2002 to more than 11,000. In other words, on the enforcement side, we've made some serious efforts to do what the American people expect us to do.

There used to be a problem with catch and release -- Border Patrol agents would find somebody trying to sneak into our country illegally; they would say, we caught you, now report back to the local immigration court so you can have your hearing, because there was no place to hold these good people -- or these people. And guess what would happen? They'd head off into society and say, see you later, and never return for the court date.

So we worked with Congress and expanded the number of beds on our border, and we've effectively ended -- effectively ended catch and release.

I want -- I want to tell you a statistic that may surprise you. Last year, we apprehended and sent home more than about 1.1 million people entering our country illegally. Now think about that. In one year alone, our Border Patrol agents and law enforcement agents found 1.1 million people coming into our country illegally, and sent them home. They're working hard down there, and

they're making progress. People are doing the jobs we expect them to do, and now we're going to build on this progress.

So this bill sets clear benchmarks for border security that must be met before other elements of this legislation are triggered. We make a priority of securing the border. These benchmarks include further increasing Border Patrol agents, building miles of fencing and modernizing the border. You can't fence the whole border, but you can use fencing in a way to help known -- to help stop people at known crossing points. It's a smart part of making sure the border is secure, along with other ways to modernize the border -- berms, and electronics, and UAVs. We're going to improve our surveillance capability. We're modernizing the border. It hadn't been that way. We're making progress to modernize that border.

It also includes benchmarks for giving honest employers the tools to verify that they're hiring legal workers. Most people want to comply with the law. I know you do. Yet, it's awfully hard for you to be a document verifier. (Applause.) It's a burden to place on small business owners, to say, okay, you've got to make sure that the documents that look real are real. The document forgers are good, they know what they're doing. They're preying on innocent people who want to simply find work, to put food on the table back at home.

And so the bill we're talking about says, okay, enough is enough when it comes to document forgery; we'll create a tamper-resistant identity card for foreign workers, and a mandatory electronic system for verifying employment eligibility. This will make sure that you're complying with the law, that you don't have to guess, that you don't hope you're dealing with some forged document. It will make it easier for you to do your -- run your businesses, and at the same time, it will make it easier for the government to punish those who hire illegal immigrants -- knowingly hire illegal immigrants. In other words, it gives us a chance to enforce the law. And that's what the American people want.

It's important for the people to know that their government is serious about meeting these benchmarks. One common concern is whether the government will provide the resources to meet the goals in the bill. They say, it's fine to talk about it, are you actually going to do something? To answer these concerns I support an amendment that will provide \$4.4 billion in immediate additional funding for securing our borders and enforcing our laws at the work site. This funding will come from the fines and penalties that we collect from those who have come to our country illegally.

By matching our benchmarks with these critical funds, we're going to show the American people that the promises in this bill will be kept. And so I call on the senators to pass this amendment and show the American people that we're going to do our jobs of securing this border once and for all.

By moving forward with this bill we'll also help meet the needs of a growing economy. When the economy grows, people are looking for workers. That's economics one. (Laughter.) You're probably some who are looking for workers. As you get expanded work orders, you're wondering whether you can find the workers to meet the needs. That's what happens when the economy grows. You need workers to make the economy grow.

The reality is, in America, that the construction industry and other sectors depend on foreign workers to fill jobs Americans are not doing. That's the reality of the world we live in. So once our border security and work site enforcement measure is in place, this bill will create a new temporary worker program. The program will establish a lawful and orderly process for foreign workers to come to America on a temporary basis. This will help reduce the number of people trying to sneak across our border. If you're truly interested in border security, it makes sense to give people a legal way to come to do work Americans aren't doing, on a temporary basis.

See, people are sneaking in because they want to work. It makes sense to me to say, instead of sneaking in, here's a temporary worker card that's tamper-proof, that you can go fill jobs that Americans aren't doing. Therefore, you don't sneak across. Such a system will take pressure off the border and let our Border Patrol agents focus on drug runners, or gun runners, or terrorists. I strongly believe that it's in our economic interest and our security interest to have a temporary worker program.

This legislation will also create a merit-based point system for admitting new immigrants to our country. The system will reward new applicants based upon skills and education so we can ensure that America continues to have the world's most talented work force. It's a reform of an immigration system that hadn't worked. The bill is a practical way to address problems that have sprung up as a result of an immigration system that hasn't worked. By moving forward, this bill will resolve the status of those who are here illegally -- already here illegally.

Look, we need to do this without animosity and without amnesty. I know there are some people who I guess believe that we could just kick them out of the country. That's just totally impractical. It won't work. We need a practical solution to a problem that has arisen as a result of a bill that didn't work, the 1986 immigration bill.

Amnesty is forgiveness with no penalty for people who have broken our laws to get here. In contrast, this bill requires illegal workers to pay a fine, to register with the government, to undergo background checks, to pay their back taxes, to hold down a steady job, and to learn English in a set period of time. (Applause.)

At the end of eight years, if they want to apply for a green card -- in other words, get in line for citizenship -- after eight years -- they'll have to return to their home country so they can apply from there, pay an additional fine. In short, they will prove themselves worthy of a great land.

The legislation will also help newcomers to our country assimilate into our society. One of the great beauties of America has been people can come to this country with a dream and become Americans -- that's assimilate. (Applause.)

Carlos Gutierrez's story is a great story. Mel Martinez's parents put him on an airplane from Cuba to Florida because a tyrant emerged on that island. He was in my Cabinet. I was at the Coast Guard Academy the other day; the number one graduate at the Coast Guard Academy talked about his migrant worker grandfather, who came to America with a dream. And now the grandson stands in front of the President talking about the beauties of America. You know, Americans must be confident in our ability to assimilate newcomers. We have done so in the past, and we will do so in the future. People newly arrived with dreams lift our soul, they

invigorate our society; they work hard to become Americans. And it's important for us to help them assimilate.

And the key to that, the key to unlocking the full promise of America is the ability to read, write and speak English. And so the bill affirms that English is the language of our land, and the bill will expand opportunities to help new immigrants learn our language and the shared ideals that make us all Americans.

We have an historic window of opportunity to act now. Now is the time to get it done. We've got to summon the political courage to move forward on comprehensive reform. Doing nothing is not a solution. (Applause.) If we fail to act, the problems of 1986 will continue. The pressures on our border will not be alleviated. Employers will be left without a reliable system for verifying the legal status of their workers. Jobs will go unfulfilled, hardworking immigrants will remain in the shadows of our society, and our nation will continue to have a broken immigration system.

The American people expect people in Washington, D.C. to solve problems. I believe we can express our feelings, disagree on certain elements of the legislation, and still come together on a solution. I'm confident that we can pass a bill into law this year, and it will show the American people that we can prove we're serious about confronting the great issues of our time.

Now is the time to set aside all the political wrangling that tends to dominate the scene here in Washington, D.C., and do hard work and pass a comprehensive immigration bill. And I'm counting on your help to get it done. (Applause.)

Thank you all.

As we work on this legislation at home, we're meeting important responsibilities abroad. On September the 11th, 2001, we saw that problems originating in a failed and oppressive state 7,000 miles away could bring murder and destruction to our cities. Nine-eleven was a turning point for our nation. We learned that our nation's security depends on fighting our enemies overseas, so we do not have to face them here at home. And we learned that to secure our country we must advance the cause of freedom as a great alternative to tyranny and terror.

We're in an ideological conflict with ambitious men who have a different view of government than we do. They don't believe in dissent. They don't believe in freedom to worship as one sees fit. They want to extend their power and reach throughout the Middle East. They want to reestablish a caliphate, and they murder to achieve their objectives. You can't talk reason to these people. You cannot negotiate with them. We must stay on the offense and bring them to justice before they hurt us again. (Applause.)

We went into Afghanistan and helped remove an oppressive government that harbored the terrorists who planned the 9/11 attacks. Today, because we acted, the terrorist camps in Afghanistan have been shut down. Al Qaeda lost its safe haven. Twenty-five million people have been liberated. The Afghan people have elected a government that is fighting terrorists instead of harboring them. It's in our nation's security interests, it's in our national interest, to stand with that young democracy in Afghanistan and give their people a chance to live in liberty. (Applause.)

In Iraq, we removed a cruel dictator who was an enemy of the United States of America, had used -- who had used weapons of mass destruction, who was paying the families of suicide bombers, who had invaded his neighbors, who was given a chance to disclose or disarm by the U.N. Security Council not once, but numerous times. He made the wrong choice. I made the choice to uphold what the free world said. The world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power. (Applause.) And so are the Iraqis.

And now, we're undertaking the difficult and dangerous work of helping Iraq establish a functioning democracy that can protect our people and be an ally in this struggle against radicals and extremists who use murder to achieve an ideological objective. And the stakes are high. And it's tough work.

In December, 2005, if you can remember that far back -- (laughter) -- nearly 12 million Iraqis went to the polls. I was -- I was pleased, but not surprised. I believe in the universality of freedom. I believe people want to be free. And here, after years of tyranny, when given a chance, 12 million people went to the polls. And by going to the polls, they chose a new government under the most progressive democratic constitution in the Arab world.

A thinking enemy watched all this. And in 2006, al Qaeda -- the folks who orchestrated the attack on the United States of America on September the 11th, 2001 -- and other Sunni extremists ramped up their attacks, which led to a tragic escalation of sectarian violence. In the face of the violence, I had a choice to make: withdraw our troops, or to send reinforcements to help the Iraqis quell the violence.

Had I been polled during that period of time, I'd have said I was -- I didn't approve of what was happening in Iraq. I'd have been one "you can put me down as not approving." The sectarian violence was getting more severe. And I had a choice. It's what Presidents do. They make decisions. And that's what you do. You make decisions. I made a decision. I decided to send more troops with a new mission to help the Iraqi government secure the population and get control of Baghdad. I put our troops under a new commander, General David Petraeus, who wrote the Army's new manual on counterinsurgency warfare.

It is too early to judge the results of this new strategy. General Petraeus recently put it this way: "We haven't even started the full surge yet." He just got his troops on the ground. Only at the end of this week will the last of the five reinforcement brigades become fully operational. Under our new strategy, American and Iraqi forces are now living side-by-side in Baghdad neighborhoods. As Iraqis see forces patrolling their streets they're gaining the trust and they're getting new cooperation from the residents.

Just as an example of what I'm talking about, Iraqi and coalition forces have captured more weapon caches since the beginning of the year than they did all of last year. Why? Because people are beginning to trust that the security situation will improve. They're willing to step forward. Most people want to live in peace. Iraqi mothers want their children to grow up in a peaceful world, just like our mothers do. There's something universal about motherhood, isn't there? They want something better for their children, and they don't like the violence, and they're expecting their government to help them. And that's what we're doing; we're helping to provide security.

We're also seeing gains from our new strategy in Anbar Province. Anbar is a large Sunni area west of Baghdad that has been a hotbed for insurgents and al Qaeda. It's where al Qaeda said they were going to establish a new safe haven. They have made it clear they want safe havens. Why? Because they want to attack again, they want to spread their ideology. This is what the enemy has said. And I take the words of the enemy very seriously, and so should the American people.

With the help of tribal sheikhs, the American and Iraqi forces have cleared and held terrorist strongholds in Ramadi and Fallujah. The population is tired of al Qaeda. They're tired of murder. And we're striking powerful blows against al Qaeda in Anbar. And that helps our security here at home.

The summer is going to be a critical period for our new strategy. I've cautioned that the enemies of free Iraq will -- particularly al Qaeda and illegal militias -- are going to continue their campaigns of terror and intimidation to stop the progress of a free society. We can expect heavy fighting in the coming weeks. We can expect more casualties, both American and Iraqi casualties.

Just yesterday, two minarets of the Golden Mosque of Samarra were blown up in an attack that had all the hallmarks of al Qaeda. The mosque is one of the most sacred places in Shia Islam. The same mosque that was blown up last year -- the Golden Dome was blown up, and that caused the security -- violence to get out of hand, which caused me to make a decision to send more troops in, as opposed to withdrawing them.

You see, these killers hope that their attacks, like this one, will create enough confusion and chaos that we will abandon this young democracy. They have objectives, they have goals, they want to drive us out. They thrive on chaos. Why? Because it enables them to develop safe haven. If they ever gain safe haven, the United States becomes even more vulnerable to attack. One of the lessons of September the 11th is, what happens overseas matters to the security of the United States of America. It is better to defeat them overseas than face them here on our soil again. (Applause.)

The act of cruelty that took place yesterday, and has taken place by these car bombs that destroy innocent life, reveals the terrorists for what they are: the enemy of every Iraqi who seeks to live in peace. That's what they are. They're the enemy of people who want to live in peace.

I call on Iraqis to reject this provocation. America will continue to stand behind the Iraqi people as they fight these extremists and terrorists, people who want to destroy both our countries. With our help, we expect the Iraqi government to pass laws that help the people of that troubled land reconcile their differences so that the people who voted for democracy can raise their families in a secure environment. We all have obligations to make sure that this young democracy survives. That's what the Iraqi people expect our government to do, and that's what the American people expect us to tell the Iraqi government to do.

Obviously, this is more than a military mission. There must be a political track at the same time. It's a difficult fight, and the temptation is to look for an easy way out. Some in Washington who want to declare defeat before our troops even had the chance to make it work -- the consequences of failure would be grave. If we withdraw before the Iraqi government can defend itself, we

would leave a dangerous security vacuum, which extremist forces, like al Qaeda, would compete to fill. Sectarian violence would multiply on a horrific scale. Fighting could engulf the entire region in chaos.

The extremists who emerge victorious in this struggle use Iraq as a base to launch new attacks against America. Ultimately, our troops might have to return to Iraq in order to protect ourselves and confront an entrenched enemy that is even more dangerous. The stakes are high.

We will not abdicate our responsibility and leave this problem to future generations. Now is the time to confront the danger. Now is the time to do the hard work necessary for this democracy to survive. Now is the time to stand with the Iraqi people, not only for their security, but for our own. And that is why we will complete the mission. (Applause.)

For all the talk about consequences of failure, we also need to remember the consequences of success in Iraq. Success will give us a new ally in the war on terror. This is a global war that we're fighting against ideologues who use murder as a weapon to achieve their objectives. It's important for us to support forms of government that defeat an ideology of hate. And the best form of government that defeats ideology of hate is one of hope, and that's liberty. And it's worked throughout the history of the United States of America, and the world, for that matter. We have seen freedom's power to transform societies before.

My dad, like many of your relatives, defended our nation in a bloody war against the Japanese and the Germans. I doubt right after World War II somebody would have predicted that one of George W. Bush's -- they wouldn't have predicted I'd have been President anyway, but -- (laughter) -- particularly my friends in Midland, Texas. (Laughter.) But I doubt somebody would have said a future President would have been sitting down at a table with the Japanese, keeping the peace. After a bloody war, with the sworn enemy being the Japanese and the Germans, I doubt anybody would have said -- had the confidence necessary to say that liberty has got the capacity to transform enemies into allies. But that's what happened.

I went to the G8, and Angela Merkel, who is a really fine leader for Germany, was at the table. And Shinzo Abe from Japan was at the table. We're talking about peace. We're talking about dealing with the conditions that cause radicalism to prevail, dealing with forms of government that frustrate people so much that 19 kids get on an airplane and kill nearly 3,000 Americans. We've got to be confident as we look at the future; liberty has transformed enemies to allies. Liberty has got the capacity to defeat an ideology based upon hate. Liberty has got the ability to bring light into societies.

We've done this kind of hard work before. And it's in our interests to secure a young generation of Americans against the threats of the 21st century to do this work again. I'm optimistic about our future. I believe the United States can achieve anything she sets her mind to. And so I come to you today to talk about making this economy stronger, to dealing with problems, and to how the United States intends to handle the biggest issue facing us, and that's to make sure we protect the American people. The challenges are great, but this country can handle any challenge that comes our way.

Proud to be with you. May God bless you. (Applause.)

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President's Radio Address

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. This week, Senate leaders introduced revised legislation on comprehensive immigration reform. I thank leaders from both parties for their bipartisan effort to fix our immigration system so it can meet the needs of our Nation in the 21st century.

As the Senate takes up this critical bill, I understand that many Americans have concerns about immigration reform -- especially about the federal government's ability to secure the border. So this bill puts the enforcement tools in place first. And it means more Border Patrol agents, more fencing, more infrared cameras and other technologies at the border. It also requires an employee-verification system based on government-issued, tamper-proof identification cards that will help employers ensure that the workers they hire are legal.

Only after these enforcement tools are in place will certain other parts of the bill go into effect. To make sure the government keeps its enforcement commitment, the bill includes \$4.4 billion in immediate additional funding for these border security and worksite enforcement efforts.

The bill also addresses other problems with immigration enforcement. Right now, our laws are ineffective and insufficient. For example, crossing the border illegally carries weak penalties. In addition, participation in illegal gangs is not enough to bar admission into our country. And when we cannot get other countries to accept the return of their citizens who are dangerous criminals, in most cases our government can only detain these aliens for six months before releasing them into society.

This is unacceptable. The bill before the Senate addresses these problems. Under this bill, those caught crossing illegally will be permanently barred from returning to the United States on a work or tourist visa. Under this bill, anyone known to have taken part in illegal gang activity can be denied admission to our country. And under this bill, we will be able to detain aliens who are dangerous criminals until another country accepts their return.

These enforcement measures are a good start. Yet even with all these steps, we cannot fully secure the border unless we take pressure off the border. Hundreds of thousands of people come here illegally because our current work visa program does not match the needs of a growing and dynamic economy. To discourage people from crossing our border illegally, this bill creates an orderly path for foreign workers to enter our country legally to work on a temporary basis.

With this program in place, employers will have a practical system to fill jobs Americans are not doing -- and foreign workers will have a legal way to apply for them. As a result, they won't have to try to sneak in. And that will leave border agents free to chase down drug dealers, human traffickers, and terrorists.

Once the border security and worksite enforcement benchmarks are met, the bill will resolve the status of 12 million people who are now in our country illegally. Under this bill, these workers will be given an opportunity to get right with the law. This is not amnesty. There will be penalties for those who come out of the shadows. If they pass a strict background check, pay a fine, hold a job, maintain a clean criminal record, and eventually learn English, they will qualify for and maintain a Z visa. If they want to get a green card, they have to do all these things -- plus pay an additional fine, go to the back of the line, and return to their country to apply from there.

This bill provides an historic opportunity to uphold America's tradition of welcoming and assimilating immigrants and honoring our heritage as a Nation built on the rule of law. We have an obligation to solve problems that have been piling up for decades. The status quo is unacceptable. We must summon the political courage to move forward with a comprehensive reform bill. By acting now, we can ensure that our laws are respected, that the needs of our economy are met, and that our Nation treats newcomers with dignity and helps them assimilate.

I urge members of both parties to support comprehensive immigration reform. By working together, we can pass this good bill -- and build an immigration system worthy of our great Nation.

Thank you for listening.

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President Bush Discusses Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Room 350

Eisenhower Executive Office Building

9:01 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for coming. Thanks for working on an immigration bill that's important for this country. I appreciate your efforts and I appreciate your time.

I do want to thank Secretary Gutierrez and Secretary Chertoff for their hard work. And one of the things I told members of the Senate, that the administration is going to be involved in crafting a comprehensive bill that's good for the country. And I said we're going to be more than just giving speeches, or using the microphone to proclaim the need for a comprehensive bill. I would send two members plus our staff up to -- two members of my Cabinet plus our staff up to work the -- to work with the senators.

And you guys have done a really good job. Thank you for your time. Thanks for your understanding of the complex, carefully crafted piece of legislation that is moving through the Senate. And you've done exactly what I asked you to do -- that's why you're in the Cabinet. (Laughter.) I appreciate you all helping work this bill through the Senate.

The first thing that we've got to recognize in the country is that the system isn't working. The immigration system needs reform. The status quo is unacceptable. Most Americans understand that. They say, well, we attempted to reform the system in 1986, and the reform didn't work. Our view is, if the status quo is unacceptable, we need to replace it with something that is acceptable, and have been working toward that end with both Democrats and Republicans in the Senate. The reason the Senate, of course, is that we'll be moving our attention to the House when it passes a comprehensive piece of legislation.

I view this as an historic opportunity for Congress to act, for Congress to replace a system that is not working with one that we believe will work a lot better. In other words, this is a moment for people who have been elected to come together, focus on a problem, and show the American people that we can work together to fix the problem. If you dislike the status quo on immigration, then you ought to be supporting a comprehensive approach to making sure the system works.

And it's a practical approach. The Senate has worked very hard to craft a comprehensive bill. In a good piece of legislation like this, and a difficult piece of legislation like this, one side doesn't get everything they want. It's a careful compromise, and many of you have been involved with that compromise.

The problem that this bill recognizes, the bill recognizes that we've got to address the problem in a comprehensive fashion. There are people who say, well, we've got to do more to protect our border -- and they're right, we do have to do more to protect our border. And that's why this bill has a lot of border security measures that will help continue the strategy that we have been implementing over the past year. As a matter of fact, there's a \$4.4 billion direct deposit on enforcement measures. But it's important for our fellow citizens to understand that in order to

enforce the border, there has to be a way for people to come to our country on a temporary basis to do work Americans aren't doing. Otherwise, they will continue to try to sneak in across the border.

And, therefore, a second aspect of the comprehensive bill is one that addresses the economic needs of our country, and that is a temporary worker program that will match foreign workers with jobs Americans aren't doing -- and notice I say temporary worker program. There are a lot of employers here in this country that worry about having a work force that will be able to meet the demands and needs of a growing economy.

There are people who live in our neighborhood and around the world who are desperate to provide food for their families, and recognize there are available jobs, and they will do anything to come to our country to work, because they want to fight off the poverty and starvation that has affected their loved ones.

It's a powerful incentive to be a mom or a dad to make sure your children don't suffer. That's an incentive. That's an incentive for people here in America; it also happens to be an incentive for people around the world. And, therefore, people will be willing to go extra lengths to avoid border security. They'll be willing to be crammed in the bottom of 18-wheelers. They fall prey to these coyotes who smuggle human beings to achieve profit.

When I say the system hadn't worked -- the system hadn't worked to enforce our borders like we want, but the system has also fostered illegal operations that prey upon the human being, and it's not in this nation's interest that that continue to happen.

And, finally, this bill goes to the heart of our values. We have proven that our nation is capable of assimilating people. And I'm confident that we can continue to be a nation that assimilates. The bill recognizes that English is a part of the assimilation process and wants to help people learn the language in order to be able to take advantage of America.

You know, I've heard all the rhetoric -- you've heard it, too -- about how this is amnesty. Amnesty means that you've got to pay a price for having been here illegally, and this bill does that (Click here for correction). But it also recognizes it's in our nation's interest to bring people out of the shadows; that there's got to be a way forward that recognizes there is a penalty for being here illegally -- on the other hand, that recognizes that each person has got worth and dignity.

I love a country where people come with dreams and aspirations and through hard work can realize those dreams and aspirations. I'm struck every time I hear -- I'm struck about our greatness every time I hear a story about a child taking advantage of a mother's or dad's hard work to realize the blessings of America. I was at the Coast Guard Academy -- I've told this story several times -- and the number one cadet talked about his migrant grandfather. The fellow was a Mexican American -- or is a Mexican American. The father came from -- the grandfather came from Mexico to work hard so that, hopefully, some day somebody in his family would realize the blessings of America. And it worked.

The country is better off. Our soul is constantly renewed. Our spirit is invigorated when people come here and realize the blessings of America. And so the bill that we've worked hard to craft is

an important piece of legislation that addresses the needs of a failed system, that says we're going to change for the better.

I want to thank you all for working hard. We've got a couple of days of hard work ahead of us to get the bill through the first stage of the process, and then, of course, when successful in the Senate, we'll be reconvening to figure out how to get the bill out of the House. It's an important piece of legislation; it's an important time to act for the sake of the country.

Thanks for your time. God bless your efforts. God bless our country. Thank you. (Applause.)

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President Bush Disappointed by Congress's Failure to Act on Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Spruance Auditorium
Naval War College
Newport, Rhode Island

12:38 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: I thank the members of the Senate and members of my administration who worked so hard on the border security and immigration reform bill. I'm sorry the Senate was unable to reach agreement on the bill this morning.

Legal immigration is one of the top concerns of the American people and Congress's failure to act on it is a disappointment. The American people understand the status quo is unacceptable when it comes to our immigration laws. A lot of us worked hard to see if we couldn't find a common ground -- it didn't work.

Congress really needs to prove to the American people that it can come together on hard issues. The Congress needs to work on comprehensive energy policy and good health care; make sure health care is affordable without inviting the federal government to run the health care system. We've got to work together to make sure we can balance this federal budget, and not overspend or raise taxes on the American people. We've got a lot of work to do.

When they come back from the summer -- from the July recess, before the summer break begins, we'll be focusing on the appropriations process. And I look forward to working with Congress to balance our budgets and to be wise about how we spend the people's money.

Thank you for your time.

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Withdrawal Marker

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FORM	SUBJECT/TITLE	PAGES	DATE	RESTRICTION(S)
Memorandum	Immigration Reform - To: POTUS - From: Karl Zinsmeister	2	08/08/2007	P5;

**This marker identifies the original location of the withdrawn item listed above.
For a complete list of items withdrawn from this folder, see the
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COLLECTION:

Staff Secretary, White House Office of the

SERIES:

Von Der Heydt, Thomas (Tommy) - Bush Record Policy Memos

FOLDER TITLE:

Immigration: A Timeline (2001 - 2008) [3]

FRC ID:

13894

OA Num.:

14457

NARA Num.:

14246

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
- P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
- P5 Release would disclose confidential advise between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
- P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

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- b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
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- b(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
- b(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
- b(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
- b(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
- b(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

Administrative Immigration Reforms

BORDER SECURITY

1. The Administration is committed to adding more border personnel, detention beds, and infrastructure, going beyond previously announced targets to adopt the enforcement enhancements proposed by Senator Gregg during the immigration debate earlier this year, with the understanding that some will not be completed during this Administration. These enforcement enhancements, which will be funded no later than through your FY 2009 budget, will include:
 - 20,000 Border Patrol agents
 - 370 miles of fencing
 - 300 miles of vehicle barriers
 - 105 camera and radar towers
 - Four additional UAVs
 - Detention beds sufficient to hold 31,500 illegal aliens.
2. The Administration will maintain its policy of "catch and return" for illegal aliens apprehended at the border.
3. The Departments of State and Homeland Security will expand the list of international gangs whose members are automatically denied admission to the United States.
4. The Administration will propose an exit requirement at airports and seaports by the end of 2008, and will launch a pilot land-border exit system for guest workers.
5. By the end of 2008, the Administration will require most arrivals at our land ports-of-entry to use passports or similarly secure documents.
6. Beginning this fall, the Secretary of Homeland Security will deliver regular "State of the Border" reports to update Congress and the country on progress being made at the border.

INTERIOR ENFORCEMENT

7. The Administration will train additional state and local law-enforcement officers and provide them with additional tools to address illegal immigration in their communities.
8. By this fall, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement will have quintupled the number of enforcement teams devoted to removing fugitive aliens (from 15 to 75 in less than three years).
9. The Justice Department will initiate regulatory action to close a loophole that permits illegal immigrants who accept "voluntary departure" to nevertheless keep litigating their case.

WORKSITE ENFORCEMENT

10. On the day of this announcement, the Department of Homeland Security will issue a "No-Match" regulation that clarifies the responsibilities of employers who receive notice that employees' names and corresponding Social Security numbers do not match the records at the Social Security Administration. These responsibilities include undertaking the following steps within 90 days: checking their own records for clerical errors, asking the employee to confirm the accuracy of the employer's records, and asking the employee to pursue the matter with the Social Security Administration.
11. There are now 29 categories of documents that employers must accept to establish identity and work eligibility among their workers. The Department of Homeland Security will simplify the verification process for employers by reducing that number and weeding out the most insecure documents.
12. The Department of Homeland Security will raise the civil fines imposed on employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants by approximately 25 percent.
13. The Administration will continue its aggressive expansion of criminal investigations against employers who make a business practice of knowingly hiring illegal aliens.
14. The Administration will issue rules requiring all Federal contractors and vendors to use E-Verify (the successor to Basic Pilot), the Federal electronic employment verification system that ensures employees are eligible to work in the United States.
15. The Administration will offer assistance to help states make greater use of E-Verify.
16. The Administration will bolster E-Verify by expanding the data sources the system can check.
17. The Administration will seek voluntary state partners willing to share their Department of Motor Vehicles photos and records with E-Verify, a change that will help employers detect illegal immigrants using fraudulent driver's licenses.

STREAMLINING CURRENT GUEST-WORKER PROGRAMS

18. The Department of Labor will reform the H-2A, an uncapped visa that has been issued to only about 17,000 ag guest workers annually in recent years, so farmers can readily hire legal temporary workers, while protecting their rights.
19. The Department of Labor will issue regulations streamlining the H-2B program, a visa for non-ag seasonal workers such as landscape laborers, forestry workers, maids, and construction workers.

20. The Department of Homeland Security will extend, from one year to three years, the length of the NAFTA-created TN visa for professional workers from Canada and Mexico, removing the administrative hassle of annual renewals for these talented workers.

FIXING EXISTING IMMIGRATION

21. The Administration will reduce processing times for immigration background checks by adding agents and converting paper documentation into electronic forms.

22. The Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration will study and report on the technical and recordkeeping reforms necessary to deny credit in our Social Security system for illegal work.

ASSIMILATION

23. The Office of Citizenship will unveil in September a revised naturalization test that emphasizes fundamentals of American democracy, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

24. The Office of Citizenship will introduce a Web-based electronic training program and convene eight regional training conferences for volunteers and adult educators who lead immigrants through the naturalization process.

25. The Department of Education will launch a free, Web-based portal to help immigrants learn English, and expand this model over time.

President Bush Addresses Border Security and Immigration Challenges

Today, members of my Cabinet announced a series of important new Administrative actions to address border security and immigration challenges. These reforms represent steps my Administration can take within the boundaries of existing law to better secure our borders, improve worksite enforcement, streamline existing temporary worker programs, and help new immigrants assimilate into American society.

Although the Congress has not addressed our broken immigration system by passing comprehensive reform legislation, my Administration will continue to take every possible step to build upon the progress already made in strengthening our borders, enforcing our worksite laws, keeping our economy well-supplied with vital workers, and helping new Americans learn English.

I appreciate the work of Secretary Chertoff and Secretary Gutierrez in implementing these important reforms, which will improve our security and enrich our Nation.

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Fact Sheet: Improving Border Security and Immigration Within Existing Law

Today, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff And Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez Announced A Series Of Reforms The Administration Will Pursue To Address Border Security And Immigration Challenges. The following reforms represent steps the Administration can take within the boundaries of existing law to secure our borders more effectively, improve interior and worksite enforcement, streamline existing guest worker programs, improve the current immigration system, and help new immigrants assimilate into American culture.

BORDER SECURITY

- **1. The Administration Will Continue To Strengthen Security At The Border With Additional Personnel And Infrastructure.** We are committed to implementing the following border security measures by December 31, 2008:
 - 18,300 Border Patrol agents
 - 370 miles of fencing
 - 300 miles of vehicle barriers
 - 105 camera and radar towers
 - Three additional UAVs

We will also work to ensure that 1,700 more Border Patrol Agents and an additional UAV are added in 2009.

- **2. The Administration Will Maintain The Policy Of "Catch And Return" For Illegal Aliens Apprehended At The Border.** For years, limited detention space forced the release of many illegal border crossers from nations other than Mexico with nothing more than a Notice to Appear for a hearing before an immigration judge. Many aliens ignored these notices and instead blended into U.S. society. The Administration has ended this practice and instituted a policy of "catch and return," ensuring that all removable aliens caught trying to cross the border illegally are held until they can be removed.
 - **The Administration Will Further Increase Funding For Detention Beds So There Are Places To Detain 31,500 Illegal Aliens Until They Can Be Returned.**
 - **The Administration Will Also Press Recalcitrant Countries To Work With The United States To Repatriate Citizens Who Are In The United States Illegally.**

- **3. The Departments Of State And Homeland Security Will Strengthen Legal Efforts To Keep International Gang Members Out Of The United States.** Gangs are at the root of many U.S. crime problems today, and many of the most dangerous gangs draw significant membership from abroad. The Federal government already denies visas to known members of certain gangs from China, the former Soviet Union, and El Salvador. Today, the President is directing the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to expand this list of dangerous organized gangs from other nations and to ensure that members of those gangs are barred from entry into the United States.
- **4. The Administration Will Expand Exit Requirements So Persons Who Overstay Limited-Duration Visits To The United States Can Be Identified.**
 - **By The End Of 2008, The US-VISIT Exit Requirement Will Be Underway At All U.S. Airports And Seaports.** The Department of Homeland Security will continue to explore effective and cost-efficient means of establishing biometric exit requirements at land border crossings.
 - **The Administration Will Establish A New Land-Border Exit System For Guest Workers, Starting On A Pilot Basis.** This will help ensure that temporary workers in the country now follow the mandate to leave when their work authorization expires.
- **5. The Administration Will Require All Travelers To Our Ports Of Entry To Use Passports Or Other Similar Secure Documents.** Since January 2007, air travelers have been required to carry a passport for entry into the United States. Because of passport processing backlogs, a temporary accommodation has been made for U.S. citizens traveling in the Western Hemisphere, which will be phased out. Starting January 31, 2008, DHS will phase in a requirement for passports or other secure documents for sea and land ports of entry.
- **6. Beginning This Fall, The Secretary Of Homeland Security Will Deliver Regular "State Of The Border" Reports.** These reports will keep the American people informed of the Federal Government's progress in securing the border and hold the Administration accountable for continuing improvement.

INTERIOR ENFORCEMENT

- **7. The Administration Is Training Hundreds Of State And Local Law Enforcement Officers To Address Illegal Immigration In Their Communities.** The Administration is maintaining the 287(g) program and expanding other measures that help State and local law officials. These measures include a broad array of enforcement tools, such as formal task forces, greater use of the ICE Law Enforcement Support Center, delegated border search and seizure authority under Title 19, and enhanced partnerships to address location-specific threats, such as gangs.
- **8. By This Fall, U.S. Immigration And Customs Enforcement Teams Devoted To Removing Fugitive Aliens Will Have Been Quintupled In Less Than Three Years.**

There were 15 seven-member Fugitive Operations Teams in 2005. As of this week there are 68; there will be 75 by the end of September.

- **9. The Justice Department Will Initiate Regulatory Action To Close The "Voluntary Departure" Loophole Manipulated By Many Illegal Immigrants.** Illegal immigrants who settle their cases by agreeing to voluntarily depart sometimes then gain extra time inside the United States by filing a procedural motion to reopen the case. New regulations will clarify that filing such a motion will terminate the voluntary departure status and make the alien subject to the order of removal. They will also set a presumptive \$3,000 civil penalty for failing to comply with a voluntary departure agreement.

WORKSITE ENFORCEMENT

- **10. Today, The Department Of Homeland Security Issued A "No-Match" Regulation That Will Help Employers Ensure Their Workers Are Legal And Help The Government Identify And Crack Down On Employers Who Knowingly Hire Illegal Workers.** In cases in which an employer has a significant number of employees with inaccurate personal identity information, the Social Security Administration will send the employer a "No-Match" letter. The regulation clarifies that employers may be held liable if they ignore the "No Match" problems by failing to take specified steps within 90 days of receiving the letter.
- **11. In The Coming Months, The Administration Will Publish A Regulation That Will Reduce The Number Of Documents That Employers Must Accept To Confirm The Identity And Work Eligibility Of Their Employees.** Presently, no fewer than 29 categories of documents can be used to establish identity and work eligibility. Employers have little capacity to verify the authenticity of these documents, and the sheer quantity of accepted documents is an invitation to fraud. This regulation will reduce unlawful employment by weeding out insecure documents now used often for identity fraud.
- **12. As A Civil Counterpart To The Administration's Strategy Of Using Criminal Investigations To Deter Illegal Employment, The Department Of Homeland Security Will Raise The Civil Fines Imposed On Employers Who Knowingly Hire Illegal Immigrants By Approximately 25 Percent.** Efforts to secure the border will fail unless the "magnet" that attracts illegals is turned off. Unfortunately, the fines for relying on illegal workers are so modest that some companies treat them as little more than a cost of doing business. DHS will use existing authority to update civil fines for inflation in order to boost fines by about 25 percent, as much as is allowed under current law.
- **13. The Administration Will Continue To Expand Criminal Investigations Against Employers Who Knowingly Hire Large Numbers Of Illegal Aliens.** Arrests by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement for criminal violations have increased from 24 in FY 1999 to a record 716 in FY 2006. There have been 742 criminal arrests since the beginning of FY 2007 (through July 31), and there is anecdotal evidence that companies are taking notice and adjusting their business practices to follow the law.

- **14. The Administration Will Commence a Rulemaking Process To Require All Federal Contractors And Vendors To Use E-Verify, The Federal Electronic Employment Verification System, To Ensure That Their Employees Are Authorized To Work In The United States.** The Federal government ought to lead by example. As there are more than 200,000 companies doing Federal business, this will significantly expand use of E-Verify, and make it more difficult for illegal immigrants to obtain jobs through fraud.
- **15. The Administration Will Help States Make Greater Use Of E-Verify.** Some States already mandate the use of E-Verify by some or all of their hiring agencies, and other States are considering similar requirements. The Administration will assist such efforts through outreach and offers of technical assistance.
- **16. The Administration Will Bolster E-Verify By Expanding The Data Sources It Can Check.** This will make it easier to catch individuals who commit identity theft. New sources of data will include cross-checks of visa and passport information.
- **17. The Administration Will Seek Voluntary State Partners Willing To Share Their Department Of Motor Vehicles Photos And Records With E-Verify.** Agreements to allow E-Verify access to the repository of photographs in state DMV databases will help prevent illegal immigrants from using fraudulent driver's licenses to obtain employment. Such agreements will also lay the groundwork for further expansion of the electronic employment eligibility verification system.

STREAMLINING EXISTING GUEST-WORKER PROGRAMS

- **18. The Department Of Labor (DOL) Will Reform The H-2A Agricultural Seasonal Worker Program.** No sector of the American economy requires a legal flow of foreign workers more than agriculture, which has begun to experience severe labor shortages as our Southern border has tightened. The President has therefore directed DOL to review the regulations implementing the H-2A program and to institute changes that will provide farmers with an orderly and timely flow of legal workers, while protecting the rights of laborers.
- **19. The Department Of Labor Will Issue Regulations Streamlining The H-2B Program For Non-Agricultural Seasonal Workers.** Because businesses in seasonal industries such as landscaping and hospitality frequently have a difficult time locating temporary workers, the H-2B program has proven quite popular. Some employers report significant processing delays, however. DOL's proposed rule will speed processing by moving from a government-certified system to an employer-attestation system akin to the PERM system that has reduced backlogs in other areas.
- **20. The Department Of Homeland Security Will Extend The Visa Term For Professional Workers From Canada And Mexico To Attract More Of These Talented Workers To The United States.** The United States must compete for foreign professional workers, and those who elect to lend their talents to the U.S. economy should be welcomed with open arms, not given a bureaucratic runaround. Yet the roughly 65,000 workers who enter the United States each year on the TN visa must go to the

trouble of renewing their visa every year. This regulation will extend the TN visa duration to three years – the same term as other popular professional visas.

- **21. The Department Of Homeland Security And The Department Of Labor Will Study And Report On Potential Administrative Reforms To Visa Programs For Highly Skilled Workers.**

IMPROVING EXISTING IMMIGRATION

- **22. The Administration Will Reform And Expedite Background Checks For Immigration.** Current mechanisms for conducting immigration background checks are backed up, slowing processing times and endangering national security. The Administration is investing substantial new funds to address the backlog, and the FBI and USCIS are working together on a variety of projects designed to streamline existing processes so as to reduce waiting times without sacrificing security.
- **23. The President Is Directing The Department Of Homeland Security And The Social Security Administration To Study The Technical And Recordkeeping Reforms Necessary To Guarantee That Illegal Aliens Do Not Earn Credit In Our Social Security System For Illegal Work.** Currently, aliens who make Social Security payments while working here legally can continue to accrue credits even if they overstay their visa. Improved data-sharing can lay the foundation for eventual Congressional action to eliminate this practice (which proved an obstacle to comprehensive reform). The relevant agencies are ordered to report to the President with a detailed plan for eliminating the problem.

ASSIMILATION

- **24. The Office Of Citizenship Will Announce A Revised Naturalization Test In September 2007.** The new test will emphasize fundamental concepts of American democracy, basic U.S. history, and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. It will inculcate the basic values we share as Americans, and encourage civic knowledge and patriotism among prospective citizens.
 - **The New Standardized Test Will Ensure Fairness By Eliminating Current Wide Variations In The Quality Of Testing Between Regional Offices.**
- **25. The Office Of Citizenship Will Provide Additional Training For Volunteers And Adult Educators Who Lead Immigrants Through The Naturalization Process.** In October 2007, the Office of Citizenship will introduce a web-based training program that covers U.S. government, civics education, and the naturalization process. To complement these on-line materials, USCIS will convene eight regional training conferences, beginning in October 2007, to improve the ability of citizenship instructors and volunteers to teach American history, civics, and the naturalization process to immigrant students. An on-line training module will also be available by the end of the year.

- **26. The Department Of Education Will Launch A Free, Web-Based Portal To Help Immigrants Learn English, And Expand This Model Over Time.** Knowledge of English is the most important component of assimilation. An investment in tools to help new Americans learn English will be repaid many times over in the contributions these immigrants make to our political discourse, economy, and society.

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October 24, 2007 (Senate)

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

S. 2205 – Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act of 2007

(Sen. Durbin (D) Illinois and two cosponsors)

The Administration continues to believe that the Nation's broken immigration system requires comprehensive reform. This reform should include strong border and interior enforcement, a temporary worker program, a program to bring the millions of undocumented aliens out of the shadows without amnesty and without animosity, and assistance that helps newcomers assimilate into American society. Unless it provides additional authorities in all of these areas, Congress will do little more than perpetuate the unfortunate status quo.

The Administration is sympathetic to the position of young people who were brought here illegally as children and have come to know the United States as home. Any resolution of their status, however, must be careful not to provide incentives for recurrence of the illegal conduct that has brought the Nation to this point. By creating a special path to citizenship that is unavailable to other prospective immigrants—including young people whose parents respected the Nation's immigration laws—S. 2205 falls short. The Administration therefore opposes the bill.

The primary change wrought by S. 2205 would be to establish a preferential path to citizenship for a special class of illegal aliens. Specifically, S. 2205 awards permanent status to any illegal alien who is under 30, has been in the United States for five years after arriving as a child, and has completed two years of college or in the uniformed services. This path to citizenship is unavailable to any other alien, no matter how much promise he or she may have, no matter how much he or she may contribute to American society. Moreover, the path that S. 2205 creates would allow illegal aliens to obtain a green card before many individuals who are currently lawfully waiting in line.

Sponsors of S. 2205 argue that the bill is necessary in order to give children who are illegal aliens incentives to obtain an education. But it is difficult to reconcile that professed aim with the bill's retroactivity provisions: even those who attended college years earlier will be eligible for a green card.

The legal status that the bill grants its beneficiaries means that they can petition almost instantly to bring family members into the country. It also places them on the fast track to citizenship because they can immediately begin accruing the residence time in the United States that is necessary for naturalization. Finally, this legal status entitles the bill's beneficiaries to certain welfare benefits within five years.

The bill is also indiscriminate in whom it would make eligible for the program. For example,

S. 2205 includes loopholes that would authorize permanent status for certain aliens convicted of multiple misdemeanors and even felonies.

The open-ended nature of S. 2205 is objectionable and will inevitably lead to large-scale document fraud. The path to citizenship remains open for decades, thus creating a strong temptation for future illegal aliens to purchase fraudulent documents on a burgeoning black market. Moreover, the bill's confidentiality provisions are drawn straight from the 1986 amnesty law and will provide the same haven for fraud and criminality as that law did.

Immigration is one of the top concerns of the American people—and of this Administration—but it needs to be addressed in a comprehensive and balanced way that avoids creating incentives for problems in the future.

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Withdrawal Marker

The George W. Bush Library

FORM	SUBJECT/TITLE	PAGES	DATE	RESTRICTION(S)
Memorandum	Temporary Ag Workers - To: POTUS - From: Karl Zinsmeister	4	11/04/2007	P5;

**This marker identifies the original location of the withdrawn item listed above.
For a complete list of items withdrawn from this folder, see the
Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet at the front of the folder.**

COLLECTION:

Staff Secretary, White House Office of the

SERIES:

Von Der Heydt, Thomas (Tommy) - Bush Record Policy Memos

FOLDER TITLE:

Immigration: A Timeline (2001 - 2008) [3]

FRC ID:

13894

OA Num.:

14457

NARA Num.:

14246

RESTRICTION CODES**Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]**

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
- P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
- P5 Release would disclose confidential advise between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
- P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

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- b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
- b(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
- b(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
- b(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
- b(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
- b(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
- b(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
- b(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

15

President Bush Delivers State of the Union Address

Chamber of the United States House of Representatives
United States Capitol

9:09 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Madam Speaker, Vice President Cheney, members of Congress, distinguished guests, and fellow citizens: Seven years have passed since I first stood before you at this rostrum. In that time, our country has been tested in ways none of us could have imagined. We faced hard decisions about peace and war, rising competition in the world economy, and the health and welfare of our citizens. These issues call for vigorous debate, and I think it's fair to say we've answered the call. Yet history will record that amid our differences, we acted with purpose. And together, we showed the world the power and resilience of American self-government.

All of us were sent to Washington to carry out the people's business. That is the purpose of this body. It is the meaning of our oath. It remains our charge to keep.

The actions of the 110th Congress will affect the security and prosperity of our nation long after this session has ended. In this election year, let us show our fellow Americans that we recognize our responsibilities and are determined to meet them. Let us show them that Republicans and Democrats can compete for votes and cooperate for results at the same time. (Applause.)

From expanding opportunity to protecting our country, we've made good progress. Yet we have unfinished business before us, and the American people expect us to get it done.

In the work ahead, we must be guided by the philosophy that made our nation great. As Americans, we believe in the power of individuals to determine their destiny and shape the course of history. We believe that the most reliable guide for our country is the collective wisdom of ordinary citizens. And so in all we do, we must trust in the ability of free peoples to make wise decisions, and empower them to improve their lives for their futures.

To build a prosperous future, we must trust people with their own money and empower them to grow our economy. As we meet tonight, our economy is undergoing a period of uncertainty. America has added jobs for a record 52 straight months, but jobs are now growing at a slower pace. Wages are up, but so are prices for food and gas. Exports are rising, but the housing market has declined. At kitchen tables across our country, there is a concern about our economic future.

In the long run, Americans can be confident about our economic growth. But in the short run, we can all see that that growth is slowing. So last week, my administration reached agreement with Speaker Pelosi and Republican Leader Boehner on a robust growth package that includes tax relief for individuals and families and incentives for business investment. The temptation will be to load up the bill. That would delay it or derail it, and neither option is acceptable. (Applause.) This is a good agreement that will keep our economy growing and our people working. And this Congress must pass it as soon as possible. (Applause.)

We have other work to do on taxes. Unless Congress acts, most of the tax relief we've delivered over the past seven years will be taken away. Some in Washington argue that letting tax relief expire is not a tax increase. Try explaining that to 116 million American taxpayers who would

see their taxes rise by an average of \$1,800. Others have said they would personally be happy to pay higher taxes. I welcome their enthusiasm. I'm pleased to report that the IRS accepts both checks and money orders. (Laughter and applause.)

Most Americans think their taxes are high enough. With all the other pressures on their finances, American families should not have to worry about their federal government taking a bigger bite out of their paychecks. There's only one way to eliminate this uncertainty: Make the tax relief permanent. (Applause.) And members of Congress should know: If any bill raises taxes reaches my desk, I will veto it. (Applause.)

Just as we trust Americans with their own money, we need to earn their trust by spending their tax dollars wisely. Next week, I'll send you a budget that terminates or substantially reduces 151 wasteful or bloated programs, totaling more than \$18 billion. The budget that I will submit will keep America on track for a surplus in 2012. American families have to balance their budgets; so should their government. (Applause.)

The people's trust in their government is undermined by congressional earmarks -- special interest projects that are often snuck in at the last minute, without discussion or debate. Last year, I asked you to voluntarily cut the number and cost of earmarks in half. I also asked you to stop slipping earmarks into committee reports that never even come to a vote. Unfortunately, neither goal was met. So this time, if you send me an appropriations bill that does not cut the number and cost of earmarks in half, I'll send it back to you with my veto. (Applause.)

And tomorrow, I will issue an executive order that directs federal agencies to ignore any future earmark that is not voted on by Congress. If these items are truly worth funding, Congress should debate them in the open and hold a public vote. (Applause.)

Our shared responsibilities extend beyond matters of taxes and spending. On housing, we must trust Americans with the responsibility of homeownership and empower them to weather turbulent times in the housing market. My administration brought together the HOPE NOW alliance, which is helping many struggling homeowners avoid foreclosure. And Congress can help even more. Tonight I ask you to pass legislation to reform Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, modernize the Federal Housing Administration, and allow state housing agencies to issue tax-free bonds to help homeowners refinance their mortgages. (Applause.) These are difficult times for many American families, and by taking these steps, we can help more of them keep their homes.

To build a future of quality health care, we must trust patients and doctors to make medical decisions and empower them with better information and better options. We share a common goal: making health care more affordable and accessible for all Americans. (Applause.) The best way to achieve that goal is by expanding consumer choice, not government control. (Applause.) So I have proposed ending the bias in the tax code against those who do not get their health insurance through their employer. This one reform would put private coverage within reach for millions, and I call on the Congress to pass it this year. (Applause.)

The Congress must also expand health savings accounts, create Association Health Plans for small businesses, promote health information technology, and confront the epidemic of junk medical lawsuits. (Applause.) With all these steps, we will help ensure that decisions about your

medical care are made in the privacy of your doctor's office -- not in the halls of Congress. (Applause.)

On education, we must trust students to learn if given the chance, and empower parents to demand results from our schools. In neighborhoods across our country, there are boys and girls with dreams -- and a decent education is their only hope of achieving them.

Six years ago, we came together to pass the No Child Left Behind Act, and today no one can deny its results. Last year, fourth and eighth graders achieved the highest math scores on record. Reading scores are on the rise. African American and Hispanic students posted all-time highs. (Applause.) Now we must work together to increase accountability, add flexibility for states and districts, reduce the number of high school dropouts, provide extra help for struggling schools.

Members of Congress: The No Child Left Behind Act is a bipartisan achievement. It is succeeding. And we owe it to America's children, their parents, and their teachers to strengthen this good law. (Applause.)

We must also do more to help children when their schools do not measure up. Thanks to the D.C. Opportunity Scholarships you approved, more than 2,600 of the poorest children in our Nation's Capital have found new hope at a faith-based or other non-public school. Sadly, these schools are disappearing at an alarming rate in many of America's inner cities. So I will convene a White House summit aimed at strengthening these lifelines of learning. And to open the doors of these schools to more children, I ask you to support a new \$300 million program called Pell Grants for Kids. We have seen how Pell Grants help low-income college students realize their full potential. Together, we've expanded the size and reach of these grants. Now let us apply that same spirit to help liberate poor children trapped in failing public schools. (Applause.)

On trade, we must trust American workers to compete with anyone in the world and empower them by opening up new markets overseas. Today, our economic growth increasingly depends on our ability to sell American goods and crops and services all over the world. So we're working to break down barriers to trade and investment wherever we can. We're working for a successful Doha Round of trade talks, and we must complete a good agreement this year. At the same time, we're pursuing opportunities to open up new markets by passing free trade agreements.

I thank the Congress for approving a good agreement with Peru. And now I ask you to approve agreements with Colombia and Panama and South Korea. (Applause.) Many products from these nations now enter America duty-free, yet many of our products face steep tariffs in their markets. These agreements will level the playing field. They will give us better access to nearly 100 million customers. They will support good jobs for the finest workers in the world: those whose products say "Made in the USA." (Applause.)

These agreements also promote America's strategic interests. The first agreement that will come before you is with Colombia, a friend of America that is confronting violence and terror, and fighting drug traffickers. If we fail to pass this agreement, we will embolden the purveyors of false populism in our hemisphere. So we must come together, pass this agreement, and show our neighbors in the region that democracy leads to a better life. (Applause.)

Trade brings better jobs and better choices and better prices. Yet for some Americans, trade can mean losing a job, and the federal government has a responsibility to help. (Applause.) I ask Congress to reauthorize and reform trade adjustment assistance, so we can help these displaced workers learn new skills and find new jobs. (Applause.)

To build a future of energy security, we must trust in the creative genius of American researchers and entrepreneurs and empower them to pioneer a new generation of clean energy technology. (Applause.) Our security, our prosperity, and our environment all require reducing our dependence on oil. Last year, I asked you to pass legislation to reduce oil consumption over the next decade, and you responded. Together we should take the next steps: Let us fund new technologies that can generate coal power while capturing carbon emissions. (Applause.) Let us increase the use of renewable power and emissions-free nuclear power. (Applause.) Let us continue investing in advanced battery technology and renewable fuels to power the cars and trucks of the future. (Applause.) Let us create a new international clean technology fund, which will help developing nations like India and China make greater use of clean energy sources. And let us complete an international agreement that has the potential to slow, stop, and eventually reverse the growth of greenhouse gases. (Applause.)

This agreement will be effective only if it includes commitments by every major economy and gives none a free ride. (Applause.) The United States is committed to strengthening our energy security and confronting global climate change. And the best way to meet these goals is for America to continue leading the way toward the development of cleaner and more energy-efficient technology. (Applause.)

To keep America competitive into the future, we must trust in the skill of our scientists and engineers and empower them to pursue the breakthroughs of tomorrow. Last year, Congress passed legislation supporting the American Competitiveness Initiative, but never followed through with the funding. This funding is essential to keeping our scientific edge. So I ask Congress to double federal support for critical basic research in the physical sciences and ensure America remains the most dynamic nation on Earth. (Applause.)

On matters of life and science, we must trust in the innovative spirit of medical researchers and empower them to discover new treatments while respecting moral boundaries. In November, we witnessed a landmark achievement when scientists discovered a way to reprogram adult skin cells to act like embryonic stem cells. This breakthrough has the potential to move us beyond the divisive debates of the past by extending the frontiers of medicine without the destruction of human life. (Applause.)

So we're expanding funding for this type of ethical medical research. And as we explore promising avenues of research, we must also ensure that all life is treated with the dignity it deserves. And so I call on Congress to pass legislation that bans unethical practices such as the buying, selling, patenting, or cloning of human life. (Applause.)

On matters of justice, we must trust in the wisdom of our founders and empower judges who understand that the Constitution means what it says. (Applause.) I've submitted judicial nominees who will rule by the letter of the law, not the whim of the gavel. Many of these nominees are being unfairly delayed. They are worthy of confirmation, and the Senate should give each of them a prompt up-or-down vote. (Applause.)

In communities across our land, we must trust in the good heart of the American people and empower them to serve their neighbors in need. Over the past seven years, more of our fellow citizens have discovered that the pursuit of happiness leads to the path of service. Americans have volunteered in record numbers. Charitable donations are higher than ever. Faith-based groups are bringing hope to pockets of despair, with newfound support from the federal government. And to help guarantee equal treatment of faith-based organizations when they compete for federal funds, I ask you to permanently extend Charitable Choice. (Applause.)

Tonight the armies of compassion continue the march to a new day in the Gulf Coast. America honors the strength and resilience of the people of this region. We reaffirm our pledge to help them build stronger and better than before. And tonight I'm pleased to announce that in April we will host this year's North American Summit of Canada, Mexico, and the United States in the great city of New Orleans. (Applause.)

There are two other pressing challenges that I've raised repeatedly before this body, and that this body has failed to address: entitlement spending and immigration. Every member in this chamber knows that spending on entitlement programs like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid is growing faster than we can afford. We all know the painful choices ahead if America stays on this path: massive tax increases, sudden and drastic cuts in benefits, or crippling deficits. I've laid out proposals to reform these programs. Now I ask members of Congress to offer your proposals and come up with a bipartisan solution to save these vital programs for our children and our grandchildren. (Applause.)

The other pressing challenge is immigration. America needs to secure our borders -- and with your help, my administration is taking steps to do so. We're increasing worksite enforcement, deploying fences and advanced technologies to stop illegal crossings. We've effectively ended the policy of "catch and release" at the border, and by the end of this year, we will have doubled the number of border patrol agents. Yet we also need to acknowledge that we will never fully secure our border until we create a lawful way for foreign workers to come here and support our economy. (Applause.) This will take pressure off the border and allow law enforcement to concentrate on those who mean us harm. We must also find a sensible and humane way to deal with people here illegally. Illegal immigration is complicated, but it can be resolved. And it must be resolved in a way that upholds both our laws and our highest ideals. (Applause.)

This is the business of our nation here at home. Yet building a prosperous future for our citizens also depends on confronting enemies abroad and advancing liberty in troubled regions of the world.

Our foreign policy is based on a clear premise: We trust that people, when given the chance, will choose a future of freedom and peace. In the last seven years, we have witnessed stirring moments in the history of liberty. We've seen citizens in Georgia and Ukraine stand up for their right to free and fair elections. We've seen people in Lebanon take to the streets to demand their independence. We've seen Afghans emerge from the tyranny of the Taliban and choose a new president and a new parliament. We've seen jubilant Iraqis holding up ink-stained fingers and celebrating their freedom. These images of liberty have inspired us. (Applause.)

In the past seven years, we've also seen images that have sobered us. We've watched throngs of mourners in Lebanon and Pakistan carrying the caskets of beloved leaders taken by the assassin's

hand. We've seen wedding guests in blood-soaked finery staggering from a hotel in Jordan, Afghans and Iraqis blown up in mosques and markets, and trains in London and Madrid ripped apart by bombs. On a clear September day, we saw thousands of our fellow citizens taken from us in an instant. These horrific images serve as a grim reminder: The advance of liberty is opposed by terrorists and extremists -- evil men who despise freedom, despise America, and aim to subject millions to their violent rule.

Since 9/11, we have taken the fight to these terrorists and extremists. We will stay on the offense, we will keep up the pressure, and we will deliver justice to our enemies. (Applause.)

We are engaged in the defining ideological struggle of the 21st century. The terrorists oppose every principle of humanity and decency that we hold dear. Yet in this war on terror, there is one thing we and our enemies agree on: In the long run, men and women who are free to determine their own destinies will reject terror and refuse to live in tyranny. And that is why the terrorists are fighting to deny this choice to the people in Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Palestinian Territories. And that is why, for the security of America and the peace of the world, we are spreading the hope of freedom. (Applause.)

In Afghanistan, America, our 25 NATO allies, and 15 partner nations are helping the Afghan people defend their freedom and rebuild their country. Thanks to the courage of these military and civilian personnel, a nation that was once a safe haven for al Qaeda is now a young democracy where boys and girls are going to school, new roads and hospitals are being built, and people are looking to the future with new hope. These successes must continue, so we're adding 3,200 Marines to our forces in Afghanistan, where they will fight the terrorists and train the Afghan Army and police. Defeating the Taliban and al Qaeda is critical to our security, and I thank the Congress for supporting America's vital mission in Afghanistan. (Applause.)

In Iraq, the terrorists and extremists are fighting to deny a proud people their liberty, and fighting to establish safe havens for attacks across the world. One year ago, our enemies were succeeding in their efforts to plunge Iraq into chaos. So we reviewed our strategy and changed course. We launched a surge of American forces into Iraq. We gave our troops a new mission: Work with the Iraqi forces to protect the Iraqi people, pursue the enemy in its strongholds, and deny the terrorists sanctuary anywhere in the country.

The Iraqi people quickly realized that something dramatic had happened. Those who had worried that America was preparing to abandon them instead saw tens of thousands of American forces flowing into their country. They saw our forces moving into neighborhoods, clearing out the terrorists, and staying behind to ensure the enemy did not return. And they saw our troops, along with Provincial Reconstruction Teams that include Foreign Service officers and other skilled public servants, coming in to ensure that improved security was followed by improvements in daily life. Our military and civilians in Iraq are performing with courage and distinction, and they have the gratitude of our whole nation. (Applause.)

The Iraqis launched a surge of their own. In the fall of 2006, Sunni tribal leaders grew tired of al Qaeda's brutality and started a popular uprising called "The Anbar Awakening." Over the past year, similar movements have spread across the country. And today, the grassroots surge includes more than 80,000 Iraqi citizens who are fighting the terrorists. The government in

Baghdad has stepped forward, as well -- adding more than 100,000 new Iraqi soldiers and police during the past year.

While the enemy is still dangerous and more work remains, the American and Iraqi surges have achieved results few of us could have imagined just one year ago. (Applause.) When we met last year, many said that containing the violence was impossible. A year later, high profile terrorist attacks are down, civilian deaths are down, sectarian killings are down.

When we met last year, militia extremists -- some armed and trained by Iran -- were wreaking havoc in large areas of Iraq. A year later, coalition and Iraqi forces have killed or captured hundreds of militia fighters. And Iraqis of all backgrounds increasingly realize that defeating these militia fighters is critical to the future of their country.

When we met last year, al Qaeda had sanctuaries in many areas of Iraq, and their leaders had just offered American forces safe passage out of the country. Today, it is al Qaeda that is searching for safe passage. They have been driven from many of the strongholds they once held, and over the past year, we've captured or killed thousands of extremists in Iraq, including hundreds of key al Qaeda leaders and operatives.

Last month, Osama bin Laden released a tape in which he railed against Iraqi tribal leaders who have turned on al Qaeda and admitted that coalition forces are growing stronger in Iraq. Ladies and gentlemen, some may deny the surge is working, but among the terrorists there is no doubt. Al Qaeda is on the run in Iraq, and this enemy will be defeated. (Applause.)

When we met last year, our troop levels in Iraq were on the rise. Today, because of the progress just described, we are implementing a policy of "return on success," and the surge forces we sent to Iraq are beginning to come home.

This progress is a credit to the valor of our troops and the brilliance of their commanders. This evening, I want to speak directly to our men and women on the front lines. Soldiers and sailors, airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen: In the past year, you have done everything we've asked of you, and more. Our nation is grateful for your courage. We are proud of your accomplishments. And tonight in this hallowed chamber, with the American people as our witness, we make you a solemn pledge: In the fight ahead, you will have all you need to protect our nation. (Applause.) And I ask Congress to meet its responsibilities to these brave men and women by fully funding our troops. (Applause.)

Our enemies in Iraq have been hit hard. They are not yet defeated, and we can still expect tough fighting ahead. Our objective in the coming year is to sustain and build on the gains we made in 2007, while transitioning to the next phase of our strategy. American troops are shifting from leading operations, to partnering with Iraqi forces, and, eventually, to a protective overwatch mission. As part of this transition, one Army brigade combat team and one Marine Expeditionary Unit have already come home and will not be replaced. In the coming months, four additional brigades and two Marine battalions will follow suit. Taken together, this means more than 20,000 of our troops are coming home. (Applause.)

Any further drawdown of U.S. troops will be based on conditions in Iraq and the recommendations of our commanders. General Petraeus has warned that too fast a drawdown could result in the "disintegration of the Iraqi security forces, al Qaeda-Iraq regaining lost

ground, [and] a marked increase in violence." Members of Congress: Having come so far and achieved so much, we must not allow this to happen. (Applause.)

In the coming year, we will work with Iraqi leaders as they build on the progress they're making toward political reconciliation. At the local level, Sunnis, Shia, and Kurds are beginning to come together to reclaim their communities and rebuild their lives. Progress in the provinces must be matched by progress in Baghdad. (Applause.) We're seeing some encouraging signs. The national government is sharing oil revenues with the provinces. The parliament recently passed both a pension law and de-Baathification reform. They're now debating a provincial powers law. The Iraqis still have a distance to travel. But after decades of dictatorship and the pain of sectarian violence, reconciliation is taking place -- and the Iraqi people are taking control of their future. (Applause.)

The mission in Iraq has been difficult and trying for our nation. But it is in the vital interest of the United States that we succeed. A free Iraq will deny al Qaeda a safe haven. A free Iraq will show millions across the Middle East that a future of liberty is possible. A free Iraq will be a friend of America, a partner in fighting terror, and a source of stability in a dangerous part of the world.

By contrast, a failed Iraq would embolden the extremists, strengthen Iran, and give terrorists a base from which to launch new attacks on our friends, our allies, and our homeland. The enemy has made its intentions clear. At a time when the momentum seemed to favor them, al Qaida's top commander in Iraq declared that they will not rest until they have attacked us here in Washington. My fellow Americans: We will not rest either. We will not rest until this enemy has been defeated. (Applause.) We must do the difficult work today, so that years from now people will look back and say that this generation rose to the moment, prevailed in a tough fight, and left behind a more hopeful region and a safer America. (Applause.)

We're also standing against the forces of extremism in the Holy Land, where we have new cause for hope. Palestinians have elected a president who recognizes that confronting terror is essential to achieving a state where his people can live in dignity and at peace with Israel. Israelis have leaders who recognize that a peaceful, democratic Palestinian state will be a source of lasting security. This month in Ramallah and Jerusalem, I assured leaders from both sides that America will do, and I will do, everything we can to help them achieve a peace agreement that defines a Palestinian state by the end of this year. The time has come for a Holy Land where a democratic Israel and a democratic Palestine live side-by-side in peace. (Applause.)

We're also standing against the forces of extremism embodied by the regime in Tehran. Iran's rulers oppress a good and talented people. And wherever freedom advances in the Middle East, it seems the Iranian regime is there to oppose it. Iran is funding and training militia groups in Iraq, supporting Hezbollah terrorists in Lebanon, and backing Hamas' efforts to undermine peace in the Holy Land. Tehran is also developing ballistic missiles of increasing range, and continues to develop its capability to enrich uranium, which could be used to create a nuclear weapon.

Our message to the people of Iran is clear: We have no quarrel with you. We respect your traditions and your history. We look forward to the day when you have your freedom. Our message to the leaders of Iran is also clear: Verifiably suspend your nuclear enrichment, so negotiations can begin. And to rejoin the community of nations, come clean about your nuclear

intentions and past actions, stop your oppression at home, cease your support for terror abroad. But above all, know this: America will confront those who threaten our troops. We will stand by our allies, and we will defend our vital interests in the Persian Gulf. (Applause.)

On the home front, we will continue to take every lawful and effective measure to protect our country. This is our most solemn duty. We are grateful that there has not been another attack on our soil since 9/11. This is not for the lack of desire or effort on the part of the enemy. In the past six years, we've stopped numerous attacks, including a plot to fly a plane into the tallest building in Los Angeles and another to blow up passenger jets bound for America over the Atlantic. Dedicated men and women in our government toil day and night to stop the terrorists from carrying out their plans. These good citizens are saving American lives, and everyone in this chamber owes them our thanks. (Applause.)

And we owe them something more: We owe them the tools they need to keep our people safe. And one of the most important tools we can give them is the ability to monitor terrorist communications. To protect America, we need to know who the terrorists are talking to, what they are saying, and what they're planning. Last year, Congress passed legislation to help us do that. Unfortunately, Congress set the legislation to expire on February the 1st. That means if you don't act by Friday, our ability to track terrorist threats would be weakened and our citizens will be in greater danger. Congress must ensure the flow of vital intelligence is not disrupted. Congress must pass liability protection for companies believed to have assisted in the efforts to defend America. We've had ample time for debate. The time to act is now. (Applause.)

Protecting our nation from the dangers of a new century requires more than good intelligence and a strong military. It also requires changing the conditions that breed resentment and allow extremists to prey on despair. So America is using its influence to build a freer, more hopeful, and more compassionate world. This is a reflection of our national interest; it is the calling of our conscience.

America opposes genocide in Sudan. (Applause.) We support freedom in countries from Cuba and Zimbabwe to Belarus and Burma. (Applause.)

America is leading the fight against global poverty, with strong education initiatives and humanitarian assistance. We've also changed the way we deliver aid by launching the Millennium Challenge Account. This program strengthens democracy, transparency, and the rule of law in developing nations, and I ask you to fully fund this important initiative. (Applause.)

America is leading the fight against global hunger. Today, more than half the world's food aid comes from the United States. And tonight, I ask Congress to support an innovative proposal to provide food assistance by purchasing crops directly from farmers in the developing world, so we can build up local agriculture and help break the cycle of famine. (Applause.)

America is leading the fight against disease. With your help, we're working to cut by half the number of malaria-related deaths in 15 African nations. And our Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief is treating 1.4 million people. We can bring healing and hope to many more. So I ask you to maintain the principles that have changed behavior and made this program a success. And I call on you to double our initial commitment to fighting HIV/AIDS by approving an additional \$30 billion over the next five years. (Applause.)

America is a force for hope in the world because we are a compassionate people, and some of the most compassionate Americans are those who have stepped forward to protect us. We must keep faith with all who have risked life and limb so that we might live in freedom and peace. Over the past seven years, we've increased funding for veterans by more than 95 percent. And as we increase funding -- (applause.) And as increase funding we must also reform our veterans system to meet the needs of a new war and a new generation. (Applause.) I call on the Congress to enact the reforms recommended by Senator Bob Dole and Secretary Donna Shalala, so we can improve the system of care for our wounded warriors and help them build lives of hope and promise and dignity. (Applause.)

Our military families also sacrifice for America. They endure sleepless nights and the daily struggle of providing for children while a loved one is serving far from home. We have a responsibility to provide for them. So I ask you to join me in expanding their access to child care, creating new hiring preferences for military spouses across the federal government, and allowing our troops to transfer their unused education benefits to their spouses or children. (Applause.) Our military families serve our nation, they inspire our nation, and tonight our nation honors them. (Applause.)

The strength -- the secret of our strength, the miracle of America, is that our greatness lies not in our government, but in the spirit and determination of our people. (Applause.) When the Federal Convention met in Philadelphia in 1787, our nation was bound by the Articles of Confederation, which began with the words, "We the undersigned delegates." When Gouverneur Morris was asked to draft a preamble to our new Constitution, he offered an important revision and opened with words that changed the course of our nation and the history of the world: "We the people."

By trusting the people, our Founders wagered that a great and noble nation could be built on the liberty that resides in the hearts of all men and women. By trusting the people, succeeding generations transformed our fragile young democracy into the most powerful nation on Earth and a beacon of hope for millions. And so long as we continue to trust the people, our nation will prosper, our liberty will be secure, and the state of our Union will remain strong. (Applause.)

So tonight, with confidence in freedom's power, and trust in the people, let us set forth to do their business. God bless America. (Applause.)

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May 20, 2008 (Senate)

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

HR 2642 – Supplemental Appropriations Bill of 2008

The Administration strongly opposes the Senate amendments to H.R. 2642, Supplemental Appropriations Bill of 2008, as reported by the Committee on Appropriations. Four weeks ago and prior to the development of this legislation, the President made clear that an acceptable bill must provide our troops the resources they need, while not tying the hands of our commanders or imposing artificial timelines for withdrawal. The President also made clear that this bill must be fiscally responsible and not exceed the \$108.1 billion request for fiscal year (FY) 2008 that was delivered to Congress months ago. Because Congress has failed to address these criteria as described below, if this bill were presented to the President in its current form, he would veto it.

As General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker recently testified to Congress, our strategy in Iraq is working to bring greater security and allowing for political progress. These positive developments are in the national interest of the United States. Both the Administration and the Congress must continue to support our brave men and women in uniform who have made this success possible.

The committee-reported bill seeks to tie the hands of our military commanders and includes an artificial timeline for withdrawal. Precipitous withdrawal from Iraq would embolden our enemies and confirm their belief that America will not stand behind its commitments. It could lead to a safe haven in Iraq for terrorism that could be used to attack America and our interests around the world, and is likely to unleash chaos in Iraq that could spread across the region. Additionally, the Administration strongly opposes attempts to limit the much needed flexibilities of our commanders in the field during this and future conflicts by codifying current policy regarding deployment schedules.

This legislation includes billions of dollars of unrequested domestic spending, all of it in excess of the President's request of \$108.1 billion for FY 2008. The Administration has offered responsible solutions for domestic concerns that do not require additional government spending, and the Administration urges Congress to adopt that approach. The Administration believes there is a time and place for domestic funding to be debated and considered on its merits, but that is not in a bill focused on the emergency needs of our troops. Last week, the Administration issued a veto threat on the excessive spending added to this bill by the House of Representatives.

The committee-reported bill moves even further in the wrong direction, adding another \$10 billion in unrelated spending to the President's request, and numerous authorizing provisions that have no place in a troop funding bill.

The Administration supports enhancements to the Montgomery GI Bill and to that end transmitted a legislative proposal on April 25, 2008 to allow for the transferability of unused

education benefits to spouses or dependent children of military personnel. Not only does this legislation lack such transferability, the Administration is also concerned that because of the high benefit for limited service included in this bill, it could harm retention rates within the armed forces. Any additional legislation should reward those who have agreed to serve while strengthening our all volunteer force as outlined by the Secretary of Defense in his letter to the Senate Armed Services Committee. The Administration is supportive of alternative legislation now pending in the Senate and looks forward to addressing these issues with Congress in the context of future legislative activity.

The unemployment rate is 5.0 percent -- a low rate by historical and economic standards. The current unemployment insurance program already provides significant assistance; including six months of benefits and extended benefits beyond six months if a state has a high and rising unemployment rate. Increasing and extending unemployment insurance benefits when unemployment is this low would be unprecedented and counterproductive because it would reduce the incentive for workers to find new employment.

The committee-reported bill would block the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) from implementing important regulations protecting the fiscal integrity of the Medicaid program, would put billions of dollars of Federal funds at risk, and would turn back progress that has already been made to stop waste, fraud and abuse in Medicaid. It also includes a provision delaying the Administration's efforts to ensure that states prioritize the enrollment of low-income children under the States Children's Health Insurance Program and minimize taxpayer dollars replacing private sector health insurance coverage.

The Administration strongly opposes the Emergency Agriculture Relief Act, which would grant illegal agricultural workers lawful status for up to five years, with the opportunity to seek lawful permanent residence during that period, as long as they have done some farm work somewhere in the world in the last two years. The Administration supports a balanced program -- strong border and interior enforcement, a temporary worker program, a sensible and fair way to deal with people here illegally, and assimilation measures. Unless Congress adopts reforms in all of these areas, this bill's grant of legal status to as many as 1.35 million illegal workers, plus their spouses and children, will simply encourage more illegal border crossings. Moreover, the bill would revive some of the worst abuses of the 1986 law, including document fraud and the creation of a safe haven from enforcement.

Other Concerns

The Administration submitted to Congress a partial year request for our troops in FY 2009, which includes account level detail for the allocation included in the President's FY 2009 Budget. If Congress chooses to provide funding for FY 2009 it must remain focused on our troops and national security and not be a vehicle for additional domestic spending.

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INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: KARL ZINSMEISTER

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON TEMPORARY WORKER PROGRAMS

Purpose

You were asked last week about temporary worker programs, specifically H-2A (uncapped agricultural) and H-2B (capped non-agricultural). The purpose of this memo is to give you a quick update on the status of those programs, plus some similar mechanisms for high-skilled workers.

Background

H-2A

The H-2A program for employing foreign workers in seasonal agricultural jobs is cumbersome, overly prescriptive, and woefully inadequate for our serious labor needs in agriculture today. On February 13, the Departments of Labor and Homeland Security published proposed regulations that will clear some major roadblocks to wider use of H-2A:

- *Wages:* H-2A wages are considerably higher than market wages in some regions, which is one reason why many farmers hire illegal workers instead. The DoL regulation would change the wage formula, shifting to the same data series used to compute payments for other kinds of temporary workers. If this formula had been in effect in 2007, it would have trimmed wages from \$8.81 per hour to \$7.47 per hour for typical workers.
- *The "50% rule":* The H-2A program currently requires employers to hire any eligible U.S. worker who becomes available before 50% of an H-2A contract has been completed. This can leave the temporary worker stranded, and render the employer's investments in transportation and training wasted. DoL proposes to significantly scale back or eliminate the 50% rule, while requiring farmers to recruit U.S. workers earlier in the process before resorting to H-2A.
- *Streamlining:* The regulation would allow employers to attest, without heavy paperwork, that there are insufficient U.S. workers for their positions. DoL would still do a final certification, and there would be an audit system with stiff penalties for noncompliance. This could shorten the approval process by 7-15 days.
- *Housing:* The statute requires employers to provide free housing to most H-2A workers. The regulation would allow many employers to provide vouchers instead.

DHS and DOL aim to finalize their rules by September.

In the meantime, Senators Feinstein and Craig have continued to pursue "AgJOBS," a legislative solution to the farm labor crunch that combines H-2A reforms with a deeply problematic legalization of undocumented farm workers. Since the Administration can improve H-2A via regulation, the AgJOBS package as a whole is undesirable. A version of AgJOBS was added to the Iraq supplemental in committee, and the Administration included that among the litany of reasons for our veto threat. Democrats removed the AgJOBS section before the appropriations package reached the Senate floor, but we can expect backers to continue trying to move the legislation.

H-2B

The H-2B program for temporary laborers outside of agriculture operates more efficiently than H-2A, so there is no lack of employer demand. But H-2B is limited by a statutory cap of 66,000 slots per year, and businesses complain bitterly that low quotas are imperiling their ability to operate. The shortage has been exacerbated by expiration of the so-called "returning-worker exemption," which allowed employers to bring back certain H-2B laborers from previous seasons without using up a slot under the quota. The Administration has publicly supported extending the returning-worker exemption, which could effectively triple, or more, the size of the temporary worker pool, but this has been blocked in both chambers of Congress. Most recently, the Senate Appropriations Committee added an exemption renewal to the Iraq supplemental, only to have it stripped out later.

Though Congressional cooperation is required to fix the numerical stinginess of H-2B, the Labor Department issued a draft regulation last month that will streamline the program a bit.¹ The proposed rule would permit employers to attest that they have met the obligation to recruit U.S. workers, and other program requirements, rather than making them document their efforts in paperwork. The proposal would also protect U.S. and foreign workers via stronger penalties for employers who pass along application costs to foreign workers or refuse to cooperate in Labor Department audits. The rule should be final later this year.

H-1B and other measures for high-skill workers

The H-1B temporary work program for highly skilled workers has been grossly oversubscribed for years. Fixing this problem is a very top priority of the high-technology sector of our economy. Here again, Congress is responsible for establishing the quota (85,000 visas), so there is little the Executive branch can do about that directly. In April, a group of 30 conservative House Republicans wrote to Speaker Pelosi asking her to remedy this situation. However, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus has prevailed upon the leadership not to advance piecemeal legislation increasing the H-1B cap. Moreover, the Administration has declined to openly support a statutory increase in the cap outside the context of comprehensive immigration reform. Instead, your Administration has been trying to provide relief through the regulatory process.

¹ Some Members of Congress and outside groups have asked you to renew the returning worker exemption via unspecified "Executive authority," but your advisers do not believe such authority exists absent action by Congress.

The most significant action to date concerns what is known as Optional Practical Training (OPT). Some foreign students who have been enrolled at American universities are eligible to work for a U.S. employer in a job directly related to their major. Effective April 8, the maximum period of OPT has been extended from 12 months to 29 months for certain graduates with degrees in science, technology, engineering, or math. This will improve the ability of U.S. employers to use highly skilled foreign scholars in a time when H-1B visas are in very short supply. The OPT extension, which will benefit as many as 23,000 students per year, was a high priority for the tech industry and boosters of U.S. competitiveness like Bill Gates.

A second change benefitting high-skill foreign workers is our rule to extend the term of visitor visas for professional workers from Canada and Mexico. Some 65,000 Canadian and Mexican professionals enter the United States every year on the TN visa, which was created by NAFTA. TN visas currently have a maximum duration of one year, after which the worker must either leave, seek readmission in TN status, or apply for an extension. Last month, DHS proposed a rule to extend the maximum duration of the TN visa from one year to three. That change will be finalized this summer.

A third change under way will benefit aliens living in the United States who have green-card applications pending. Such aliens are now eligible to work, but only for one year, and the hassle and expense of frequent renewals is bothersome to many. Later this month, DHS will start authorizing employment for two-year periods.

Conclusion

After Congress failed to pass comprehensive immigration reform last year, your Administration promised to do what it could within the boundaries of existing law to improve the immigration system—including making our existing temporary worker programs more functional. A year later, there has been lots of activity on that front, with more to come. We will update you as events warrant.