

Written by The White House Press Office

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In his final press conference as President, George W. Bush addresses his administration's record on the economy and waging the war on terror, and wishes President-elect Obama "All the Best."

"I think historians will look back and they'll be able to have a better look ... after some time has passed. [T]here is no such thing as short-term history. I don't think you can possibly get the full breadth of an administration until time has passed: Where ... did a President's decisions have the impact that he thought they would ... over time? Or how did this President compare to future Presidents, given a set of circumstances that may be similar or not similar? ... [I]t's just impossible to do. And I'm comfortable with that."

– President George W. Bush, 1/12/09

"I Have Worked To Be Respectful Of My Opponents On Different Issues. ... We Did Find Some Good Common Ground On A Variety Of Issues"

President George W. Bush: "[W]hen I get out of here, I'm getting off the stage." "I believe there ought to be ... one person in the klieg lights at a time, and I've had my time in the klieg lights."
(President George W. Bush, Press Conference, The White House, 1/12/09)

· "I wish [President-elect Obama] all the best." "And no question ... there will be critics. And there should be. We all should welcome criticism on different policy – it's the great thing about our democracy; people have a chance to express themselves. I just hope the tone is respectful. He deserves it – and so does the country."

· "I am disappointed by the tone in Washington, D.C." "I tried to do my part by not engaging in the name-calling and – and by the way, needless name-calling. I have worked to be respectful of my opponents on different issues. ... [W]e did find some good common ground on a variety of issues – No Child Left Behind, Medicare/prescription drugs, PEPFAR, in the end, the funding for troops in Iraq. Tax cuts, to a certain extent, got some bipartisan votes on them. There had been areas where we were able to work together. It's just the rhetoric got out of control at times."

· "I would hope that, frankly, for the sake of the system itself, that if people disagree with President-Elect Obama, they treat him with respect." "I worry about people looking at our system and saying, why would I want to go up there and work in that kind of environment?"

P resident Bush: "This party will come back. But the party's message has got to be that different points of view are included in the party." "[T]ake, for example, the immigration debate. That's obviously a highly contentious issue. And the problem with the outcome of the initial round of the debate was that some people said, well, Republicans don't like immigrants. Now, that may be fair or unfair, but ... that's the image that came out."

· "[O]ur party has got to be compassionate and broad-minded." "[I]f the image is we don't like immigrants, then there's probably somebody else out there saying, well, if they don't like the immigrants, they probably don't like me, as well."

"The Actions We Have Taken ... Have Helped Thaw The Credit Markets, Which Is The First Step Toward Recovery"

President Bush: "I inherited a recession, I am ending on a recession. In the meantime there were 52 months of uninterrupted job growth." "And I defended tax cuts when I campaigned, I helped implement tax cuts when I was President, and I will defend them after my presidency as the right course of action. And there's a fundamental philosophical debate about tax cuts. Who best can spend your money, the government or you? And I have always sided with the people on that issue."

· "Now, obviously these are very difficult economic times." "When people analyze the situation ... it obviously took place during my presidency. The question facing a President is not when the problem started, but what did you do about it when you recognized the problem."

· "[W]e've taken extraordinary measures to deal with the frozen credit markets, which have affected the economy." "Credit spreads are beginning to shrink; lending is just beginning to pick

up. The actions we have taken, I believe, have helped thaw the credit markets, which is the first step toward recovery."

· "I wasn't kidding when I said Wall Street got drunk and we got the hangover." "I understand. It's tough for a lot of working people out there. The people are concerned about their economic future."

President Bush: "I am concerned about protectionism." "In tough economic times, the temptation is to say, well, let's just throw up barriers and protect our own and not compete. ... A disappointment – not a mistake, but a disappointment – was not getting the three trade bills out of Congress on Colombia, Panama and South Korea. That was a disappointment."

· "[I]t would be a huge mistake if we become a protectionist nation." "The best way to enhance economic growth in a third world country and to give people a chance to realize a better future is through trade."

"The Stakes Are High. There Is An Enemy That Still Is Out There"

President Bush: "The most urgent threat that he'll have to deal with, and other Presidents after him will have to deal with, is an attack on our homeland. " "I wish I could report that's not the case, but there's still an enemy out there that would like to inflict damage on ... Americans. And that will be the major threat."

· "The stakes are high. There is an enemy that still is out there." "You know, people can maybe try to write that off as, you know, he's trying to set something up. I'm telling you there's an enemy that would like to attack America, Americans, again. There just is. That's the reality of the world."

President Bush: " [H]ard things don't happen overnight. " "[W]hen the history of Iraq is written, historians will analyze, for example, the decision on the surge. The situation ... looked like it was going fine and then violence for a period of time began to throw ... the progress of Iraq into doubt. And rather than accepting the status quo and saying, oh, it's not worth it or the politics makes it difficult or ... the party may end up ... not doing well in the elections because of the violence in Iraq, I decided to do something about it – and sent 30,000 troops in as opposed to withdrawing."

· "[T]hat part of history is certain, and the situation did change. " "Now the question is, in the long run, will this democracy survive? And that's going to be the challenge for future Presidents."

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President Bush: "I think Israel has a right to defend herself." "Obviously in any of these kinds of situations, I would hope that she would continue to be mindful of innocent folks, and that they help, you know, expedite the delivery of humanitarian aid. ... I hope so. I'm for a sustainable cease-fire. And a definition of a sustainable cease-fire is that Hamas stops firing rockets into Israel."

President Bush: "I disagree with this assessment that, you know, people view America in a dim light. I just don't agree with that." "I strongly disagree with the assessment that our moral standing has been damaged. It may be damaged amongst some of the elite, but people still understand America stands for freedom, that America is a country that provides such great hope. You go to Africa, you ask Africans about America's generosity and compassion; go to India, and ask about ... their view of America. Go to China and ask."

"Here At The Last Press Conference ... Mostly I'm Interested In Saying Thank You For The Job"

President Bush: "My friends say, what is it like to deal with the press corps? I said, these are just people trying to do the best they possibly can." "Sometimes didn't like the stories that you wrote or reported on. Sometimes you underestimated me. But always the relationship I have felt has been professional. And I appreciate it."

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· "We have been through a lot together." "Just seemed like yesterday that ... I was on the campaign trail and you were analyzing my speeches and my policies."

· "And so here at the last press conference ... mostly I'm interested in saying thank you for the job." "It has been a honor to work with you. ... I wish you all the very best. I wish you and your families all the best."

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

"The Policies of the Bush Administration 2001-2009," a collection of policy fact sheets, is now available on the White House website in PDF format at:

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[http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/Policies of the Bush Administratio
n.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/Policies_of_the_Bush_Administratio
n.pdf)

The Policies of the Bush Administration fact sheets are also available individually by topic in HTML format:

Protecting America/Global War On Terror: [President Bush Has Kept America Safe](#) , [Global War on Terror](#)

Freedom Agenda: [President Bush's Freedom Agenda Helped Protect The American People](#)

Military Transformation: [Transforming Our Armed Forces to Face the Threats of Today and Tomorrow](#)

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