THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 4, 2009

Today, we are called upon to remember not only the day our country was born, but also the indomitable spirit of the first American citizens who made that day possible. We are called to remember how unlikely it was that our American experiment would succeed at all; that a small band of patriots would declare independence from a powerful empire; and that they would form, in the new world, what the old world had never known—a government of, by, and for the people.

That unyielding spirit is what defines us as Americans. It is what led generations of pioneers to blaze a westward trail. It is what led my grandparents' generation to persevere in the face of a depression and triumph in the face of tyranny. It is what led generations of American workers to build an industrial economy unrivaled around the world. It is what has always led us, as a people, not to wilt or cower at a difficult moment, but to face down any trial and rise to any challenge, understanding that each of us has a hand in writing America's destiny.

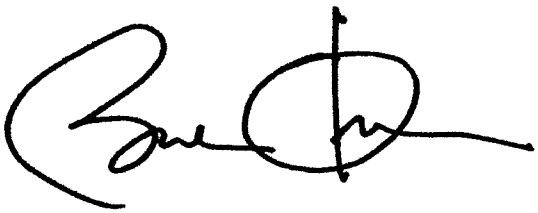
On this day, we also remember that during our most defining moments, it was brave and selfless men and women in uniform who defended and served our country with honor—waging war so that we might know peace; braving hardship so that we might know opportunity; and at times, paying the ultimate price so that we might know freedom. This service—the service of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen—makes our annual celebration of this day possible. This service proves that our founding ideals remain just as powerful and alive in our third century as a Nation as they did on the first July 4. This service guarantees that the United States of America shall forever remain the last, best hope on Earth.

All of us must call on this spirit of service and sacrifice to meet the challenges of our time. We are waging two wars. We are battling a deep recession. Our economy—and our Nation itself—are endangered by festering problems we have kicked down the road for far too long: spiraling health care costs, inadequate schools, and a dependence on foreign oil.

Meeting these extraordinary challenges will require an extraordinary effort on the part of every American. It will require us to remember that we did not get to where we are as a Nation by standing pat in a time of change. We did not get here

by doing what was easy. That is not how a cluster of thirteen colonies became the United States of America.

We are not a people who fear the future. We are a people who make it. On this July 4, we need to summon once more the spirit that inhabited Independence Hall two hundred and thirty-three years ago today.

That is how this generation of Americans will make its mark on history. That is how we will make the most of this extraordinary moment. And that is how we will write the next chapter in the great American story.

I wish you all the best for a happy Fourth of July.