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Statement by the George W. Bush Presidential Center on a phone call between President Bush and Dr. Óscar Elías Biscet González

Posted: 27 Mar 2012 01:25 PM PDT

Tuesday, March 27, 2012 (Dallas, TX) – This morning, President George W. Bush spoke via telephone to Dr. Óscar Elías Biscet González, a freedom advocate who has spent 12 years in Cuban prisons for expressing his beliefs. Founder of the Lawton Foundation for Human Rights, Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet remains in Cuba as a leading voice for the establishment of democracy in his country. President Bush expressed his admiration for Dr. Biscet and the Bush Center's support for those who seek liberty around the world.

During the call, he told Dr. Biscet that there is "one thing I want you to know that's for certain: I will continue to help as best I can. I want you to know there are a lot of people who admire you and respect you and will continue to pray for you, including me. To the extent we can, we will continue to press for not only your freedom, but the freedom of everyone who lives in your country."

He continued, "One thing I admire, Oscar, is your great faith. I think it's an example of what the Bible sets out: courage in the face of oppression. You're certainly living that out, and I really do pray for you."

Dr. Biscet thanked President Bush for his support and for the support of the American people. He said, "We couldn't do what we do without your help; we need your support. I want to thank you because when you remembered me, it gave me strength while I was imprisoned."

They spoke in advance of the launch of the website of the George W. Bush Institute's Freedom Collection, a living archive of the struggle for human freedom and democracy around the world. Using video interviews, the Freedom Collection documents the personal stories of brave men and women who have led or participated in freedom movements from the 20th century to the present day.

The Freedom Collection provides inspiration and insight to the current generation of freedom advocates and educates and informs those who live in free societies about the real challenges faced by those who live under tyranny and are fighting for their universal right to be free.

The Freedom Collection also includes a physical archive containing documents and artifacts from major freedom movements. At Wednesday's website launch, Dr. Angel E. Garrido, vice president of the Lawton Foundation for Human Rights, will donate artifacts to the physical archive on behalf of Dr. Biscet, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom which was awarded to him in absentia while he was in prison by President Bush.

The Presidential Medal of Freedom is the nation's highest civilian award. Dr. Biscet's children and directors of the Lawton Foundation attended the ceremony at the White House on Nov. 5, 2007. Dr. Biscet and 74 other Cuban advocates of freedom had been arrested in 2003 in what came to be known as the Black Spring. He requested that the Lawton Foundation for Human Rights hold the presidential medal until the time that Cuba is free. The medal will now be transferred to the Freedom Collection's physical archive for safekeeping until that time.

The Freedom Collection website will be launched on Wednesday, March 28, and can be viewed at www.freedomcollection.org . The launch event will be live-streamed at www.bushcenter.com at 5:45PM CDT.