

## Country needs to be conscious of economic casualties on the home front

John Burbank; News Tribune Columnist

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In the past three months our world has been turned upside down. This Thanksgiving is made somber by the attacks on America, the anthrax scare, the economic downturn and the uncertainty of what happens next. So it is fitting to reflect on the first official "National Day of Thanksgiving and Praise."

President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed this day for the last Thursday of November 1863, right in the middle of the Civil War, an odd time for Thanksgiving. Thousands of Americans were dead, dying or injured from the battles. The end of the war was not in sight. And yet Lincoln reviewed the "bounteous harvests that fall, respect for the rule of law, peace with other nations, the growth of industry and population, and the large increase of freedom anticipated in the nation's future." A little more than a year earlier, Lincoln had signed a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which became final and permanently binding on Jan. 1, 1863. As Lincoln would later say in his Second Inaugural Address, everyone knew at the beginning of the war that the enslavement of one-eighth of America's people "was somehow the cause of the war." The Emancipation Proclamation promised the "new birth of freedom" Lincoln envisioned for America.

So in the middle of the war, Lincoln called for this National Day of Thanksgiving, not a day of national mourning. It was a day to give thanks and to anticipate and appreciate a more peaceful and more just future.

This year we too can give thanks for the promise that is borne out of the ashes of Sept. 11. We do mourn for the victims of terror. But we cannot let terror win. We too can anticipate, appreciate and help create a future of national security, economic security, opportunity and hope in our country and throughout the world. The groundwork has already been laid. We have embraced a renewed sense of national civility, of caring for each other, of the recognition that we as citizens of this country are in this world together.

On Sept. 11, death did not discriminate among the bond traders, the janitors and the firefighters. We rediscovered that we Americans are not merely ego-gratifying individuals, but together we form a culture, a society and a nation. And as Americans we recognized the solidarity of the people of the world with us. Remember, it was in Europe on Sept. 14 that all traffic came to halt for three minutes of silence in respect for the victims of Sept. 11. This is a promise that goes beyond our country. To defeat terror, we must cooperate with other democracies. We must participate in the discussions of trade, finance and global warming as a leader and partner with other countries. Just as the French newspaper *Le Monde* ran its headline: "We are all Americans," so we Americans can see ourselves as citizens of the world. Perhaps the greatest thanks since Sept. 11 goes to our military. At their hands the Taliban have been defeated, and the modern-day slavery of Afghan women has been overturned. No longer are these women forbidden from work, education and even going outdoors. They can stand outside their homes and breathe the fresh air of freedom. Indeed, our neighbors from Fort Lewis, McChord Air Force Base and Whidbey Island Naval Station have done well waging a just war. And for this we give thanks. But we are close to failing at keeping up the home-front economy and helping those workers who find themselves, through no fault of their own, without jobs and health care, facing an uncertain position in the future work force. Unfortunately, many Boeing workers, also

our neighbors, do know what happens next - they walk out the door in early December with no job to come back to. And all this while Congress and the president fiddle over a jobs and economic stimulus package.

This November, our military has created hope and freedom for the people of Afghanistan. By next November, will we on the home front have done our part to create hope and economic security for the workers and citizens of our country? This is the promise of Thanksgiving.

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