

Administration of Barack Obama, 2014

Remarks at the National Governors Association Dinner

February 23, 2014

Good evening, everybody. Please have a seat. Have a seat. Well, welcome to the White House. Everybody looks fabulous. I am truly honored to be one of Michelle Obama's guests tonight here at dinner. *[Laughter]* I want to thank all the Governors and their better halves for being here tonight, especially your chair, Mary Fallin, and your vice chair, John Hickenlooper.

Tonight we want to make sure that all of you make yourselves at home, to which I'm sure some of you are thinking, that's been the plan all along. *[Laughter]* But keep in mind what a wise man once wrote: "I am more than contented to be Governor and shall not care if I never hold another office." Of course, that was Teddy Roosevelt. *[Laughter]* So I guess plans change.

I look forward to working with each of you not just in our meetings tomorrow, but throughout this year, what I hope to be a year of action. Our partnership on behalf of the American people on issues ranging from education to health care to climate change run deep, deeper than what usually hits the front page.

Being here tonight, I'm thinking about moments that I've spent with so many of you during the course of the year: with Governor Patrick at a hospital in Boston, seeing the survivors of the Boston bombing, seeing them fight through their wounds, determined to return to their families, but also realizing that a lot of lives were saved because of the preparations that Federal and State and local officials had carried out beforehand; with Governor Fallin at a firehouse in Moore, thanking first responders who risked their lives to save others after a devastating tornado, but once again seeing the kind of State-Federal cooperation that's so vital in these kinds of circumstances; spending time with Governor O'Malley at the Naval Academy graduation last spring and looking out over some of our newest sailors and marines as they join the greatest military in the world; and reminding ourselves that on national security issues, the contributions of the National Guard obviously are extraordinary, and all of you work so closely with them.

So if there's one thing in common in the moments like these, it's that our cooperation is vital to make sure that we're doing right by the American people. And what's common also is the incredible resilience and the goodness and the strength of the American people that we're so privileged to serve. And that resilience has carried us from the depths of the worst economic crisis in our lifetimes to what I am convinced can be a breakthrough year for America and the American people.

That, of course, will require that we collectively take action on what matters to them: jobs and opportunity. And when we've got a Congress that sometimes seems to have a difficult time acting, I want to make sure that I have the opportunity to partner with each of you in any way that I can to help more Americans work and study and strive and make sure that they see their efforts and their faith in this country rewarded.

I know we'll talk more about areas where we can work together tomorrow. So tonight I simply would like to propose a toast: To the families that support us, to the citizens that inspire us, and to this exceptional country that has given us so much. Cheers.

[At this point, a toast was offered.]

And with that, I would like to invite your chair, Governor Mary Fallin, to say a few words. Mary.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:11 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mary Fallin of Oklahoma, in her capacity as chair, and Gov. John W. Hickenlooper of Colorado, in his capacity as vice chair, of the National Governors Association; Gov. Deval L. Patrick of Massachusetts; and Gov. Martin J. O'Malley of Maryland.

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