

Administration of Barack Obama, 2015

Remarks at the Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation Ceremony
November 25, 2015

The President. Hello, everybody!

Audience members. Hello!

The President. Well, good afternoon. Everybody, have a seat.

[*At this point, the turkey gobbled.*]

The President. Feel free to keep on gobbling. [*Laughter*]

As you may have heard, for months, there has been a fierce competition between a bunch of turkeys trying their—win their way into the White House. [*Laughter*] Some of you caught that. Well, today I can announce that the American people have spoken, and we have two winners. Their names are Honest and Abe. I confess that Honest looks like good eating. But this is a democracy. Abe is now a free bird. He is TOTUS, the Turkey of the United States. [*Laughter*] Yes. Simas, is he attacking you? Are you okay? My political director is getting pecked by TOTUS. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank the Chairman of the National Turkey Federation, Dr. Douglas, as well as farmer Joe Hedden, who personally raised this turkey in California's Central Valley.

America is, after all, a country of second chances, and this turkey has earned a second chance to live out the rest of his life comfortably on 1,000 acres of open land, complete with a barn called the White House on Turkey Hill—[*laughter*]—which actually sounds pretty good.

If for some reason Abe can't fulfill his duties to walk around and gobble all day—[*laughter*]—Honest is in an undisclosed location, ready to serve as the TOTUS—in the TOTUS line of succession.

[*The turkey gobbled.*]

The President. [*Laughter*] Yes. Oh, boy.

Malia Obama. Okay, that's funny.

The President. By the way, can I just—I am going to publicly thank Malia and Sasha for once again standing here with me during the turkey pardon. [*Laughter*] They do this solely because it makes me feel good—[*laughter*]—not because they actually think that this is something I should be doing. [*Laughter*] And of—as you get older, you appreciate when your kids just indulge you like this, so I—I am very grateful.

Where was I? [*Laughter*] Later today Michelle, Malia, Sasha, and I will take some of the less fortunate turkey brothers with us—they will have been packed and frozen—to help serve a Thanksgiving meal to homeless veterans here in DC. And it's a reminder not only of the spirit of giving during this holiday season, but our national obligation to make sure all those who serve and sacrifice [for]^{*} our country have a place to call home. My administration considers this one of our top priorities, making sure that we're bringing about the reality of zero homelessness for our veterans.

^{*} White House correction.

And I want to thank Jaindl Turkey Farm in Pennsylvania for donating the turkeys for us to share with others for the seventh year in a row. It is hard to believe that this is my seventh year of pardoning a turkey. Time flies, even if turkeys don't. *[Laughter]*

Sasha Obama. That was good. That was good.

The President. I thought it was pretty good.

Malia Obama. Yes. *[Laughter]*

The President. I——

[A child in the audience giggled.]

The President. You think it's funny too, don't you?

I know some folks think this tradition is a little silly. I do not disagree. *[Laughter]* I've got to listen to my critics say I'm often too soft on turkeys. And I'm sure the press is digging into whether or not the turkeys I've pardoned have really rededicated their lives to being good turkey citizens.

But I do enjoy this chance to wish America a happy Thanksgiving. We go through challenging times, and so often, the news of the day can make folks discouraged. But the fact is, is that we live in the greatest country on Earth, and we are blessed in so many ways, most of all, because we have families and friends and people we care about. We look out for each other. We looked out for our neighbors and our friends. We're grateful for the brave men and women of our military who serve all around the world and for the families that miss them. I'm especially grateful to have the privilege and the honor to serve as your President.

So I'm also grateful for the fact that the Bears are going to beat the Packers this weekend.

With that, I hope that everybody has a very, very happy Thanksgiving. And I now am going to go over and, with the power vested in me, officially pardon this turkey.

[At this point, the President left the podium and walked toward the turkey.]

Foster Farms manager Joe Hedden. All right, you can just stand there.

The President. Are we going to put him on the pardoning table?

[The President gestured toward his daughters Sasha and Malia.]

You staying away?

Sasha Obama. Yes.

Malia Obama. Yes.

The President. All right. Yes. All right.

[As the President gestured with his hand, the turkey gobbled.]

Don't interrupt. *[Laughter]* By the power vested in me, you are hereby pardoned. Give them—give Abe a big round of applause.

[The turkey gobbled.]

Yes. I'm telling you, he's a natural. All right, see you guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:44 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Thanksgiving turkey presentation ceremony.

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