

possible. And thanks to Secretary Gates, some of the reforms that they've talked about are already beginning to take shape. And I've asked him to work with Senators Levin and McCain on developing this legislation as it moves forward. And Bill Lynn, who is heading up procurement issues at our White House as Deputy Secretary of Defense, is going to be leading the charge on this as well.

I can assure you that this will be a priority for my administration. It's time to end the extra costs and long delays that are all too common in our defense contracting. We need to invest in technologies that are proven and cost-effective. We need more competition for contracts and more oversight as they're carried out. If a system isn't ready to be developed, we shouldn't pour resources into it. And if a system is plagued by cost overruns, it should be reformed. No more excuses, no more delays. The days of giving defense contractors a blank check are over.

Now, none of this will be easy. We'll have to end old ways of doing business. We'll have to take on entrenched special interests. We'll have to break bad habits that have built up over many years. But we can't keep spending good money after bad. All across America, families are making hard choices, and now

we're going to have to do the same. I can promise you that this is just the beginning of a new way of doing business here in Washington, because the American people have every right to expect and to demand a Government that is more efficient, more accountable, and more responsible in keeping the public's trust.

And I also want to acknowledge a couple of Congressmen—Congressman Towns and Congressman Welch, who have been working diligently on this issue, and Claire McCaskill in the Senate, who has been sharpening her pencils and working with IGs across departments to see if we can make some significant reforms and improvements as well.

And again, thank you to Senators McCain and Senators Levin for their outstanding leadership on this issue. We look forward to getting it done. This is going to be just one more aspect of the kind of reform that's going to be critical in the months and years to come.

Thank you everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Peter R. Orszag, Director, Office of Management and Budget.

## Remarks at a Dinner for Congressional Committee Chairs

March 4, 2009

Everybody, please be seated. Do not fear, no long speeches here. [*Laughter*] We just want to say welcome on behalf of Michelle and myself. We're so glad all of you could join us.

Obviously, the country is going through an extraordinarily difficult time, and we are going to have some monumental debates taking place over the next several months and years. We also know that we're not always going to agree on everything. But given how hard so many of you are working on both sides of the aisle, day in, day out, we thought it was important for us to be able to step back for a moment, remind ourselves that we have things in common—family, friends, laughter—and hopefully, we'll have a chance to appreciate

each other a little bit, take a timeout before we dive back into the game.

So we hope you have a wonderful evening—not to mention the fact that this is a pretty big house, so we get lonely. [*Laughter*] So—and it's hard for me to move around out there sometimes so I've got to bring the world to me.

But, anyway, I'm grateful for all of you coming. Michelle is thrilled that you're here. And we hope you just have a wonderful evening.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:43 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.