

changed my mind, in some cases they didn't. And that's okay, because we're not going to agree on everything. But I know this: Their voices and their views and their criticism ultimately will make my decisions better. They will make me ask tougher questions and ask my staffs tougher questions. And we'll find out: Are there ways of doing what we need to do that conform to our deepest held values and our ideals and that are sustainable over the long term? That makes our country stronger in the long term, and I wouldn't want it any other way.

So this summit reminds us: The fresh starts have to be between more than just two Presidents. They have to be between our two peoples, our two societies. They have to be more than just common security, the cold war weapons we dismantle. It must be about our common opportunity, the future of progress and prosperity that we build together.

And I think that the leadership here in Russia, both civil and governmental, understand this. I had lunch with President Medvedev this afternoon, and we started talking about health issues and the continuing high mortality rate among Russian men in particular. And we talked about alcoholism, and we talked about smoking. And we talked about the fact that government programs can be initiated, but to the extent that there's been success in the United States around reducing smoking levels,

it's not only a matter of changing laws, it's also been changing attitudes, so that people feel that they need to change. And they internalize these different attitudes. That's something that civic society can do in a way that government never can. I then met the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, and he talked about how, you know, government exchanges are useful, but religious organizations, they can help melt away the suspicions and mistrust that have built between people over time.

So just in those two conversations, in the span of 15 minutes, essentially what I heard was a call for action from you. Confidence that what you are doing matters, even when sometimes it seems hard and it seems as if nobody is listening. That's what our work here on Earth must be about, what Tolstoy called the "sole meaning of life . . . to serve humanity." Now, thank you for making that cause the meaning of your lives. And good luck to all of you.

Spasibo.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:38 p.m. at the Metropol Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Calvin L. Holmes, executive director, Chicago Community Loan Fund; Yuri Dzhibladze, president, Center for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights; President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia; and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

Statement on Health Care Reform

July 7, 2009

I am pleased by the progress we're making on health care reform and still believe, as I've said before, that one of the best ways to bring down costs, provide more choices, and assure

quality is a public option that will force the insurance companies to compete and keep them honest. I look forward to a final product that achieves these very important goals.

Remarks During a Meeting With Opposition Leaders in Moscow

July 7, 2009

[*The President's remarks were joined in progress.*]

—not simply tolerate dissenting voices but also to respect and recognize dissenting

voices. This is one of the elements, along with an independent media and adherence to the rule of law, that has helped to solidify our own Government during some very difficult times. I said in my remarks recently that the fact that