

provide better health care coverage; we can make sure that we use less foreign oil and develop clean energy here in the United States; that we can make our school system work for every child and not just some, and produce more scientists and engineers that are going to be the key to unlocking a 21st-century economy.

We understood that we're human and government is a human enterprise, so it's imperfect, but we can do better than we've been doing. And this debate that we're having right now, this health care debate, is a test to that proposition. There are a whole bunch of folks in this town who were just waiting for this debate to take place, because the storyline they want to write about is, all the naive, idealistic folks—"change we can believe in," "yes we can"—that all their hopes were dashed, because this is a tough, cynical town, and we are going to be able to show them that basically you can't get anything done in this town. You can't change things. Everything always immediately becomes

partisan. Government's way too complicated and Congress is way too paralyzed and the special interests are way too powerful to bring about meaningful, big changes that help the American people.

That's the storyline they're operating on, but that's the storyline we've been fighting against this entire time. From the day we announced this race, we were fighting against that. And they have been trying to write that story again and again and again. We are not going to give up now. We are not going to give up now. We are going to get this done and show the American people that Government can work for them.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:45 p.m. at Democratic National Committee Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to volunteer Beth Kimbriel, Chester, VA, who introduced the President; Gov. Timothy M. Kaine of Virginia; and Sen. Johnny Isakson.

Remarks on the Presidential and Provincial Elections in Afghanistan and an Exchange With Reporters

August 21, 2009

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. I want to say a few words about this week's election in Afghanistan. This was an important step forward in the Afghan's people's efforts to take control of their future, even as violent extremists are trying to stand in their way.

This election was run by the Afghan people. In fact, it was the first democratic election run by Afghans in over three decades. More than 30 Presidential candidates and more than 3,000 Provincial council candidates ran for office, including a record number of women. Some 6,000 polling stations were open around the country, and Afghan National Security Forces took the lead in providing security.

Over the last few days, and particularly yesterday, we've seen acts of violence and intimidation by the Taliban, and there may be more in the days to come. We knew that the Taliban would try to derail this election. Yet even in the face of this brutality, millions of Afghans exer-

cised the right to choose their leaders and determine their own destiny. And as I watched the election, I was struck by their courage in the face of intimidation and their dignity in the face of disorder.

There is a clear contrast between those who seek to control their future at the ballot box and those who kill to prevent that from happening. Once again, extremists in Afghanistan have shown themselves willing to murder innocent Muslims—men, women, and children—to advance their aims. But I believe that the future belongs to those who want to build, not those who want to destroy. And that is the future that was sought by the Afghans who went to the polls and the Afghan National Security Forces who protected them.

The United States did not support any candidate in this election. Our only interest was the result fairly, accurately reflecting the will of the Afghan people. And that is what we will

continue to support as the votes are counted and we wait for the official results from the Afghan independent electoral commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission.

Meanwhile, we will continue to work with our Afghan partners to strengthen Afghan security, governance, and opportunity. Our goal is clear: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida and their extremist allies. That goal will be achieved—and our troops will be able to come home—as Afghans continue to strengthen their own capacity and take responsibility for their own future.

Our men and women in uniform are doing an extraordinary job in Afghanistan; so are the civilians who serve by their side. All of them are in our thoughts and prayers, as are their families back home. This is not a challenge that we asked for; it came to our shores when Al Qaida launched the 9/11 attacks from Afghanistan. But America, our allies and partners, and above all, the Afghan people share a common interest in pursuing security, opportunity, and justice.

We look forward to renewing our partnership with the Afghan people as they move

ahead under a new Government. I want to again congratulate the Afghanistan people on carrying out this historic election and wish them a blessed month as they come together to welcome the beginning of Ramadan.

Thanks very much, everybody.

Release of Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed Al-Megrahi

Q. What about the hero's welcome in Libya, sir?

Q. Do you consider Libya a terrorist state, sir?

The President. I think it was highly objectionable.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:39 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. A reporter referred to Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed Al-Megrahi, a Libyan intelligence officer convicted of murder at the Scottish Court in the Netherlands on December 21, 1988, for the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Videotaped Remarks on the Observance of Ramadan

August 21, 2009

On behalf of the American people, including Muslim communities in all 50 States, I want to extend best wishes to Muslims in America and around the world: *Ramadan Kareem*.

Ramadan is the month in which Muslims believe the Koran was revealed to the prophet Muhammad, beginning with a simple word, *iqra*. It is therefore a time when Muslims reflect upon the wisdom and guidance that comes with faith and the responsibility that human beings have to one another and to God.

Like many people of different faiths who have seen Ramadan through our communities and families, I know this to be a festive time, a time when families gather and meals are shared. But I also know that Ramadan is a time of intense devotion and reflection, a time when Muslims fast during the day and perform *tarawih* prayers at night, reciting and lis-

tening to the entire Koran over the course of the month.

These rituals remind us of the principles that we hold in common and Islam's role in advancing justice, progress, tolerance, and the dignity of all human beings. For instance, fasting is a concept shared by many faiths, including my own Christian faith, as a way to bring people closer to God and to those among us who cannot take their next meal for granted. And the support that Muslims provide to others recalls our responsibility to advance opportunity and prosperity for people everywhere. For all of us must remember that the world we want to build and the changes that we want to make must begin in our own hearts and our own communities.

This summer, people across America have served in their communities, educating children, caring for the sick, and extending a hand