

protested that it was a part of her religion. The Department of Justice stood behind her, and she won her right to practice her faith. She even traveled to Washington to testify before Congress. Her words spoke to a tolerance that is far greater than mistrust; when she first wore her headscarf to school, she said, "I received compliments from the other kids."

Another young woman who has thrived in her school is Bilqis Abdul-Qaadir. She's not even 5'5"—where's Bilqis? Right here. Stand up, Bilqis, just so that we—[laughter]—I want everybody to know—she's got heels on. She's 5'5"—Bilqis broke Rebecca Lobo's record for the most points scored by any high school basketball player in Massachusetts history. She recently told a reporter, "I'd like to really inspire a lot of young Muslim girls if they want to play basketball. Anything is possible. They can do it too." As an honor student, as an athlete on her way to Memphis, Bilqis is an inspiration not simply to Muslim girls, she's an inspiration to all of us.

Of course, we know that when it comes to athletes who have inspired America, any list would include the man known simply as "The Greatest." And while Muhammad Ali could not join us tonight, it is worth reflecting upon his remarkable contributions, as he's grown from an unmatched fighter in the ring to a man of quiet dignity and grace who continues to fight for what he believes, and that includes the notion that people of all faiths hold things in common. I love this quote. A few years ago, he explained this view—and this is part of why he's "The Greatest"—saying, "Rivers, ponds, lakes, and streams—they all have different names, but they all contain water. Just as religions do—they all contain truths."

They all contain truths. Among those truths are the pursuit of peace and the dignity of all human beings. That must always form the basis upon which we find common ground. And that is why I am so pleased that we are joined tonight not only by so many outstanding Muslim Americans and representatives of the diplomatic corps, but people of many faiths—Christians, Jews, and Hindus—along with so many prominent Muslims.

Together, we have a responsibility to foster engagement grounded in mutual interest and mutual respect. And that's one of my fundamental commitments as President, both at home and abroad. That's the—that is central to the new beginning that I've sought between the United States and Muslims around the world. And that is a commitment that we can renew once again during this holy season.

So tonight we celebrate a great religion and its commitment to justice and progress. We honor the contributions of America's Muslims and the positive example that so many of them set through their own lives. And we rededicate ourselves to the work of building a better and more hopeful world.

So thanks to all of you for taking the time to be here this evening. I wish you all a very blessed Ramadan. And with that, I think we can start a feast. I don't know what's on the menu, but I'm sure it will be good. [Laughter] Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:08 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Reps. Keith Ellison and Andre Carson; Rebecca Lobo, forward, Women's National Basketball Association Connecticut Sun; and Marty Dobrow, reporter, Boston Globe newspaper.

## Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Designating Supplemental Funds To Enhance Capabilities To Combat the Global Influenza Outbreak

September 2, 2009

Dear Madam Speaker:

Within the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2009 (Public Law 111-32), Congress ap-

propriated \$7.65 billion to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for the 2009-H1N1 influenza outbreak, including a

\$5.8 billion contingent appropriation for an influenza pandemic. As you know, my Administration is actively responding to H1N1 and has appropriately utilized the emergency appropriations that Congress provided for development and procurement of 2009–H1N1 vaccine, domestic and international surveillance activities, and continuing to prepare for an immunization campaign this fall.

On July 16, 2009, I designated \$1.825 billion of the contingent appropriation as emergency funds required to address critical needs related to emerging influenza viruses (specifically, the virus known as 2009–H1N1). To further enhance our Nation's capability to respond to the potential spread of this outbreak, in accordance with the appropriation, I hereby designate an additional \$2.716 billion to support the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Health and Human Services, State, and

Veterans Affairs to support the procurement of vaccine product and supplies, antiviral medications, preparations for a vaccination campaign, and agency preparedness activities.

There continues to be much uncertainty about the severity of the outbreak this fall during the northern hemisphere flu season. A vaccine is under development and currently being tested for safety and efficacy. Results from the clinical trials, along with the latest information regarding the evolution of the 2009–H1N1 virus and the worldwide outbreaks, will inform our decisions regarding the national response.

We will communicate with you further in the future should additional funds be required.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

## The President's Weekly Address *September 5, 2009*

As we spend time with family and friends this Labor Day weekend, many of us will also be thinking about the state of working America. Yesterday we received a report showing that job losses have slowed dramatically compared to just a few months ago. Earlier in the week, we learned that the manufacturing sector has posted its first gains in 18 months and that many of the banks that borrowed money at the height of the financial crisis are now returning it to taxpayers with interest.

These are only the most recent signs that the economy is turning around, though these signs are of little comfort to those who've experienced the pain of losing a job in the previous month or in the previous 2 years of this recession. That's why it's so important that we remain focused on speeding our economic recovery. Throughout America today, tens of thousands of recovery projects are underway, repairing our Nation's roads, bridges, ports, and waterways, renovating schools, and developing renewable energy. We're putting Americans back to work doing the work America needs done, and mostly in private sector jobs.

But even as we take aggressive steps to put people back to work, it's also important that we keep faith with men and women looking back on a lifetime of labor, hard-working Americans who deserve to know that their efforts have resulted in a secure future, including a secure retirement. For this recession has not only led to the loss of jobs, but also the loss of savings. The drop in home values, for example, has also meant a drop in the value of the single largest investment most families have. And the decline in the financial markets has led to a decline in the value of 401(k)s and other sources of savings and retirement security. As a result, over the past 2 years, the American people have lost about \$2 trillion in retirement savings.

This carries a painful toll. I've heard from so many who have had to put off retirement or come out of retirement to make ends meet. I've heard from seniors who worked hard their whole lives, but now, in their golden years, are unsure of where to turn to pay the bills, afford the prescriptions, or keep the home in which they raised a family. And having too little in savings not only leaves people financially ill-prepared