

he referred to Dan Bylsma, head coach, Pittsburgh Penguins; and William O'Ree, Director

of Youth Development, National Hockey League.

Remarks at a Wreath-Laying Ceremony at the Pentagon Memorial in Arlington, Virginia *September 11, 2009*

Secretary Gates, Admiral Mullen, and members of the Armed Forces, fellow Americans, family and friends of those that we lost this day: Michelle and I are deeply humbled to be with you. Eight Septembers have come and gone. Nearly 3,000 days have passed—almost one for each of those taken from us—but no turning of the seasons can diminish the pain and the loss of that day. No passage of time and no dark skies can ever dull the meaning of this moment.

So on this solemn day, at this sacred hour, once more we pause. Once more we pray as a nation and as a people, in city streets where our two towers were turned to ashes and dust, in a quiet field where a plane fell from the sky, and here, where a single stone of this building is still blackened by the fires.

We remember with reverence the lives we lost. We read their names; we press their photos to our hearts. And on this day that marks their death, we recall the beauty and meaning of their lives, men and women and children of every color and every creed, from across our Nation and from more than 100 others. They were innocent. Harming no one, they went about their daily lives. Gone in a horrible instant, they now “dwell in the House of the Lord forever.”

We honor all those who gave their lives so that others might live and all the survivors who battled burns and wounds and helped each other rebuild their lives, men and women who gave life to that most simple of rules: I am my brother's keeper; I am my sister's keeper.

We pay tribute to the service of a new generation, young Americans raised in a time of peace and plenty who saw their Nation in its hour of need and said, “I choose to serve. I will do my part.” And once more we grieve. For you and your families, no words can ease the ache of your heart, no deeds can fill the empty

places in your homes. But on this day and all that follow, you may find solace in the memory of those you loved, and know that you have the unending support of the American people.

Scripture teaches us a hard truth: The mountains may fall and the Earth may give way; the flesh and the heart may fail. But after all our suffering, God and grace will “restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast.” So it is, so it has been for these families, so it must be for our Nation.

Let us renew our resolve against those who perpetrated this barbaric act and who plot against us still. In defense of our Nation, we will never waver; in pursuit of Al Qaida and its extremist allies, we will never falter.

Let us renew our commitment to all those who serve in our defense, our courageous men and women in uniform and their families and all those who protect us here at home. Mindful that the work of protecting America is never finished, we will do everything in our power to keep America safe.

Let us renew the true spirit of that day. Not the human capacity for evil, but the human capacity for good. Not the desire to destroy, but the impulse to save and to serve and to build. On this first National Day of Service and Remembrance, we can summon once more that ordinary goodness of America to serve our communities, to strengthen our country, and to better our world.

Most of all, on a day when others sought to sap our confidence, let us renew our common purpose. Let us remember how we came together as one Nation, as one people, as Americans, united not only in our grief, but in our resolve to stand with one another, to stand up for the country we all love.

This may be the greatest lesson of this day, the strongest rebuke to those who attacked us, the highest tribute to those taken from us, that

such sense of purpose need not be a fleeting moment. It can be a lasting virtue. For through their own lives and through you, the loved ones that they left behind, the men and women who lost their lives 8 years ago today leave a legacy that still shines brightly in the darkness and that calls on all of us to be strong and firm and unit-

ed. That is our calling today and in all the Septembers still to come.

May God bless you and comfort you. And may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:34 a.m. at the Pentagon.

The President's Weekly Address *September 12, 2009*

On Wednesday, I addressed a joint session of Congress and the American people about why we need health insurance reform and what it will take to do it. Since then, I've continued to hear from many Americans across the country about why this is so urgent and important.

I've heard from Americans who can't get health coverage, men and women who worry that one accident or illness could drive them into bankruptcy. And I've heard from Americans with insurance who thought that "the uninsured" always referred to someone else, but between skyrocketing costs and insurance company practices, they're beginning to worry that they could find themselves uninsured too.

It's an anxiety that's keeping more and more Americans awake at night. Over the last 12 months, nearly 6 million more Americans lost their health coverage; that's 17,000 men and women every single day. We're not just talking about Americans in poverty, either; we're talking about middle class Americans. In other words, it can happen to anyone.

And based on a brand new report from the Treasury Department, we can expect that about half of all Americans under 65 will lose their health coverage at some point over the next 10 years. If you're under the age of 21 today, chances are more than half that you'll find yourself uninsured at some point in that time. And more than one-third of Americans will go without coverage for longer than 1 year.

I refuse to allow that future to happen. In the United States of America, no one should have to worry that they'll go without health insurance, not for 1 year, not for 1 month, not for 1 day. And once I sign my health reform plan into law, they won't. My plan will provide more security and stability to those who have health in-

surance, offer quality, affordable choices to those who currently don't, and bring health care costs for our families, our businesses, and our Government under control.

First of all, if you are among the hundreds of millions of Americans who already have insurance through your job or Medicare or Medicaid or the VA, nothing in my plan will require you or your employer to change the coverage or the doctor you have.

What my plan will do is make the insurance you have work better for you. We'll make it illegal for insurance companies to deny you coverage because of a preexisting condition or drop your coverage when you get sick or water it down when you need it the most. They'll no longer be able to place some arbitrary cap on the amount of coverage you can receive in a given year or over a lifetime, and we will place a limit on how much you can be charged for out-of-pocket expenses, because no one should go broke just because they get sick.

Second, if you're one of the more than 30 million Americans who can't get coverage, you'll finally have quality, affordable choices. If you lose your job, change your job, or start your own business, you will be able to get coverage.

And as I have said over and over again, I will not sign a plan that adds one dime to our deficits, period. This plan will be paid for. The middle class will realize greater security, not higher taxes. And if we can successfully slow the growth of health care costs by just one-tenth of 1 percent each year, it will actually reduce the deficit by \$4 trillion over the long term.

Affordable, quality care within the reach of tens of millions of Americans who don't have it today, stability and security for the hundreds of millions who do, that's the reform we seek. We