

they're worried they may not be able to kill this agency, they're trying their hardest to weaken it, by asking for exemptions from this agency's rules and enforcement, by fighting to keep every gap and loophole they can find.

They're very good at this, because that's how business has been done in Washington for a very long time. In fact, over the last 10 years, the chamber alone spent nearly half a billion dollars on lobbying—half a billion dollars.

And the stories we heard today, they remind us that the American people can't afford business as usual any longer. These Americans can't afford high-priced lobbyists to argue their case. They're counting on us to be their advocates, to be their voice, to restore a sense of responsibility from Wall Street to Washington. That's why we need a consumer financial protection agency that will stand up not for big banks, not for financial firms, but for hard-working Americans. And that's why we need regulatory reform that will reward innovation and competition instead of shortcuts and abuses. That's why we can't let special interests win this fight.

We've already seen and lived the consequences of what happens when there's too little accountability on Wall Street and too little

protection for Main Street, and I will not allow this country to go back there. It is time for us to move forward. It is time for real change. And I'm confident that we're going to get it done, with the help of all the people who are here today, and, most importantly, with the help of the American people, who are going to demand a better deal from their financial services.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:37 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Patricia Nelson, retired nursing home aid, who introduced the President; Lawrence H. Summers, Director, National Economic Council; Susan Chapman, administrative assistant, College of Staten Island, NY; Karen Cappuccio, Transportation Security Administration supervisor, Lehigh Valley Airport, PA; Maxine Given, senior director of finance and administration, Fund for John Hopkins Medicine, MD; and Andrew Giordano, retired police officer, Locust Point, MD. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Canonization of Father Damien De Veuster

October 9, 2009

I wish to express my deep admiration for the life of Blessed Damien De Veuster, who will be canonized on Sunday by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. I also want to convey my best wishes to the Kingdom of Belgium and its people, who are proud to count Fr. Damien among their great citizens.

Fr. Damien has also earned a special place in the hearts of Hawaiians. I recall many stories from my youth about his tireless work there to care for those suffering from leprosy who had been cast out. Following in the steps of Jesus' ministry to the lepers, Fr. Damien

challenged the stigmatizing effects of disease, giving voice to the voiceless and, ultimately, sacrificing his own life to bring dignity to so many.

In our own time as millions around the world suffer from disease, especially the pandemic of HIV/AIDS, we should draw on the example of Fr. Damien's resolve in answering the urgent call to heal and care for the sick.

I offer my prayers as people of all faiths join the Holy Father and millions of Catholics around the world in celebrating Fr. Damien's extraordinary life and witness.

The President's Weekly Address *October 10, 2009*

The historic movement to bring real, meaningful health insurance reform to the American people gathered momentum this week as we approach the final days of this debate. Having worked on this issue for the better part of a year, the Senate Finance Committee is finishing deliberations on their version of a health insurance reform bill that will soon be merged with other reform bills produced by other congressional committees.

After evaluating the Finance Committee's bill, the Congressional Budget Office, an office that provides independent, nonpartisan analysis, concluded that the legislation would make coverage affordable for millions of Americans who don't have it today. It will bring greater security to Americans who have coverage with new insurance protections. And, by attacking waste and fraud within the system, it will slow the growth in health care costs without adding a dime to our deficits. This is another milestone on what's been a long, hard road toward health insurance reform.

In recent months, we've heard every side of every argument from both sides of the aisle, and rightly so. Health insurance reform is a complex and critical issue that deserves a vigorous national debate, and we've had one. The approach that is emerging includes the best ideas from Republicans and Democrats and people across the political spectrum.

In fact, what's remarkable is not that we've had a spirited debate about health insurance reform, but the unprecedented consensus that has come together behind it. This consensus encompasses everyone from doctors and nurses to hospitals and drug manufacturers.

And earlier this week, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger of California and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg came out in support of reform, joining two former Republican Senate majority leaders: Bob Dole and Dr. Bill Frist, himself a cardiac surgeon. Dr. Louis Sullivan, Secretary of Health and Human Services under President George H.W. Bush, sup-

ports reform, as does Republican Tommy Thompson, a former Wisconsin Governor and Secretary of Health and Human Services under President George W. Bush. These distinguished leaders understand that health insurance reform isn't a Democratic issue or a Republican issue, but an American issue that demands a solution.

Still, there are some in Washington today who seem determined to play the same old partisan politics, working to score political points, even if it means burdening this country with an unsustainable status quo: a status quo of rising health care costs that are crushing our families, our businesses, and our government; a status quo of diminishing coverage that's denying millions of hard-working Americans the insurance they need; a status quo that gives big insurance companies the power to make arbitrary decisions about your health care. That's a status quo I reject and that's a status quo the American people reject.

The distinguished former congressional leaders who urged us to act on health insurance reform spoke of the historic moment at hand and reminded us that this moment will not soon come again. They called on members of both parties to seize this opportunity to finally confront a problem that has plagued us for far too long.

That is what we are called to do at this moment. That is the spirit of national purpose that we must summon right now. Now is the time to rise above the politics of the moment. Now is the time to come together as Americans. Now is the time to meet our responsibilities to ourselves and to our children and secure a better, healthier future for generations to come. That future is within our grasp. So let's go finish the job.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 12 p.m. on October 9 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for