

he's the Secretary of Defense, and I am so glad to have him here. Please give a big—Bob Gates a big round of applause.

So today was about service. All of you are showing why I feel inspired and I get up every day even when I'm a little pooped, is because I know that there are young people and a next generation that's coming out here and is going to make this country better and is going to protect this country. You guys are symbols of that.

And so we are just very appreciative of everything you do. Know that your Commander in Chief draws inspiration from you.

All right, now I'm going to try to shake as many hands as possible.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:18 p.m. in the Marine Corps Mess Hall at Texas A&M University. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Message to the Congress on Trade With Haiti *October 16, 2009*

To the Congress of the United States:

The Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement Act of 2008 (HOPE II) (the "Act") (Public Law 110–246), amended the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (CBERA) to make certain additional products from Haiti eligible for preferential tariff treatment. Under HOPE II, these imports from Haiti will continue to be eligible for preferential treatment after October 18, 2009, if I determine and certify that Haiti has met certain eligibility criteria set out in the Act.

Since enactment of HOPE II, Haiti has issued a decree establishing an independent labor ombudsman's office, and the President of Haiti has selected a labor ombudsman following consultation with unions and industry representatives. In addition, Haiti, in cooperation with the International Labor Organization, has established a Technical Assistance Improvement and Compliance Needs Assessment and

Remediation (TAICNAR) Program. Haiti has also implemented an electronic visa system that acts as a registry of Haitian producers of articles eligible for duty-free treatment and has made participation in the TAICNAR Program a condition of using this visa system.

In light of these actions and in accordance with section 213A of CBERA, as amended, I have determined and hereby certify that Haiti: (i) has implemented the requirements set forth in sections 213A(e)(2) and (e)(3); and (ii) is requiring producers of articles for which duty-free treatment may be requested under section 213A(b) to participate in the TAICNAR Program and has developed a system to ensure participation in such program by such producers, including by developing and maintaining a registry of producers.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
October 16, 2009.

The President's Weekly Address *October 17, 2009*

Over the better part of the past year, a great debate has taken place in Washington and across America about how to reform our health care system to provide security for people with insurance, coverage for those without insurance, and lower costs for everyone. From the Halls of Congress to the homes of ordinary Americans, this debate has helped us to forge

consensus and find common ground. That's a good thing; that's what America is all about.

Now, as the debate draws to a close, we can point to a broad and growing coalition of doctors and nurses, workers and businesses, hospitals and even drug companies—folks who represent different parties and perspectives, including leading Democrats and many

leading Republicans—who recognize the urgency of action. Just this week, the Senate Finance Committee approved a reform proposal that has both Democratic and Republican support. For the first time ever, all five committees in Congress responsible for health reform have passed a version of legislation. As I speak to you today, we are closer to reforming the health care system than we have ever been in history.

But this is not the time to pat ourselves on the back. This is not the time to grow complacent. There are still significant details and disagreements to be worked out in the coming weeks. And there are still those who would try to kill reform at any cost. The history is clear: For decades, rising health care costs have unleashed havoc on families, businesses, and the economy, and for decades, whenever we have tried to reform the system, the insurance companies have done everything in their considerable power to stop us.

We know that this inaction has carried a terrible toll. In the past decade, premiums have doubled. Over the past few years, total out-of-pocket costs for people with insurance rose by a third. And we know that if we do not reform the system, this will only be a preview of coming attractions. A new report for the Business Roundtable, a nonpartisan group that represents the CEOs of major companies, found that without significant reform, health care costs for these employers and their employees will well more than double again over the next decade. The cost per person for health insurance will rise by about \$18,000. That's a huge amount of money. That's going to mean lower salaries and higher unemployment, lower profits and higher rolls of uninsured. It's no exaggeration to say that unless we act, these costs will devastate the U.S. economy.

This is the unsustainable path we're on, and it's the path the insurers want to keep us on. In fact, the insurance industry is rolling out the big guns and breaking out their massive war chest to marshal their forces for one last fight to save the status quo. They're filling the airwaves with deceptive and dishonest ads. They're flooding Capitol Hill with lobbyists and campaign contributions, and they're funding studies designed to mislead the American people.

Of course, like clockwork, we've seen folks on cable television who know better waving these industry-funded studies in the air. We've seen industry insiders and their apologists citing these studies as proof of claims that just aren't true. They'll claim that premiums will go up under reform, but they know that the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office found that reforms will lower premiums in a new insurance exchange while offering consumers protections that will limit out-of-pocket costs and prevent discrimination based on preexisting conditions. They'll claim that you'll have to pay more out of pocket, but they know that this is based on a study that willfully ignores whole sections of the bill, including tax credits and cost savings that will greatly benefit middle class families. Even the authors of one of these studies have now admitted publicly that the insurance companies actually asked them to do an incomplete job.

It's smoke and mirrors, it's bogus, and it's all too familiar. Every time we get close to passing reform, the insurance companies produce these phony studies as a prescription and say, "Take one of these and call us in a decade." Well, not this time. The fact is, the insurance industry is making this last-ditch effort to stop reform even as costs continue to rise and our health care dollars continue to be poured into their profits, bonuses, and administrative costs that do nothing to make us healthy, that often actually go toward figuring out how to avoid covering people. And they're earning these profits and bonuses while enjoying a privileged exception from our antitrust laws, a matter that Congress is rightfully reviewing.

Now, I welcome a good debate. I welcome the chance to defend our proposals and to test our ideas in the fires of this democracy. But what I will not abide are those who would bend the truth, or break it, to score political points and stop our progress as a country. And what we all must oppose are the same old cynical Washington games that have been played for decades, even as our problems have grown and our challenges have mounted.

Last November, the American people went to the polls in historic numbers and demanded change. They wanted a change in our policies, but they also sought a change in our politics, a

politics that too often has fallen prey to the lobbyists and special interests, that's fostered division and sustained the status quo. Passing health insurance reform is a great test of this proposition. Yes, it will make a profound and positive difference in the lives of the American people. But it also now represents something more: whether or not we as a nation are capable of tackling our toughest challenges; if we can serve the national interest despite the unrelenting efforts of the special interests; if we can still do big things in America.

I believe we can; I believe we will. And I urge every Member of Congress to stand

against the power plays and political ploys and to stand up on behalf of the American people who sent us to Washington to do their business.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:20 p.m. on October 16 at Texas A&M University's Rudder Auditorium in College Station, TX, for broadcast on October 17. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 16, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on October 17.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Significant Narcotic Traffickers Centered in Colombia October 16, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1622(d), provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the emergency declared with respect to significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia is to continue in effect beyond October 21, 2009.

The circumstances that led to the declaration on October 21, 1995, of a national emergency have not been resolved. The actions of significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, for-

eign policy, and economy of the United States and to cause an extreme level of violence, corruption, and harm in the United States and abroad. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to maintain economic pressure on significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia by blocking their property and interests in property that are in the United States or within the possession or control of United States persons and by depriving them of access to the U.S. market and financial system.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
October 16, 2009.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 19. The notice of October 16 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at Viers Mill Elementary School in Silver Spring, Maryland October 19, 2009

The President. Here's the reason that I wanted to stop by for lunch today, and that is, I have heard great things about this school. I

hear everybody here is reading all the time. Right? The motto here is?

Principal Matthew A. Devan. Viers Mill, what's our goal?