

the University of Oklahoma. And we are sorry about Bradford's shoulder.

Senator David L. Boren. Thank you. [*Laughter*] Thank you, sir.

The President. I look forward to working with Chuck and David in their new roles. They will report to me, they will have my full support, and they will have the full cooperation of my National Security Council staff and the organizations represented here.

We are off to a good start with this meeting by welcoming the press, which past advisory boards have rarely done. Now, that's a reflection of my administration's commitment to transparency and open government, even, when appropriate, on matters of national security and intelligence.

In the near future, I'll be naming additional members to the board. I look forward to Chuck, David, and these men and women around the table for their candid and unvarnished advice on the quality and accuracy of our intelligence and the effectiveness of our intelligence community.

Our work is clear. The organizations represented here have made real progress in recent years. But we all agree that more needs to be

done to improve the collection of intelligence, to ensure that analysis reaches senior decision-makers in a timely way, and to provide strong oversight to ensure that our intelligence activities are consistent with our democratic values and with the rule of law.

And the American people—and the men and women of our intelligence community as well—deserve nothing less. As I've said in my recent visits to the National Counterterrorism Center and the Joint Terrorism Task Force, we are extraordinarily grateful to them for the hard work, without any fanfare, that they do to keep the American people safe.

That's what I'm committed to doing as President, and that's why I want to again thank Senators Hagel and Boren for agreeing to serve in this capacity. I think they are going to be a invaluable resource to all of us sitting around the table.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:41 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Tom Hagel, brother of Sen. Charles T. Hagel; and Sam Bradford, quarterback, University of Oklahoma Sooners.

Remarks on Signing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010

October 28, 2009

Thank you. Please, everybody, be seated. Good afternoon. I have often said that meeting our greatest challenges would require not only changing policies in Washington but changing the way business is done in Washington, that it would require a Government that's more efficient and effective and less influenced by lobbyists and parochial politics. And I'm pleased to say that when it comes to the defense bill I'm about to sign into law, we've taken some important steps towards that goal.

I want to acknowledge my outstanding Vice President, Joe Biden. Attorney General Eric Holder is here. And all Members of Congress who are joining us here today, thank you very much for your outstanding work. You can give

Members of Congress a round of applause as well.

As Commander in Chief, I will always do whatever it takes to keep the American people safe, to defend this Nation. And that's why this bill provides for the best military in the history of the world. It reaffirms our commitment to our brave men and women in uniform and our wounded warriors. It expands family leave rights for the family members of our troops and veterans. And it makes investments in the capabilities necessary to meet 21st-century challenges.

But I have always rejected the notion that we have to waste billions of dollars of taxpayer money to keep this Nation secure. In fact, I think that wasting these dollars makes us less

secure. And that's why we have passed a defense bill that eliminates some of the waste and inefficiency in our defense process, reforms that will better protect our Nation, better protect our troops, and save taxpayers tens of billions of dollars.

Now, at the outset, let me just say that this effort would not have been possible without an extraordinary Secretary of Defense. And so I want to thank publicly Bob Gates for his service to our Nation.

Having served under eight Presidents of both parties, this is a man who understands that our defense budget isn't about politics, it's about the security of our country, and who knows that every dollar wasted is a dollar we can't spend to care for our troops or protect the homeland.

And over the last several months, he took that fight to Congress. He challenged conventional thinking, and he emerged with several critical victories. So on behalf of the American people, I want to thank you, Bob, for your extraordinary efforts.

Now, Bob couldn't have been successful had it not been for the next person I want to introduce, Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He provided wise counsel and stood with us in our efforts to initiate reform, even though it probably occasionally caused some heartburn inside of the Pentagon as well, because change is hard. And so I'm very grateful for his leadership and excellent work. Please give Mike a big round of applause.

And finally, I want to thank the Members of Congress, particularly Senators Carl Levin and John McCain and Congressmen Ike Skelton and Buck McKeon. As the chairmen and ranking members of their respective committees, they did an outstanding job.

Now, this bill isn't perfect. This bill is an important step forward, but it's just a first step. There's still more waste we need to cut. There are still more fights that we need to win. Changing the culture in Washington will take time and sustained effort. And that's why Secretary Gates and I will continue waging these battles in the months and years ahead.

But I will say that when Secretary Gates and I first proposed going after some of these wasteful projects, there were a lot of people in this town who didn't think it was possible, who were certain we were going to lose, who were certain that we would get steamrolled, who argued that the special interests were too entrenched and that Washington was simply too set in its ways.

And so I think it's important to note today we have proven them wrong. Today we're putting an end to some wasteful projects that lawmakers have tried to kill for years. And we're doing this because Secretary Gates and I both know that we can't build the 21st-century military we need unless we fundamentally reform the way our defense establishment does business. The Government Accountability Office, the GAO, has looked into 96 major defense projects from the last year and found cost overruns that totaled \$296 billion, an amount of money that would have paid our troops' salaries and provided benefits for their families for more than a year.

And we all know where this kind of waste comes from: indefensible, no-bid contracts that cost taxpayers billions and make contractors rich; special interests and their exotic projects that are years behind schedule and billions over budget; entrenched lobbyists pushing weapons that even our military says it doesn't want and doesn't need; the impulse in Washington to win political points back home by building things that we don't need at costs we can't afford. This waste would be unacceptable at any time, but at a time when we're fighting two wars and facing a serious deficit, it's inexcusable, it's unconscionable. It's an affront to the American people and to our troops, and it has to stop.

And already I've put an end to unnecessary no-bid contracts. I signed bipartisan legislation to reform defense procurement so weapons systems don't spin out of control. And even as we made critical investments in the equipment and weapons our troops do need, we're eliminating tens of billions of dollars in waste we don't need. So no longer will we be spending nearly \$2 billion to buy more F-22 fighter jets that the Pentagon says they don't need. This

bill also terminates troubled and massively over budget programs such as the Future Combat Systems, the Airborne Lasers, the Combat Search and Rescue helicopter, and a new Presidential helicopter that costs nearly as much as Air Force One. I won't be flying on that.

At the same time, we accelerated or increased weapons programs needed to confront real and growing threats: the Joint Strike Fighter, the Littoral Combat Ship, and more helicopters and reconnaissance support for our troops at the front.

And this bill also reduces waste and fraud in our contracting system, as well as our reliance on private contractors for jobs that Federal employees have the expertise and the training to do.

So today I'm pleased to say that we have proved that change is possible. It may not come quickly, or all at once, but if you push hard enough, it does come eventually.

Now, speaking of that, there is one more long-awaited change contained within this legislation that I'll be talking about a little more later today. After more than a decade of opposition and delay, we've passed inclusive hate crimes legislation to help protect our citizens from vio-

lence based on what they look like, who they love, how they pray, or who they are.

I promised Judy Shepard, when she saw me in the Oval Office, that this day would come, and I'm glad that she and her husband Dennis could join us for this event. I'm also honored to have the family of the late Senator Ted Kennedy, who fought so hard for this legislation. And Vicki and Patrick, Kara, everybody who's here, I just want you all to know how proud we are of the work that Ted did to help this day—make this day possible. So—and thank you for joining us here today.

So with that, I'm going to sign this piece of legislation. Thank you all for doing a great job. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:42 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Dennis and Judy Shepard, parents of Matthew Shepard, who was attacked and killed in October 1998; and Victoria R. Kennedy, wife, Patrick J. Kennedy, son, and Kara Kennedy Allen, daughter, of former Sen. Edward M. Kennedy. S. 1390, approved October 28, was assigned Public Law No. 111–84.

Remarks on the Enactment of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act

October 28, 2009

Hello, everybody. Good to see you. Yes. Thank you so much, and welcome to the White House. There are several people here that I want to just make mention of because they helped to make today possible: we've got Attorney General Eric Holder and the Department of Justice crowd; a champion of this legislation and a great Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi; my dear friend, senior Senator from the great State of Illinois, Dick Durbin; the outstanding chairman of Armed Services, Carl Levin; Senator Arlen Specter; chairman of the Judiciary Committee in the House, Representative John Conyers; Representative Barney Frank; Representative Tammy Baldwin; Representative Jerry Nadler; Representative Jared Polis; all the

Members of Congress who are here today. We thank you.

Mr. David Bohnett and Mr. Tom Gregory and the David Bohnett Foundation—they are partners for this reception—thank you so much, guys, for helping to host this; and finally and most importantly, because these were really the spearheads of this effort, Dennis, Judy, and Logan Shepard, as well as Betty Byrd Boatner and Louvon Harris, sisters of James Byrd, Jr. To all the activists, all the organizers, all the people who helped make this day happen, thank you for your years of advocacy and activism, pushing and protesting that made this victory possible.

You know, as a nation we've come far on the journey towards a more perfect union. And today, we've taken another step forward. This