

especially privileged to see you at a time of renewal and change in America and during a period of transition, where the world order is changing. And I look forward to hear your views on how you see the world evolving in a manner and America's role in it, which is crucial to the stability and prosperity of East Asia.

President Obama. Thank you very much.

All right, everybody.

The President's Visit to Dover Air Force Base

Q. Sir, can we ask about your visit to Dover Air Force Base last night? Will it influence your decision on Afghanistan?

President Obama. Well, obviously, it was a sobering reminder of the extraordinary sacrifices that our young men and women in uniform are engaging in every single day, not only our troops but their families as well. And so Michelle and I are constantly mindful of those sacrifices.

And obviously, the burden that both our troops and our families bear in any wartime situation is going to bear on how I see these conflicts. And it is something that I think about each and every day.

All right?

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:47 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Health Care Reform Legislation

October 29, 2009

I congratulate the House of Representatives on the introduction of the "Affordable Health Care for America Act," another critical milestone in the effort to reform our health care system.

This legislation is the product of unprecedented cooperation and countless hours of hard work by Speaker Pelosi, Chairmen Waxman, Rangel, and Miller, Congressman Dingell, and scores of House Members who share my conviction that we can't wait another year for health insurance reform. They have forged a strong consensus that represents a historic step forward.

The House legislation includes critical reforms to the insurance industry so that Americans will no longer have to worry that they will be denied coverage or that their coverage will be dropped or watered down when they need it most. I'm also pleased that the bill includes a

public option offered in an exchange. As I've said throughout this process, a public option that competes with private insurers is the best way to ensure choice and competition that are so badly needed in today's market. And the House bill clearly meets two of the fundamental criteria I have set out: It is fully paid for and will reduce the deficit in the long term.

While we know there will—may—more steps and much spirited debate before a bill reaches my desk, I congratulate the House on their work so far, and I'm confident that Members will continue to work together to deliver meaningful reform for America's families and businesses.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

Statement on Czech Republic's National Day

October 28, 2009

On behalf of the American people, I extend my warmest wishes to those celebrating the Czech Republic's National Day. Whether they are Americans that trace their roots back to the

Czech Republic, or those living there now, the United States and the Czech Republic are close allies and essential partners. Our nations share a history of struggle on behalf of liberty and

democracy, and our people have forged a strong and lasting partnership that is grounded in these shared values. Czech Americans trace their roots back to before our country was founded, they have enriched our communities

and our country, and they continue to play a key role in shaping the direction of our Nation.

NOTE: This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 30.

Statement on the Anniversary of the Founding of Turkey October 29, 2009

The people of the United States join the people of Turkey in celebrating the anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Turkey. The friendship between our nation is strong, and our alliance is enduring. More than 50 years ago, the United States and Turkey began a partnership based on shared values and mutual respect, a partnership and friendship that has deepened over the years as we have over-

come many shared challenges. Turkish Americans help to forge the bonds that join our nations in friendship, and they continue to contribute to our society in a wide range of field, including arts, athletics, education, business, medicine, and science.

NOTE: This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 30.

Remarks on Signing the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Extension Act of 2009 October 30, 2009

The President. Good morning, everybody.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. We often speak about AIDS as if it's going on somewhere else, and for good reason. This is a virus that has touched lives and decimated communities around the world, particularly in Africa. But often overlooked is the fact that we face a serious HIV/AIDS epidemic of our own, right here in Washington, DC, and right here in the United States of America. And today we are taking two important steps forward in the fight that we face here at home.

It has been nearly three decades since this virus first became known. But for years, we refused to recognize it for what it was. It was coined a "gay disease." Those who had it were viewed with suspicion. There was a sense among some that people afflicted by AIDS somehow deserved their fate and that it was acceptable for our Nation to look the other way.

A number of events and advances over the years have broadened our understanding of this cruel illness. One of them came in 1984, when a 13-year-old boy from central Indiana

contracted HIV/AIDS from a transfusion. Doctors assured people that Ryan White posed no risk to his classmates or his community, but ignorance was still widespread. People didn't yet understand or believe that the virus couldn't be spread by casual contact. Parents protested Ryan's attendance in class. Some even pulled their kids out of school. Things got so bad that the White family had to ultimately move to another town.

It would have been easy for Ryan and his family to stay quiet and to fight the illness in private. But what Ryan showed was the same courage and strength that so many HIV-positive activists have shown over the years and shown around—show around the world today. And because he did, we didn't just become more informed about HIV/AIDS, we began to take action to fight it.

In 1990, the year Ryan passed away, two great friends and unlikely political allies, Ted Kennedy and then Orrin Hatch, came together and introduced the Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency Act, the CARE Act, which was later named after Ryan.