

this recession will not end until we completely turn that tide.

So we've made progress, but we can't rest. And my administration will not rest, until we've revived this economy and rebuilt it stronger than before, until we're creating jobs and opportunities for middle class families, until we have moved beyond the cycles of boom and bust, of reckless risk and speculation, that led us to so much crisis and pain these past few years.

Next week, I'll be meeting with owners of large and small businesses, labor leaders, and non-for-profit leaders from across the country to talk about the additional steps we can take to help spur job creation. I'll work with the Congress to enact those proposals quickly.

And it's my fervent hope and my heartfelt expectation that next Thanksgiving we will be able to celebrate the fact that many of those who have lost their jobs are back at work and that as a nation we will have come through these difficult storms stronger and wiser and grateful to have reached a brighter day.

Thank you, God bless you, and from my family to yours, happy Thanksgiving.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 1:30 p.m. on November 25 at the White House for broadcast on November 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 25, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on November 26.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting an Alternative Plan for Pay Increases for Civilian Federal Employees

November 30, 2009

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am transmitting an alternative plan for locality pay increases for civilian Federal employees covered by the General Schedule (GS) and certain other pay systems in January 2010.

Under title 5, United States Code, civilian Federal employees covered by the GS and certain other pay systems would receive a two-part pay increase in January 2010: (1) a 2.4 percent across-the-board adjustment in scheduled rates of basic pay derived from Employment Cost Index data on changes in the wages and salaries of private industry workers, and (2) locality pay adjustments averaging 16.5 percent based on Bureau of Labor Statistics salary surveys of non-Federal employers in each locality pay area. According to the statutory formula, for Federal employees covered by the locality pay system, the overall average pay increase would be about 18.9 percent. This total Federal employee pay increase would cost about \$22.6 billion in fiscal year 2010 alone.

Title 5, United States Code, authorizes me to implement an alternative pay plan if I view the adjustments that would otherwise take ef-

fect as inappropriate due to "national emergency or serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare." As in August, when I submitted an alternative plan under 5 U.S.C. 5303(b) to limit the across-the-board increase in 2010 to 2.0 percent, I have determined that it is appropriate to exercise my statutory alternative plan authority under 5 U.S.C. 5304a to set alternative January 2010 locality pay rates.

A national emergency, within the meaning of chapter 53 of title 5, has existed since September 11, 2001. Likewise, our country continues to face serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare and most Americans would not understand or accept that Federal employees should receive an average pay increase of 18.9 percent while many of their fellow citizens are facing employment cut-backs or unemployment. Such an increase would cost \$19.9 billion more than the 2.0 percent overall Federal civilian pay increase that I proposed in my 2010 Budget and would build in later years.

Accordingly, I have determined that under the authority of section 5304a of title 5, United States Code, the locality pay percentages

currently in effect as shown in the attachment shall remain in effect in 2010.

The law requires that I include in this report an assessment of the impact of my decision on the Government's ability to recruit and retain well-qualified employees. As I said in August, I do not believe this decision will materially affect our ability to continue to attract and retain a quality Federal workforce. Since any pay raise above the amount proposed in this alternative plan would likely be unfunded, agencies would have to absorb the additional cost and could have to reduce hiring to pay the higher rates.

Statement on Romanian National Day *December 1, 2009*

I send my best wishes to all those who will celebrate Romanian National Day. Our nations share nearly 130 years of relations, and Romania remains a close ally and partner as we face

Moreover, the GS "quit" rate continues to be very low (2.1 percent on an annual basis), well below the overall average "quit" rate in private enterprise.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

Statement on Central African Republic National Day *December 1, 2009*

On behalf of the American people, I extend my best wishes to all those who are celebrating the National Day of the Central African Republic.

the challenges of the world. I especially offer my congratulations to the Romanian American community that are observing this occasion.

Our Nation stands with the Central African Republic as both our countries work together to promote peace and prosperity.

Remarks at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York *December 1, 2009*

Thank you. Please be seated. Good evening. To the United States Corps of Cadets, to the men and women of our Armed Services, and to my fellow Americans: I want to speak to you tonight about our effort in Afghanistan, the nature of our commitment there, the scope of our interests, and the strategy that my administration will pursue to bring this war to a successful conclusion. It's an extraordinary honor for me to do so here at West Point, where so many men and women have prepared to stand up for our security and to represent what is finest about our country.

To address these important issues, it's important to recall why America and our allies were compelled to fight a war in Afghanistan in the

first place. We did not ask for this fight. On September 11th, 2001, 19 men hijacked 4 airplanes and used them to murder nearly 3,000 people. They struck at our military and economic nerve centers. They took the lives of innocent men, women, and children without regard to their faith or race or station. Were it not for the heroic actions of passengers onboard one of these flights, they could have also struck at one of the great symbols of our democracy in Washington and killed many more.

As we know, these men belonged to Al Qaida, a group of extremists who have distorted and defiled Islam, one of the world's great religions, to justify the slaughter of innocents. Al Qaida's base of operations was in Afghanistan,