

got a solemn obligation to look after them when they come home. And this 9/11—post-9/11 GI bill, I think, is a great example of it. My grandfather fought in World War II, and then he got his college education on the GI bill. It wasn't just good for him. Because of that whole greatest generation going to college, that built our middle class. And all the things that we've been talking about in terms of science and technology and innovation and clean energy, all that depends on what happens in a place like Lehigh, making sure that people are being trained and constantly upgrading their skills for the future.

So that's what the GI bill's supposed to do. Now, the VA—we've actually increased the budget for the VA by 11 percent last year, which was the largest increase in 30 years, and we'll be increasing it again this year, because we think it's important to play some catchup. Rick Shinseki, who's a great American hero and now the Secretary of the VA, one of his tasks is to upgrade a bunch of the old systems in the VA.

The truth of the matter is, you shouldn't have to make a phone call. You should be able to get online. That would be more efficient. And what that tells me is—I mean, the fact that you're having to make the call tells me that we have not fully upgraded our information systems yet the way they need to be upgraded.

But he is really working diligently. We had a lot of work to do on this front. The VA had been somewhat underfunded for a number of years despite the growing amount of demand caused by returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. We are, I think, going to get it in a good place by the time I'm through in Washington. But in the meantime, you'll, I promise, get a return phone call.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:54 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Eric E. Schmidt, chief executive officer, Google, Inc.; and President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea.

## Joint Statement by President Barack Obama and President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia on the Expiration of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty *December 4, 2009*

Recognizing our mutual determination to support strategic stability between the United States of America and the Russian Federation, we express our commitment, as a matter of principle, to continue to work together in the spirit of the START Treaty following its expira-

tion, as well as our firm intention to ensure that a new treaty on strategic arms enter into force at the earliest possible date.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

## The President's Weekly Address *December 5, 2009*

Every month since January, when I became your President, I've spoken to you about the periodic reports of the Labor Department on the number of jobs created or lost during the previous month; numbers that tell a story about how America's economy is faring overall.

In those first months, the numbers were nothing short of devastating. The worst recession since the 1930s had wreaked havoc on the lives of so many of our fellow Americans. Yesterday the numbers released by the Labor De-

partment reflected a continuing positive trend of diminishing job loss.

But for those who were laid off last month and the millions of Americans who have lost their jobs in this recession, a good trend isn't good enough. Trends don't buy the groceries. Trends don't pay the rent or a college tuition. Trends don't fulfill the need within each of us to be productive, to provide for our families, to make the most of our lives, to reach for our dreams.