

hearing is one of the biggest problems that small businesses have out there.

So I think that it's realistic for us to get a package moving quickly that may not include all the things I think need to be done, and it may be that that first package builds some trust and confidence that Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill can work together, and then we move on to the next aspect of the package, and so forth. It may take a series of incremental steps, but the one thing I'm absolutely clear about is, is that we've got an economy that's growing right now, a huge boost in productivity. That's the good news. The bad news is, is that companies still haven't taken that final step in actually putting people on their payroll full time. We're seeing an increase in temporary workers, but they haven't yet taken on that full-time worker. And so pro-

viding some additional impetus to them right as the economy is moving in a positive direction, I think, can end up yielding some good results.

All right? Thank you, guys. That was pretty good. Thanks.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 1:30 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred Martha N. Johnson, Administrator-designate, General Services Administration; and former Director General Mohamed ElBaradei of the International Atomic Energy Agency. A reporter referred to President Nicolas Sarkozy of France; and Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom.

Remarks at PBS's "A Celebration of Music From the Civil Rights Movement: In Performance at the White House"

February 9, 2010

Welcome to the White House, everybody, and thank you for braving the storm. I am thrilled to see all of you here today—friends, guests, members of my Cabinet, Members of Congress, our Vice President and Dr. Jill Biden, and everyone watching at home—for the fifth in a series of evenings celebrating the music that tells the story of America.

Tonight we celebrate the music of the movement. To help us do that, Michelle and I are thrilled to welcome a tremendous group of artists who influenced that music and artists who were influenced by it: Yolanda Adams, Joan Baez, Natalie Cole, Morgan Freeman, Jennifer Hudson, John Mellencamp, Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon, Smokey Robinson, the Blind Boys of Alabama, the Howard University Choir, and a man who was good enough to take a night off from his never-ending tour, Mr. Bob Dylan.

I want to thank some of them for spending some time earlier here today leading a workshop of high school students, perhaps even inspiring the next generation of civil rights leaders.

Let me also just acknowledge a good friend to us all, Dr. Joseph Lowery, who was here—or who couldn't be here with us today, but he is recuperating after an illness, and we want to keep him in our thoughts and prayers tonight.

Now, the civil rights movement was a movement sustained by music. It was lifted by spirituals inspired by the Bible. It was sharpened by protest songs about wrongs that needed righting. It was broadened by folk artists like a New York-born daughter of immigrants and a young storyteller from Minnesota who captured the hardships and hopes of people who were worlds different from them, in ways that only song can do.

It was a movement with a soundtrack, diverse strains of music that coalesced when the movement was right. But that soundtrack wasn't just inspired by the movement; it gave strength in return, a fact not lost on the movement's leaders.

It's been said that when Dr. King and his associates were looking for communities to organize and mobilize, they'd know which were

disciplined enough and serious enough when they saw folks singing freedom songs. Dr. King himself once acknowledged that he didn't see "the real meaning of the movement" until he saw young people singing in the face of hostility.

You see, it's easy to sing when you're happy. It's easy to sing when you're among friends. It's easy to sing when times are good. But it is hard to sing when times are rough. It's hard to sing in the face of taunts and fear and the constant threat of violence. It's hard to sing when folks are being beaten, when leaders are being jailed, when churches are being bombed.

It's hard to sing in times like that. But times like that are precisely when the power of song is most potent. Above the din of hatred, amidst the deafening silence of inaction, the hymns of the civil rights movement helped carry the cause of a people and advance the ideals of a nation.

Bernice Johnson Reagon knew this. One day when she was young, she was sitting in church when a local sheriff and his deputies showed up to intimidate the congregation. "They stood at the door," Bernice wrote, "making sure everyone knew they were there." "And then," she said, "a song began. And the song made sure

that the sheriff and his deputies knew that we were there."

Joan Baez and Bob Dylan knew this. One day in 1963, they joined hundreds of thousands on the National Mall and sang of a day when the time would come, when the winds would stop, when a ship would come in. They sang of a day when a righteous journey would reach its destination.

And Congressman John Lewis—a man of that Moses generation, a man who couldn't be here tonight, but whose sacrifices helped make it possible for me to be here tonight—he knew this too. For in the darkest hour, he said, "The songs fed our spirits and gave us hope."

So to everyone here or watching at home, let us enjoy the music we hear tonight. Let the music feed our spirits, give us hope, and carry us forward as one people and as one Nation. Enjoy.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:08 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to civil rights activist Joseph E. Lowery. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 10.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Presidential Nominees *February 11, 2010*

Today the United States Senate confirmed 27 of my high-level nominees, many of whom had been awaiting a vote for months.

At the beginning of the week, a staggering 63 nominees had been stalled in the Senate because one or more Senators placed a hold on their nomination. In most cases, these holds have had nothing to do with the nominee's qualifications or even political views, and these nominees have already received broad, bipartisan support in the committee process. Instead, many holds were motivated by a desire to leverage projects for a Senator's State or simply to frustrate progress. It is precisely these kinds of tactics that enrage the American people.

And so on Tuesday, I told Senator McConnell that if Republican Senators did not release

these holds, I would exercise my authority to fill critically needed positions in the Federal Government temporarily through the use of recess appointments. This is a rare but not unprecedented step that many other Presidents have taken. Since that meeting, I am gratified that Republican Senators have responded by releasing many of these holds and allowing 29 nominees to receive a vote in the Senate.

While this is a good first step, there are still dozens of nominees on hold who deserve a similar vote, and I will be looking for action from the Senate when it returns from recess. If they do not act, I reserve the right to use my recess appointment authority in the future.