

ital and credit to families purchasing homes, students attending college, businesses seeking to start up or expand. And that's why the rescue program was as necessary as it was unfortunate. And that is why, through this fee and broader reforms that we seek, our goal is not to punish Wall Street firms, but rather to prevent the abuse and excess that nearly caused the collapse of many of these firms and the financial system itself.

We cannot go back to business as usual. And when we see reports of firms once again engaging in risky bets to reap quick rewards, when we see a return to compensation practices that seem not to reflect what the country's been through, all that looks like business as usual to me. The financial industry has even launched a massive lobbying campaign, locking arms with the opposition party to stand in the way of reforms to prevent another crisis. That too, unfortunately, is business as usual. And we're already hearing a hue and cry from Wall Street suggesting that this proposed fee is not only unwelcome but unfair, that by some twisted logic, it is more appropriate for the American people to bear the costs of the bailout rather than the industry that benefited from it, even though these executives are out there giving themselves huge bonuses.

What I'd say to these executives is this: Instead of sending a phalanx of lobbyists to fight this proposal or employing an army of lawyers and accountants to help evade the fee, I sug-

gest you might want to consider simply meeting your responsibilities. And I'd urge you to cover the costs of the rescue not by sticking it to your shareholders or your customers or fellow citizens with the bill, but by rolling back bonuses for top earners and executives. And more broadly, I am continuing to call on these firms to put greater effort into helping families stay in their homes, to provide small businesses with needed loans, and to embrace, rather than fight, serious financial reform.

Ultimately, it is by taking responsibility—on Wall Street, here in Washington, all the way to Main Street—that we're going to move past this period of turmoil. That's how we're going to avoid the cycles of boom and bust that have caused so much havoc. That's how we're going to promote vibrant markets that reward innovation and entrepreneurship and hard work. That's how we're going to create sustained growth without the looming threat of another costly crisis. That's not only in the best interests of the economy as a whole, it's actually in the interest of these large banks.

So I'm going to be working closely with Congress on this proposal. And on behalf of the American people, I look forward to signing it into law.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:44 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Remarks at the Opening Session of the Forum on Modernizing Government *January 14, 2010*

Thank you. Please have a seat, everybody. Thank you so much. Well, good afternoon, everyone, and thanks for all of you for being here today.

I'd like to recognize the Deputy Cabinet Secretaries who are with us for their leadership at our agencies. And it's exciting to see the leaders of some of the most innovative, cutting-edge, tech-savvy companies in the world gathered in the city where I had to fight tooth and nail just to get a BlackBerry. *[Laughter]* There may be a little bit of a cultural clash here—*[laughter]*—but that's exact-

ly why we want you here. I really appreciate the time all of you have taken to be in Washington for this forum. I know how busy all of you are.

We stand in the midst of challenging times for our economy. I don't think that's any secret. And I know that many of you have felt these challenges in your industries and in your businesses. Some of you have felt them quite acutely. But I also know how you've managed to meet them and managed through them, experimenting and innovating and finding new ways to increase productivity and better serve

your customers. We're here today because I believe your Government should be doing exactly the same thing.

When I first started campaigning for this office, I said, I want to change the way that Washington works. And when I said that, I meant how it works for the American people. I meant making Government more responsive to their needs. I meant getting rid of the waste and the inefficiencies that bloat our deficits and squander their hard-earned savings. I meant finally revamping the outdated technologies and information systems that undermine our efficiency and threaten our security and fail to serve their interests. And I asked all of you to this forum on Government modernization today because I believe that this last objective, bringing our Government into the 21st century, is critical to achieving all those other objectives.

Now, I can say without any hesitation that our Government employees are some of the hardest working, most dedicated, most competent people I know. Government workers get a bad rap. They are dedicated, they put in a lot of hours, and they care deeply about what they do. And they desperately want to provide the very best service for the American people. But all too often, their best efforts are thwarted because the technological revolution that has transformed our society over the past two decades has yet to reach many parts of our Government. Many of these folks will tell you that their kids have better technology in their backpacks and in their bedrooms than they have at the desks at their work.

To this day, there are still places in the Federal Government where reams of yellow files in manila envelopes are walked from desk to desk or boxes of documents are shipped back and forth between offices because files aren't yet online. Believe it or not, in our Patent Office—now, this is embarrassing; this is an institution responsible for protecting and promoting innovation—our Patent Office receives more than 80 percent of patent applications electronically, then manually prints them out, scans them, and enters them into an outdated case management system. Now, this is one of the reasons why the average processing time for a

patent is roughly 3 years. Imminently solvable; hasn't been solved yet.

Even worse, too often, when we've attempted to update or replace outdated technology, we end up spending exorbitant sums of money on technologies that don't meet our needs or that took so long to implement that they were obsolete before we even started using them.

I just met with Department of Veterans Affairs, Eric Shinseki, who, a veteran himself, cares so deeply about making sure that veterans get their claims processed efficiently. We've been talking for 10 years about putting electronic systems in place for Veterans Affairs to reduce the backlog, and so far, it has not yet happened, not because people don't want it to happen, but partly because previous purchasing decisions have mismatched what VA has with what the Department of Defense has. They don't speak to each other; they don't merge.

None of this is acceptable, particularly at a time when we're experiencing such economic difficulty and so many people are struggling. We've got to get the best bang for every single dollar that the Government has in its possession. And when Washington lags a generation behind in how we do business, that has real and serious impact on people's lives. When we waste billions of dollars, in part because our technology is out of date, that's billions of dollars we're not investing in better schools for our children, in tax relief for our small businesses, in creating jobs and funding research to spur the scientific breakthroughs and economic growth of this new century.

And we know that the tools, the technology, the solutions are out there. You know because you put them in place every day. It's time we started putting them to work for the American people. If you can book dinner on OpenTable or a flight on Southwest or United online, then why shouldn't you be able to make an appointment at your local Social Security office the same way? If you can track your UPS package with your iPhone, then why not be able to check the status of your citizenship application on a web site, rather than having to write a letter and wait for a letter back?

Now, these are simple, cost-effective steps, ones which we've already taken or, at least, are

in the process of taking. But these are just the beginning. Going forward, I want to see solutions like this in every agency. I want to ask ourselves every day, how are we using technology to make a real difference in people's lives? How are we making it easier for small-business owners to get loans so they can open their doors and expand their operations and create new jobs? How are we helping young people get student loans so they can get the education they need to pursue their dreams? How are we ensuring that the brave men and women who've served this country get their benefits as quickly and as easily as possible? How are we cutting costs and reducing our deficit so that our children and our grandchildren aren't saddled with debt?

Now, improving the technology our Government uses isn't about having the fanciest bells and whistles on our web site. It's about how we use the American people's hard-earned tax dollars to make Government work better for them. And this is something I'm very serious about.

Now, this is why I appointed the very first ever Federal Government CIO and CTO, and Vivek Kundra and Aneesh Chopra are both coordinating our efforts and ensuring that we're embracing the best, most effective technologies possible.

It's also why we introduced our IT Dashboard at USAspending.gov. Here's a web site, which I've personally reviewed, where the American people can monitor every IT project in the Federal Government. If a project is over budget or behind schedule, this site tells you that and by how much, and it provides the name, the e-mail, and the phone number of the person responsible. To date, the site's gotten 78 million hits. We've already terminated a number of projects that weren't performing, and going forward, we won't hesitate to cut more and then take that money and reinvest it in someplace that's actually going to make a difference.

But here's the reason all of you are here: We can't do this alone. Many of you are pio-

neers, harnessing new technologies to build thriving businesses. Some of you have revolutionized industries. You've changed the ways that we look at the world. And if I had any doubt about how much Government has to learn from all of you, then the homework assignment you all completed would have certainly convinced me otherwise. I think the depth and the thoughtfulness of your responses indicate that all of you spent real time on preparing for today, and I deeply thank you for it.

I hope all of you will continue these efforts at the forum today. I want the very best of what you've got. I want you to tell us not just what we can do to better serve the American people, but how we can do it. How we can do it without spending a whole lot of taxpayer dollars is especially what I want to hear from you.

I just—and I also want to emphasize, I don't want to just hear your input today. We're going to need it in the months and years ahead as well. A lot of this stuff takes time to implement, even when it's implemented well. And that's why I've charged our Federal Chief Performance Officer, Jeff Zients, who you already heard from, to work with Vivek and Aneesh and all of you to make sure the changes we make have a lasting impact.

Now, we'll need each of you to keep stepping up and sharing your insights and your ideas and your expertise. We're going to need you to help us build the kind of Government that the American people expect and the kind of Government that they deserve, and that's one that spends their money wisely, serves their interests well, and is fully worthy of their trust and their respect.

So that's the purpose of today's forum. That's the ongoing mission of this administration. And I very much look forward to hearing what you have to offer us. Thank you very much for being here, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:03 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

Remarks at the House Democratic Caucus Retreat January 14, 2010

Thank you, House of Representatives. Please, everybody have a seat. Have a seat.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. To Xavier, thank you; Jim Clyburn; outstanding work by Chris Van Hollen; and of course, Steny Hoyer. To all the leadership, to all the Members, thank you for inviting me here today. Thank you.

The House of Representatives has been an incredible partner throughout this year, but I hope you don't mind me singling out one of the best partners any President could ever have, and that is your unbelievable Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi. I was out in California doing—I think it was a DNC event, and Nancy introduced me, and I said, you know, Nancy, she's smart, she's articulate, she knows her issues. But what people don't understand is, Nancy is tough. *[Laughter]* She is tough. And she is tough for her Members, for this caucus, and she's tough for the American people. And so—*[applause]*—her extraordinary leadership is one of the reasons why the House of Representatives has consistently set the bar on a whole host of issues that—and legislative accomplishments that we've seen this year and—this past year and that we're going to see this year coming up.

Now, before I begin, I want to give all of you a quick update on our urgent efforts to save lives and support the recovery in Haiti. Our, obviously, thoughts and prayers go out to all the people of Haiti, Haitian Americans who have family members. One of my top advisers, Patrick Gaspard, is Haitian American. He's got cousins and aunts and uncles who are still missing. His family priest, who he's known since he was a baby, who baptized him, is suspected dead. Those stories ripple throughout the Haitian American community, but obviously, they ripple throughout all humanity when we see the kind of tragedy that we're seeing.

I want everybody here to understand that I've directed my administration to take swift and coordinated and aggressive action. I've made it clear to my national security team that this has to be a top priority across agencies—Department of Defense, Department of

State, USAID. All the agencies involved—Homeland Security, our FEMA director—they are all intimately involved in making sure that we can get in there as quickly as possible to engage in search and rescue and to provide immediate medical attention, and then long-term help with the recovery.

Now, our highest priority is the safety of American citizens, and we are currently airlifting injured Americans out of Haiti. I know many of you have constituents desperate for news of their loved ones, and you should direct them to the State Department web site for a phone number and e-mail address and let them know that we will not rest until we have accounted for every single of our fellow Americans that are in harm's way.

The first wave of our rescue and relief workers arrived on the ground yesterday. Search and rescue teams are now working around the clock to save lives. More waves of major assets are going to be arriving. This morning I announced an immediate investment of \$100 million to support our relief efforts in the early days of this crisis. Most of this is for the basics: lifesaving equipment, food, water, medicine. This investment will grow over the year as we help our neighbors embark on what is going to be a long-term recovery.

And so I just want everybody in the House of Representatives to understand, this is a moment for American leadership. This is a time when the world looks to us and they say, given our capacity, given our unique capacity to project power around the world, that we have to project that not just for our own interests, but for the interests of the world as a whole. And my national security team understands that I will not put up with any excuses for us not doing the very best in this time of tragedy.

Now, it is good to be here with all of you. I want to make a guarantee that 2010 will not be a boring year. *[Laughter]* Let me also say this: 2010 will mark a year of remarkable progress for the American people. And much of the reason for that is because of actions that were taken by the House of Representatives.