

Last June, the world watched with admiration as Iranians sought to exercise their universal right to be heard. But tragically, the aspirations of the Iranian people were also met with a clenched fist, as people marching silently were beaten with batons, political prisoners were rounded up and abused, absurd and false accusations were leveled against the United States and the West, and people everywhere were horrified by the video of a young woman killed in the street.

The United States does not meddle in Iran's internal affairs. Our commitment, our responsibility is to stand up for those rights that should be universal to all human beings. That includes the right to speak freely, to assemble without fear, the right to the equal administration of justice, and to express your views without facing retribution against you or your families.

I want the Iranian people to know what my country stands for. The United States believes in the dignity of every human being and an international order that bends the arc of history in the direction of justice, a future where Iranians can exercise their rights, participate fully in the global economy, and enrich the world through educational and cultural exchanges beyond Iran's borders. That is the future that we seek. That is what America is for.

That is why, even as we continue to have differences with the Iranian Government, we will sustain our commitment to a more hopeful future for the Iranian people. For instance, by increasing opportunities for educational exchange

es so that Iranian students can come to our colleges and universities and through our efforts to ensure that Iranians can have access to the software and Internet technologies that will enable them to communicate with each other and with the world without fear of censorship.

Finally, let me be clear: We are working with the international community to hold the Iranian Government accountable because they refuse to live up to their international obligations. But our offer of comprehensive diplomatic contacts and dialogue stands. Indeed, over the course of the last year, it is the Iranian Government that has chosen to isolate itself and to choose a self-defeating focus on the past over a commitment to build a better future.

Last year, I quoted the words of the poet Saadi, who said, "The children of Adam are limbs to each other, having been created of one essence." I still believe that; I believe it with every fiber of my being. And even as we have differences, the Iranian Government continues to have the choice to pursue a better future and to meet its international responsibilities while respecting the dignity and fundamental human rights of its own people.

Thank you. And *Eid-eh Shoma Mobarak*.

NOTE: The President's remarks were videotaped at approximately 6 p.m. on March 19 in the Green Room at the White House for later broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released Arabic and Persian transcripts of these remarks.

## Statement on the Death of Stewart L. Udall *March 20, 2010*

For the better part of three decades, Stewart Udall served this Nation honorably. Whether in the skies above Italy in World War II, in Congress, or as Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall left an indelible mark on this Nation and inspired countless Americans who will continue

his fight for clean air, clean water, and to maintain our many natural treasures. Michelle and I extend our condolences to the entire Udall family, who continue his legacy of public service to this day.

## Remarks on House of Representatives Passage of Health Care Reform Legislation

March 21, 2010

Good evening, everybody. Tonight, after nearly 100 years of talk and frustration, after decades of trying, and a year of sustained effort and debate, the United States Congress finally declared that America's workers and America's families and America's small businesses deserve the security of knowing that here in this country, neither illness nor accident should endanger the dreams they've worked a lifetime to achieve.

Tonight, at a time when the pundits said it was no longer possible, we rose above the weight of our politics. We pushed back on the undue influence of special interests. We didn't give in to mistrust or to cynicism or to fear. Instead, we proved that we are still a people capable of doing big things and tackling our biggest challenges. We proved that this Government, a Government of the people and by the people, still works for the people.

I want to thank every Member of Congress who stood up tonight with courage and conviction to make health care reform a reality. And I know this wasn't an easy vote for a lot of people, but it was the right vote. I want to thank Speaker Nancy Pelosi for her extraordinary leadership and Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and Majority Whip Jim Clyburn for their commitment to getting the job done. I want to thank my outstanding Vice President, Joe Biden, and my wonderful Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, for their fantastic work on this issue. I want to thank the many staffers in Congress and my own incredible staff in the White House, who have worked tirelessly over the past year with Americans of all walks of life to forge a reform package finally worthy of the people we were sent here to serve.

Now, today's vote answers the dreams of so many who have fought for this reform. To every unsung American who took the time to sit down and write a letter or type out an e-mail hoping your voice would be heard, it has been heard tonight. To the untold numbers who knocked on doors and made phone calls, who

organized and mobilized out of a firm conviction that change in this country comes not from the top down, but from the bottom up, let me reaffirm that conviction: This moment is possible because of you.

Most importantly, today's vote answers the prayers of every American who has hoped deeply for something to be done about a health care system that works for insurance companies, but not for ordinary people. For most Americans, this debate has never been about abstractions, the fight between right and left, Republican and Democrat; it's always been about something far more personal. It's about every American who knows the shock of opening an envelope to see that their premiums just shot up again when times are already tough enough. It's about every parent who knows the desperation of trying to cover a child with a chronic illness only to be told no again and again and again. It's about every small-business owner forced to choose between insuring employees and staying open for business. They are why we committed ourselves to this cause.

Tonight's vote is not a victory for any one party; it's a victory for them. It's a victory for the American people, and it's a victory for common sense.

Now, it probably goes without saying that tonight's vote will give rise to a frenzy of instant analysis. There will be tallies of Washington winners and losers, predictions about what it means for Democrats and Republicans, for my poll numbers, for my administration. But long after the debate fades away and the prognostication fades away and the dust settles, what will remain standing is not the Government-run system some feared or the status quo that serves the interests of the insurance industry, but a health care system that incorporates ideas from both parties, a system that works better for the American people.

If you have health insurance, this reform just gave you more control by reining in the worst excesses and abuses of the insurance in-