

This reform of Federal student loan programs will save taxpayers \$68 billion over the next decade. And with this legislation, we're putting that money to use achieving a goal I set for America. By the end of this decade, we will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.

To make college more affordable for millions of middle class Americans for whom the cost of higher education has become an unbearable burden, we're expanding Federal Pell grants for students, increasing them to keep pace with inflation in the coming years and putting the program on a stronger financial footing. In total, we are doubling funding for the Federal Pell grant program to help students who depend on it.

To make sure our students don't go broke just because they chose to go to college, we're making it easier for graduates to afford their student loan payments. Today, about two in three graduates take out loans to pay for college. The average student ends up with more than \$23,000 in debt. So when this change takes effect in 2014, we'll cap a graduate's annual student loan repayments at 10 percent of his or her income.

To help an additional 5 million Americans earn degrees and certificates over the next decade, we're revitalizing programming at our community colleges, the career pathways for millions of dislocated workers and working families across this country. These schools are centers of learning, where students young and old can get the skills and technical training they need for the jobs of today and tomorrow. They're centers of opportunity as well, where we can forge partnerships between students

and businesses so that every community can gain the workforce it needs, and they are vital to our economic future.

And to ensure that all our students have every chance to live up to their full potential, this legislation also increases support for our minority-serving institutions, including our Historically Black Colleges and Universities, to keep them as strong as ever in this new century.

Education and health care, two of the most important pillars of a strong America, grew stronger this week. These achievements don't represent the end of our challenges, nor do they signify the end of the work that faces our country. But what they do represent is real and major reform. What they show is that we're a nation still capable of doing big things. What they prove is what's possible when we can come together to overcome the politics of the moment, push back on the special interests, and look beyond the next election to do what's right for the next generation.

That's the spirit in which we continue the work of tackling our greatest common tasks: an economy rebuilt, job creation revitalized, an American Dream renewed for all people.

Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:15 a.m. on March 26 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on March 27. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 26, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 27. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan in Kabul, Afghanistan

March 28, 2010

President Karzai. Well, Mr. President, welcome to Afghanistan on your second visit, this time as the President of the United States of America. I welcome you on behalf of the Afghan people and express the gratitude of our people for the help that America has given us

in the past 8 years, for the assistance given. And I hope that this process will continue into the future towards a stable, strong, peaceful Afghanistan that can sustain itself and that can move forward into the future with confidence and better hopes.

We had a good discussion on the issues between our two countries, about the region, and our continuing struggle against extremism and terrorism. We will be continuing our conversation later on. At this point, I suffice at welcoming President Barack Obama to Afghanistan with pleasure and once again expressing my gratitude to the American people for giving Afghanistan the taxpayers' money for the rebuilding and reestablishing better institutions in Afghanistan.

Welcome, Mr. President. As always, it's so good to have you.

President Obama. Thank you very much. And, Mr. President, thank you for your hospitality. It is wonderful to be back in Afghanistan. And to the Afghan people, the American people send greetings and are encouraged by the progress that's been made. I commented to the President that in coming into Kabul, you could see the change in terms of increased electricity production, which is just one sign, I think, of the progress that's—will continue to be made.

And I want to send a strong message that the partnership between the United States and Afghanistan is going to continue. We have seen already progress with respect to the military campaign against extremism in the region. But we also want to continue to make progress on the civilian process of ensuring that agricultural production, energy production, good governance, rule of law, anticorruption efforts—all these things end up resulting in a Afghanistan that is more prosperous, more secure, independent, is not subject to meddling by its neighbors, a transition will be able to occur so that

more and more security efforts are made by the Afghans.

And so we very much appreciate the partnership. And I expressed to the President that I'm going to be inviting him to visit Washington in May, and we intend to have a discussion about our long-term strategic interests between the two countries.

Let me finally say that one of the main reasons I'm here is to just say thank you to the incredible efforts of our U.S. troops and our coalition partners. They make tremendous sacrifices far away from home, and I want to make sure that they know how proud their Commander in Chief is of them. And so I'll have an opportunity to say thank you to them later.

I'm very pleased to see that there's been some excellent efforts in terms of partnering Afghan National Security Forces with U.S. and coalition forces. We think that points to the direction that all of us are interested in: a day when Afghanistan's going to be able to provide for its own security, but continue a long-term strategic partnership with the United States.

So thank you very much, Mr. President, for your hospitality, and—

President Karzai. Most welcome.

President Obama. —again, greetings to the Afghan people.

President Karzai. It's a pleasure and honor. Most welcome, Mr. President. Most welcome, Mr. President.

President Obama. All right? Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:15 p.m. at the Presidential Palace.

Remarks to United States and Coalition Troops at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan

March 28, 2010

The President. How's it going, Bagram? Well, you know, it turns out that the American people, they let me use this plane called Air Force One, and so I thought I'd come over and say hello.

Couple of people I want to thank, in addition to Sergeant Major Eric Johnson for the out-

standing introduction and his great service. I want to thank Major General Mike Scaparrotti. Thank you for your great work as commanding general. I want to thank Ms. Dawn Liberi, who's the senior civilian representative of Regional Command East, for her outstanding work; and Brigadier General Steven Kwast,