

with the same ferocity with which he used to block shots in the NBA. *[Laughter]* And I want to commend Dikembe on his outstanding leadership in giving back to his nation and his people and in honoring the life and legacy of Dr. King by doing such extraordinary acts of service.

The bottom line is, this is a difficult time. But we are here tonight to remember and celebrate a man who inspired a people and a nation to overcome another difficult time. That's why they sang "We Shall Overcome," because it was hard. There was something to overcome. We're all very familiar, of course, with the speech Dr. King delivered from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in the late summer of 1963. We're all familiar with the booming voice echoing across a sea of people from all corners of the country. We're familiar with the dream he described to a nation.

But what I don't think we stop to reflect on enough is the strength it took to articulate that dream. It would have been easy for Dr. King to rise to that podium and preach a message of division or hate or blame somebody else. This is a man whose own life and whose own family had been the target of attacks, a man who had been beaten, a man who had been stabbed, a man who had been jailed, a man who had been denied his most basic rights despite all the erudition, despite his fancy degrees, because of the color of his skin.

Throughout the land, he saw segregation still rife. Throughout the land he saw States and schools, Governors and police chiefs, unwilling to accept the onward march of history, unwilling to accept an expansion of the American Dream to include all of its citizens.

And yet despite all of this, despite the bitterness of the past, despite the difficulties of the present, despite the uncertainty of the future, Dr. King held fast to his dream. King rose to that podium and said, clear eyed and straight backed, to the multitude that had gathered, "Even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream."

So tonight let us remember the courage of the man who had that dream. Let us remember the perseverance of all those who have worked to fulfill that dream. Let us recommit ourselves to doing our part, in our own lives and as a nation, to make that dream real in the 21st century. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:38 p.m. at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. In his remarks, he referred to John J. DeGioia, president, Georgetown University; John Thompson, Jr., former head coach, Georgetown University men's basketball team; and Dikembe Mutombo, Georgetown University alumnus and former center, National Basketball Association's Houston Rockets. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 19.

Remarks at Graham Road Elementary School in Falls Church, Virginia *January 19, 2010*

Hello, everybody. You guys look really cute in those chairs. *[Laughter]*

I am pleased to be joined today by my outstanding Education Secretary, Arne Duncan, at Graham Road Elementary School, one of Virginia's finest schools. And here at Graham Road, they're using innovative approaches to provide effective teaching to all their students, and that's something that all of America's schools have to do.

As I said before, there are any number of actions we can take as a nation to enhance our competitiveness and secure a better future for

our people, but few of them will make as much of a difference as improving the way we educate our sons and daughters. Offering our children an outstanding education is one of our most fundamental—perhaps our most fundamental—obligation as a country. And whether we meet that obligation not only reflects who we are as Americans, it will shape our future as a nation. Countries that outeducate us today will outcompete us tomorrow, and I refuse to let that happen on my watch.

Now, it's clear that doing the same old things will not get the job done for our kids, or for

America, or for our future. So when I took office, I asked Arne Duncan to work with States and local school districts to take on business as usual in our education system, and that's how the Race to the Top competition was born last July. It's a national competition among States to improve our schools.

Over the past few months, we've seen such a positive response that today I'm announcing our intention to make a major new investment, more than \$1.3 billion in this year's budget to continue the Race to the Top. And this support will not only reaffirm our commitment to States engaged in serious reform, it will also expand the Race to the Top competition to include local school districts that are also committed to change, so innovative districts like the one in Texas whose reform efforts are being stymied by State decisionmakers will soon have the chance to earn funding to help them pursue those reforms.

After months of planning and preparation, the first round of Race to the Top applications is coming due today. And it's a sign of how much States and schools believe this initiative would benefit them that we're expecting significantly more States to apply than will actually receive a grant.

And here's how Race to the Top works. Last year, we set aside more than \$4 billion to improve our schools, one of the largest investments in reform in our Nation's history. But we didn't just hand this money out to States that wanted it; we challenged them to compete for it. And it's the competitive nature of this initiative that we believe helps make it so effective. We laid out a few key criteria and said if you meet these tests, we'll reward you by helping you reform your schools.

First, we encouraged States to adopt more challenging standards that will actually prepare our kids for college and their careers. We also encouraged schools to adopt better assessments, not just one-size-fits-all approaches, to measure what our kids know and what they're able to do.

Second, we urged schools and school districts to make sure we have excellent principals leading our schools and great teachers leading our classes by promoting rigorous

plans to develop and evaluate teachers and principals and by rewarding their success.

Third, we urged States to use cutting-edge data systems to track a child's progress throughout their academic career and to link that child's progress to their teachers so we know what's working and what's not working in the classroom.

Fourth, we encouraged States to show a stronger commitment to turning around some of their lowest performing schools.

And even before States have received a single dime of taxpayer money, many of them have committed to instituting important reforms to better position themselves for a Race to the Top grant. Forty-eight States have now joined a nationwide partnership to develop a common set of rigorous, career-ready standards in reading and math. Wisconsin has enacted legislation permitting schools to link student achievement to the performance of teachers and principals. In Illinois, Louisiana, Tennessee, California, we've seen changes in laws or policies to let public charter schools expand and succeed. These are public schools with more independence that are formed by teachers, parents, and community members.

So by rewarding some of these States submitting applications today, by extending the Race to the Top for States, by launching a Race to the Top among school districts, and by applying the principles of Race to the Top to other Federal programs, we'll build on this success. We're going to raise the bar for all our students and take bigger steps towards closing the achievement gap that denies so many students, especially Black and Latino students, a fair shot at their dreams.

We'll open up opportunity, evenly and equitably, across our education system. We'll develop a culture of innovation and excellence in our public schools. And we'll reward success and replicate it across the country. These are some of the principles that drive Race to the Top. These are some of the principles that will drive my forthcoming budget.

And these steps won't transform our education system overnight; not every school is going to be a Graham immediately. But they will help put us on a path to raise the quality of

American education, to prepare our children to succeed in their lives and in their careers, and to secure America's success in the 21st century.

That's a goal my administration will be focused on achieving in the months and years to come.

Thanks very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m.

Statement on the 50th Anniversary of the Signing of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between the United States of America and Japan *January 19, 2010*

The Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States of America and Japan was signed here in Washington 50 years ago today. On that day, President Dwight Eisenhower pledged to establish an indestructible partnership based on equality and mutual understanding. The enduring partnership between the United States of America and Japan has helped bring unprecedented prosperity and peace in freedom to our nations. Our alliance has secured extraordinary benefits for the entire Asia-Pacific region and made possible the unparalleled progress of the past five decades.

Today we commemorate the first half-century of this important alliance, which was founded on our shared values and our common interest in peace and security and reflects the abiding

ties between our citizens and institutions. America's commitment to Japan's security is unshakable and our cooperation to meet common challenges is a critical part of our engagement with the world. And just as we honor the countless Americans and Japanese who have built the ties that bind our nations, we also look to the future with a determination to build upon the foundation of their progress.

As we celebrate the anniversary of the treaty, we pay tribute to its role in supporting regional security and prosperity, and strengthening our two democracies. Let us now undertake to renew our alliance for the 21st century and enhance the bonds of friendship and common purpose that unite our nations.

Remarks on Signing a Memorandum Blocking Tax Delinquent Applicants from Obtaining Government Contracts *January 20, 2010*

Good morning, everybody. Before I start, let me introduce the folks behind me: obviously, the Vice President. In addition, we've got Senator Claire McCaskill, Congressman Ed Towns, Congressman Brad Ellsworth. We've got Douglas Shulman, who's the Commissioner of the IRS, and Jeffrey Zients, our Chief Performance Officer of the United States.

Here in our Nation's Capital, there are a number of ways to advance the ideals and interests of the American people. Often it's done through Congress. But it can also be done through what's called a Presidential memorandum, a directive that I give to Cabinet Secretaries and to Federal Government employees to change how our Government works. In a few moments, I will issue one of these directives to

help stop Government contracts from going to companies that are seriously delinquent in their taxes.

This is not simply a matter of signing a piece of paper or taking a bureaucratic act. By issuing this directive, all of us in Washington will be required to be more responsible stewards of your tax dollars.

All across this country, there are people who meet their obligations each and every day. You do your jobs. You support your families. You pay the taxes you owe, because it's a fundamental responsibility of citizenship. And yet somehow it's become standard practice in Washington to give contracts to companies that don't pay their taxes.