

## Statement on the Accident at the Dotiki Mine in Providence, Kentucky *April 30, 2010*

I am deeply saddened by the loss of two miners in Kentucky, and my thoughts and prayers are with the loved ones they left behind. As I said after the tragedy in West Virginia, I refuse to accept any number of miner deaths as simply the cost of mining. It is the responsibility of all of us, from mine operators to the Federal Government, to prevent such tragedies from happening again. That is why

my administration is taking steps to demand accountability for safety violations and strengthen mine safety so that all of our miners are protected.

NOTE: The statement referred to coal miners Justin Travis and Michael Carter, who were killed in the accident on April 29.

## The President's Weekly Address *May 1, 2010*

Over the past few weeks, as we've debated reforms to hold Wall Street accountable and protect consumers and small businesses in our financial system, we've come face to face with the great power of special interests in the workings of our democracy. Of course, this isn't a surprise. Every time a major issue arises, we've come to expect that an army of lobbyists will descend on Capitol Hill in the hopes of tilting the laws in their favor.

That's one of the reasons I ran for President, because I believe so strongly that the voices of ordinary Americans were being drowned out by the clamor of a privileged few in Washington. And that's why, since the day I took office, my administration has been taking steps to reform the system. Recently, however, the Supreme Court issued a decision that overturned decades of law and precedent, dealing a huge blow to our efforts to rein in this undue influence. In short, this decision gives corporations and other special interests the power to spend unlimited amounts of money—literally millions of dollars—to affect elections throughout our country. This in turn will multiply their influence over decisionmaking in our Government.

In the starkest terms, Members will know, when pressured by lobbyists, that if they dare to oppose that lobbyist's client, they could face an onslaught of negative advertisements in the runup to their next election. And corporations will be allowed to run these ads without ever

having to tell voters exactly who is paying for them. At a time when the American people are already being overpowered in Washington by these forces, this will be a new and even more powerful weapon that the special interests will wield.

In fact, it's exactly this kind of vast power that led a great Republican President, Teddy Roosevelt, to tackle this issue a century ago. He warned of the dangers of limitless corporate spending in our political system. He actually called it "one of the principal sources of corruption in our political affairs." And he proposed strict limits on corporate influence in elections. "Every special interest is entitled to justice," he said, "but not one is entitled to a vote in Congress, to a voice on the bench, or to representation in any public office."

In the wake of the recent Supreme Court ruling, we face a similar challenge. That's why it's so important that Congress consider new reforms to prevent corporations and other special interests from gaining even more clout in Washington. And almost all of these reforms are designed to bring new transparency to campaign spending. They're based on the principle espoused by former Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis that sunlight is the best disinfectant.

Shadowy campaign committees would have to reveal who's funding their activities to the American people. And when corporations and other special interests take to the airwaves,

whoever is running and funding the ad would have to appear in the advertisement and claim responsibility for it, like a company's CEO or an organization's biggest contributor. This will mean citizens can evaluate the claims in these ads with information about an organization's real motives.

We know how important this is. We've all seen groups with benign-seeming names sponsoring television commercials that make accusations and assertions designed to influence the public debate and sway voters' minds. Now, of course every organization has every right in this country to make their voices heard. But the American people also have the right to know when some group like "Citizens for a Better Future" is actually funded entirely by "Corporations for Weaker Oversight."

In addition, these reforms would address another troubling aspect of the Supreme Court's ruling. Under the bill Congress will consider, we'll make sure that foreign corporations and foreign nationals are restricted from spending money to influence American elections, just as they were in the past, even through U.S. subsidiaries. And we'll keep large contractors that receive taxpayer funds from interfering in our

elections as well to avoid the appearance of corruption and the possible misuse of tax dollars.

Now, we can expect that these proposed changes will be met with heavy resistance from the special interests and their supporters in Congress. But I'm calling on leaders in both parties to resist these pressures. For what we are facing is no less than a potential corporate takeover of our elections. And what is at stake is no less than the integrity of our democracy. This shouldn't be a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. This is an issue that goes to whether or not we will have a Government that works for ordinary Americans, a Government of, by, and for the people. That's why these reforms are so important. And that's why I'm going to fight to see them passed into law.

Thanks so much.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 6:10 p.m. on April 29 in the Red Room at the White House for broadcast on May 1. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 30, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 1. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

## Commencement Address at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan May 1, 2010

*The President.* Thank you, everybody. Please be seated.

*Audience member.* We love you!

*The President.* Oh, I love you back. [Laughter]

It is great to be here in the Big House—[applause]—and so may I say, "Go Blue!" [Applause] I thought I'd go for the cheap applause line to start things off. [Laughter]

Good afternoon, President Coleman, the board of trustees, to faculty, parents, family, and friends of the class of 2010. Congratulations on your graduation, and thank you for allowing me the honor of being a part of it. Let me acknowledge your wonderful Governor, Jennifer Granholm, your mayor, John Hieftje, and all the Members of Congress who are here today.

It is a privilege to be with you on this happy occasion, and you know, it's nice to spend a little time outside of Washington. [Laughter] Now, don't get me wrong, Washington is a beautiful city. It's very nice living above the store; you can't beat the commute. [Laughter] It's just, sometimes, all you hear in Washington is the clamor of politics. And all that noise can drown out the voices of the people who sent you there. So when I took office, I decided that each night I would read 10 letters out of the tens of thousands that are sent to us by ordinary Americans every day. This is my modest effort to remind myself of why I ran in the first place.

Some of these letters tell stories of heartache and struggle. Some express gratitude, some express anger. I'd say a good solid third call me an