

ernance, as committed to at the London Conference in January 2010.

President Obama and President Karzai underscored the importance of regional cooperation in promoting regional security and in combating illicit financial, criminal, and terrorist networks. Both Presidents also acknowledged the important support of Afghanistan's neighbors in facilitating trade and transit in the region, including for supplies needed for the stabilization and further development of Afghanistan.

A Forward-Looking, Long-Term Partnership

The United States and Afghanistan committed to a series of intensive, senior-level bilateral discussions to conclude with the signing of a strengthened U.S.-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Declaration in 2010, building on the U.S.-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Decla-

ration of 2005. Both Presidents concurred that these discussions would constitute a reinvigorated U.S.-Afghanistan Strategic Dialogue and focus on themes critical to our long-term relationship and enduring commitment, including: sovereignty, security, democratic development and institution building, economic and social development, and regional issues. The strengthened Strategic Partnership Declaration is expected to: reiterate the United States' and Afghanistan's shared vision and commitment to Afghanistan's future; clarify how Afghanistan plans to increasingly take on responsibility for its own security, justice, and development; and articulate how the United States plans to work with Afghanistan to enhance its ability to contribute to regional stability and prosperity.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Statement on Financial Regulatory Reform and Consumer Protection Legislation

May 12, 2010

Throughout the debate on Wall Street reform, I have urged Members of the Senate to fight the efforts of special interests and their lobbyists to weaken consumer protections. An amendment that the Senate will soon consider would do exactly that, undermining strong consumer protections with a special loophole for auto dealer-lenders. This amendment would carve out a special exemption for these lenders that would allow them to inflate rates, insert hidden fees into the fine print of paperwork, and include expensive add-ons that catch purchasers by surprise. This amendment guts provisions that empower consumers with clear information that allows them to make the financial decisions that work best for them and simply encourages misleading sales tactics that hurt American consumers. Unfortunately, countless families, particularly military fami-

lies, have been the target of these deceptive practices.

Claims by opponents of reform that this legislation unfairly targets auto dealers are simply mistaken. The fact is, auto dealer-lenders make nearly 80 percent of the automobile loans in our country, and these lenders should be subject to the same standards as any local or community bank that provides loans. Auto dealer-lenders offering transparent and fair financing products to their customers should welcome these reforms, which will make their competitors who don't play by the rules compete on a level playing field.

We simply cannot let lobbyist-inspired loopholes and special carve-outs weaken real reform that will empower American families. I urge the Senate to continue to defeat the efforts of special interests to weaken protections for all American consumers.

Statement on Energy Legislation *May 12, 2010*

I applaud Senators John Kerry and Joe Lieberman for their tireless work in drafting this important legislation. This legislation will put America on the path to a clean energy economy that will create American jobs building the solar panels, wind blades, and the car batteries of the future. It will strengthen our national security by beginning to break our dependence on foreign oil. And it will protect our environment for our children and grandchildren.

Americans know what's at stake by continuing our dependence on fossil fuels. But the challenges we face—underscored by the immense tragedy in the Gulf of Mexico—are reason to redouble our efforts to reform our Na-

tion's energy policies. For too long, Washington has kicked this challenge to the next generation. This time, the status quo is no longer acceptable to Americans. Now is the time for America to take control of our energy future and jump-start American innovation in clean energy technology that will allow us to create jobs, compete, and win in the global economy.

The House of Representatives has already taken historic action with passage of the American Clean Energy and Security Act. I look forward to engaging with Senators from both sides of the aisle and ultimately passing a bill this year.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Budget Amendments to Respond to the Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico *May 12, 2010*

Dear Madam Speaker:

The oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is a massive and potentially unprecedented environmental disaster that can seriously damage the economy and environment of our Gulf States and jeopardize the livelihoods of thousands of Americans who live throughout the Gulf region.

That is why since the initial explosion on the drilling rig occurred, the Federal Government has launched and coordinated a unified and relentless response to this crisis.

From day one of this spill, we made preparations to stage equipment and personnel for a worst-case scenario, and there is underway a sustained, multi-agency response to this disaster. My Administration and I will not rest—or be satisfied—until the leak is stopped at the source, the oil on the Gulf is contained and cleaned up, and the people of this region are able to go back to their lives and livelihoods.

Part of that effort is to hold BP, and other responsible parties in this spill, accountable for the crisis. The Federal Government will aggressively pursue full compensation for the contain-

ment and clean up, as well as any damages incurred because of this spill.

At the same time, I will spare no effort to clean up whatever damage is caused, assist those whose livelihoods have been affected by this spill, and restore the Gulf coast. We cannot allow the potentially protracted pursuit of claims to prevent us from swift action to help those harmed by this spill.

That is why I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed amendment to Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 proposals in my FY 2011 Budget.

The amendment includes General Provision proposals for the Departments of Labor, Agriculture, Commerce, Justice, the Interior, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, and the Treasury, and the Environmental Protection Agency. I request these proposals be considered as emergency requirements, since this request responds to urgent and essential needs.

The details of this request are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Together, these amendments will provide critical funds and authorities needed to respond