

like they deserve an up-or-down vote on legislation that would hold oil companies accountable for the disasters they cause, a vote that's also being blocked by the Republican leadership in the Senate. Right now the law places a \$75 million cap on the amount oil companies must pay to families and small businesses who suffer economic losses as a result of a spill like the one we're witnessing in the Gulf Coast. We should remove that cap. But the Republican leadership won't even allow a debate or a vote.

And as we speak today, 136 men and women who I've nominated for key positions in the Federal Government are still awaiting a vote on the floor of the Senate. All are highly qualified. Very few are controversial. The vast majority already have support from both parties. But most of them are seeing their nominations intentionally delayed by Republican leaders or even blocked altogether. They cannot get a vote. What this means is that, at a moment when our country is facing so many challenges, a time when we need all hands on deck, we can't get the qualified people we need to start the jobs they were appointed to do.

Look, the nature of our democracy is that we'll always have disagreements and debates, even heated ones. That's healthy, and it's important. But let's argue over genuine differences, over ideas and policies. And let's go into those debates with an open mind, a willingness to find common ground, and a conviction that,

in the end, one way or another, we'll have a vote to decide them.

Next week, I'll be meeting with a bipartisan group of Senators to discuss how we can transition away from our dependence on fossil fuels and embrace a clean energy future. I don't expect that we'll agree on a solution right away. In fact, I know that there will be plenty of disagreement and different ideas. But at least it shows that Republicans and Democrats can still sit down together in an attempt to tackle the big challenges facing our Nation.

I know the political season's upon us in Washington, but gridlock as a political strategy is destructive to the country. Whether we are Democrats or Republicans, we've got an obligation that goes beyond caring about the next election. We have an obligation to care for the next generation. So I hope that when Congress returns next week, they'll do so with a greater spirit of compromise and cooperation. America will be watching.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:10 p.m. on June 18 in the Red Room at the White House for broadcast on June 19. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 18, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 19. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

## Statement on the Observance of Juneteenth *June 19, 2010*

On this day 145 years ago, the people of Galveston, Texas, received word from members of the Union Army that those slaves who remained captive were now indeed free. More than 2 years after President Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation, the order read by Major General Gordon Granger made plain that the relationship between "former masters and slaves" would now be one of "employer and free laborer."

General Granger's pronouncement was one step in our continuing effort to perfect our Union and live out the ideals of our Founders. While we know it would be many years before

African descendants in America achieved the full rights offered through Lincoln's proclamation, that day in Texas, former slaves were offered the hope of embracing the American Dream as their own.

This occasion, which became known as Juneteenth, is now celebrated here in America and around the world and is a time not only to celebrate the rich heritage and many accomplishments of African Americans in our country, but also a time to reflect on the common values and ideals that we share as Americans.

Our Nation is stronger because of the generations of struggles for equal rights and social

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justice, and our culture is richer because of the contributions of African Americans throughout our history. This is why Juneteenth, while

rooted in the history of a people, can be celebrated by all Americans.

## Statement on China's Exchange Rate *June 19, 2010*

China's decision to increase the flexibility of its exchange rate is a constructive step that can help safeguard the recovery and contribute to

a more balanced global economy. I look forward to discussing these and other issues at the G-20 summit in Toronto next weekend.

## Remarks at a Father's Day Event *June 21, 2010*

Hello, everybody. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Thank you very much. Let me just begin by making a few acknowledgements. First of all, I've got some outstanding fathers here in the first row who aren't seeing their kids enough because I'm working them all the time—[*laughter*]*—three members of my Cabinet, Secretary of the Treasury Tim Geithner, Attorney General Eric Holder, and Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke, are here.*

In addition, we've got one of my heroes and I'm sure one of yours, somebody whose shoulders I stand on and allowed me to become President of the United States, and that's Congressman from the great State of Georgia, John Lewis, is here. A fierce advocate on behalf of the District of Columbia, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton is here.

I want to acknowledge the mayor of Washington, DC, Adrian Fenty in the house. The executive director of ARC, Edmund Fleet, is here. I want to thank all the panel discussion participants who are involved in today's events, and I want to thank Nurney Mason, a Washington, DC, icon. Nurney founded Mason's Barbershop in 1961—that's the year I was born—it's still going strong. He is here with his children and his grandchildren. Where is he? There he is right there. I could use a little trim so—[*laughter*].

One year ago this week, we kicked off a national conversation on fatherhood and personal responsibility, and members of our administration fanned out all across the country to hear from fathers and families about the chal-

lenges that they face. Secretary Arne Duncan, our Secretary of Education, held a discussion in New Hampshire about the link between fatherhood and educational achievement. Gary Locke talked to fathers in California about balancing the needs of their families with the demands of their jobs. Secretary Shinseki of Veterans Affairs held a town hall for military and veteran dads in North Carolina. And Attorney General Holder traveled to Georgia for a forum about fathers in our criminal justice system.

And in each of these places, each of these leaders posed a simple question: How can we as a nation—not just the Government, but businesses and community groups and concerned citizens—how can we all come together to help fathers meet their responsibilities to our families and communities?

And we did this because we know the vital role fathers play in the lives of our children. Fathers are our first teachers and coaches, or in my house, assistant teachers and assistant coaches—[*laughter*]*—to mom. But they're our mentors, our role models. They show us by the example they set the kind of people they want us to become.*

But we also know that what too many fathers being absent means—too many fathers missing from too many homes, missing from too many lives. We know that when fathers abandon their responsibilities, there's harm done to those kids. We know that children who grow up without a father are more likely to live in poverty. They're more likely to drop out of