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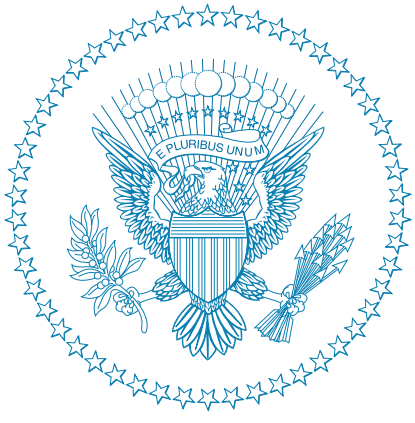
PUBLIC PAPERS OF THE PRESIDENTS
OF THE
UNITED STATES

Barack Obama



2010

(IN TWO BOOKS)

BOOK I—JANUARY 1 TO JUNE 30, 2010

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Foreword

By 2010, our economy was no longer teetering on the brink of collapse, but the American people were still feeling the effects of the worst recession since the Great Depression. We remained focused on creating jobs and providing relief to families and businesses. But it was also a time for change. We had to take on the challenges that Washington had avoided for too long, to work toward a more secure and more prosperous future for our children.

That effort began with our fight to make health care reform a reality—a fight that stretched back to the days of Teddy Roosevelt. While running for this office, I promised to make health care accessible and affordable to every American, thereby addressing one of the leading causes of our Nation's long-term deficit. It was a difficult fight, but in March, after nearly a century of talk, decades of trying, and a year of sustained effort and debate, the Affordable Care Act became the law of the land.

Health care reform was a historic step. But it wasn't the only measure we took in early 2010 to bring about meaningful change. We announced groundbreaking goals for the well-being of our children and communities with First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* initiative, which aims to end the epidemic of childhood obesity within a generation. We passed the HIRE Act to help small businesses grow and thrive. We signed the New START Treaty with Russia to reduce deployed nuclear arsenals to their lowest level in half a century. We cut tens of billions of dollars in tax subsidies to big banks and used the savings to help more Americans afford college. And I nominated Elena Kagan to serve on the Supreme Court, whose later confirmation meant that three women would serve on the Supreme Court for the first time.

The first half of 2010 was also a time of unexpected crises. In the wake of a devastating earthquake in Haiti, both the military and the American people sprang into action to provide medical care, deliver supplies, and offer relief to Haitians whose lives had been upended. And after an explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil platform caused hundreds of millions of gallons of oil to leak into the Gulf of Mexico, we coordinated a massive and ultimately successful response to stop the leak, clean up the spill, and help the people of the Gulf Coast recover.

The past 6 months have seen hard-fought compromise and long-awaited progress. They have reminded us of the resolve, generosity, and strength of the American people. We have responded to unexpected challenges and persistent injustices. And even though we continue to travel a long road to restored prosperity, I believe we will get there together—as one people and one Nation.

Preface

This book contains the papers and speeches of the President of the United States that were issued by the Office of the Press Secretary during the period January 1–June 30, 2010. The material has been compiled and published by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration.

The material is presented in chronological order, and the dates shown in the headings are the dates of the documents or events. In instances when the release date differs from the date of the document itself, that fact is shown in the textnote. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy: Remarks are checked against an audio recording, and signed documents are checked against the original. Textnotes and cross references have been provided by the editors for purposes of identification or clarity. Speeches were delivered in Washington, DC, unless indicated. The times noted are local times. All materials that are printed in full text in the book have been indexed in the subject and name indexes and listed in the document categories list.

The Public Papers of the Presidents series was begun in 1957 in response to a recommendation of the National Historical Publications Commission. An extensive compilation of messages and papers of the Presidents covering the period 1789 to 1897 was assembled by James D. Richardson and published under congressional authority between 1896 and 1899. Since then, various private compilations have been issued, but there was no uniform publication comparable to the Congressional Record or the United States Supreme Court Reports. Many Presidential papers could be found only in the form of mimeographed White House releases or as reported in the press. The Commission therefore recommended the establishment of an official series in which Presidential writings, addresses, and remarks of a public nature could be made available.

The Commission's recommendation was incorporated in regulations of the Administrative Committee of the Federal Register, issued under section 6 of the Federal Register Act (44 U.S.C. 1506), which may be found in title 1, part 10, of the Code of Federal Regulations.

A companion publication to the Public Papers series, the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, was begun in 1965 to provide a broader range of Presidential materials on a more timely basis to meet the needs of the contemporary reader. Beginning with the administration of Jimmy Carter, the Public Papers series expanded its coverage to include additional material as printed in the Weekly Compilation. On January 20, 2009, the printed Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents was superseded by the online Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents. The Daily Compilation provides a listing of the President's daily schedule and meetings, when announced, and other items of general interest issued by the Office of the Press Secretary. In 2012, the Government Printing Office and the Office of the Federal Register released a mobile web application (http://m.gpo.gov/dcpd) that catalogues the daily public activities of the President of the United States and enhances features of the online Daily Compilation with user-friendly search capability, allowing users to access Presidential content by date, category, subject, or location.

Also included in the printed edition are lists of the President's nominations submitted to the Senate, materials released by the Office of the Press Secretary that are not printed in full text in the book, and proclamations, Executive orders, and other Presidential documents released by the Office of the Press Secretary and published in the *Federal Register.* This information appears in the appendixes at the end of the book.

Volumes covering the administrations of Presidents Herbert Hoover, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald R. Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, William J. Clinton, and George W. Bush are also included in the Public Papers series.

The Public Papers of the Presidents publication program is under the direction of Michael L. White, Managing Editor, Office of the Federal Register. The series is produced by the Presidential and Legislative Publications Unit. The Chief Editor of this book was Laurice A. Clark, assisted by Lead Editors Joshua H. Liberatore, Amelia E. Otovo, and Joseph K. Vetter and unit editors Lois M. Davis, Michael J. Forcina, Joseph G. Frankovic, Heather N. McDaniel, Stacey A. Mulligan, and Matthew R. Regan.

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Charles A. Barth
Director of the Federal Register

David S. Ferriero
Archivist of the United States

Contents

Foreword . . . v

Preface . . . vii

Cabinet . . . xi

Public Papers of Barack Obama,
January 1–June 30, 2010 . . . 1

Appendix A
Digest of Other White House Announcements . . . 915

Appendix B
Nominations Submitted to the Senate . . . 957

Appendix C
Checklist of White House Press Releases . . . 973

Appendix D
Presidential Documents Published in the *Federal Register* . . . 993

Subject Index . . . A–1

Name Index . . . B–1

Document Categories List . . . C–1

Cabinet

Vice President	Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Secretary of State	Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of the Treasury	Timothy F. Geithner
Secretary of Defense	Robert M. Gates
Attorney General	Eric H. Holder, Jr.
Secretary of the Interior	Kenneth L. Salazar
Secretary of Agriculture	Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Commerce	Gary F. Locke
Secretary of Labor	Hilda L. Solis
Secretary of Health and Human Services	Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development	Shaun L.S. Donovan
Secretary of Transportation	Raymond H. LaHood
Secretary of Energy	Steven Chu
Secretary of Education	Arne Duncan
Secretary of Veterans Affairs	Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary of Homeland Security	Janet A. Napolitano
Chief of Staff	Rahm I. Emanuel
Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency	Lisa P. Jackson
United States Trade Representative	Ronald Kirk

Director of the Office of Management and Budget	Peter R. Orszag
Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers	Christina D. Romer
United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations	Susan E. Rice

Administration of Barack Obama

2010

The President's Weekly Address
January 2, 2010

It's now been more than a week since the attempted act of terrorism aboard the flight in Detroit on Christmas Day. On Thursday, I received the preliminary findings of the review that I ordered into our terrorist watch list system and air travel screening. I've directed my Counterterrorism and Homeland Security Adviser at the White House, John Brennan, to lead these reviews going forward and to present the final results and recommendations to me in the days to come.

As I said this week, I will do everything in my power to make sure our hard-working men and women in our intelligence, law enforcement, and homeland security communities have the tools and resources they need to keep America safe. This includes making sure these communities and the people in them are coordinating effectively and are held accountable at every level. And as President, that's what I'll do.

Meanwhile, the investigation into the Christmas Day incident continues, and we're learning more about the suspect. We know that he traveled to Yemen, a country grappling with crushing poverty and deadly insurgencies. It appears that he joined an affiliate of Al Qaida and that this group, Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, trained him, equipped him with those explosives, and directed him to attack that plane headed for America.

This is not the first time this group has targeted us. In recent years, they've bombed Yemeni Government facilities and Western hotels, restaurants, and Embassies, including our Embassy in 2008, killing one American. So, as President, I've made it a priority to strengthen our partnership with the Yemeni Government, training and equipping their security forces, sharing intelligence, and working with them to strike Al Qaida terrorists.

And even before Christmas Day, we had seen the results. Training camps have been struck, leaders eliminated, plots disrupted. And all those involved in the attempted act of terrorism on Christmas must know: You too will be held to account.

But these efforts are only part of a wider cause. It's been nearly a year since I stood on the steps of the U.S. Capitol and took the oath of office as your President. And with that oath came the solemn responsibility that I carry with me every moment of every day, the responsibility to protect the safety and security of the American people.

On that day, I also made it very clear our Nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred and that we will do whatever it takes to defeat them and defend our country, even as we uphold the values that have always distinguished America among nations.

Make no mistake, that's exactly what we've been doing. It's why I refocused the fight, bringing to a responsible end the war in Iraq, which had nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks, and dramatically increasing our resources in the region where Al Qaida is actually based, in Afghanistan and Pakistan. That's why I've set a clear and achievable mission to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida and its extremist allies and prevent their return to either country. And it's why we've forged new partnerships, as in Yemen, and put unrelenting pressure on these extremists wherever they plot and train, from East Africa to Southeast Asia, from Europe to the Persian Gulf.

And though often out of sight, our progress has been unmistakable. Along with our partners, we've disrupted terrorist financing, cut off recruiting chains, inflicted major losses on Al Qaida's leadership, thwarted plots here in the United States, and saved countless American lives.

Yet as the Christmas Day attempt illustrates, and as we were reminded this week by the sacrifices of more brave Americans in Afghanistan, including those seven dedicated men and women of the CIA, the hard work of protecting our Nation is never done. So as our reviews continue, let us ask the questions that need to be

asked. Let us make the changes that need to be made. Let us debate the best way to protect the country we all love. That's the right and responsibility of every American and every elected official.

But as we go forward, let us remember this: Our adversaries are those who would attack our country, not our fellow Americans, not each other. Let us never forget what has always carried us through times of trial, including those attacks eight Septembers ago.

Instead of giving in to fear and cynicism, let's renew that timeless American spirit of resolve and confidence and optimism. Instead of succumbing to partisanship and division, let's summon the unity that this moment demands. Let's work together, with a seriousness of purpose, to do what must be done to keep our country safe.

As we begin this new year, I can't imagine a more fitting resolution to guide us as a people and as a nation.

Happy New Year.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11 a.m. on January 1 at the Bali House in Kailua, Hawaii, for broadcast on January 2. In the address, the President referred to Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, suspect in the December 25, 2009, explosive device incident on Northwest Airlines Flight 253. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 1, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 2. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Meeting on Improving Homeland Security
January 5, 2010

Good afternoon, everybody. I just concluded a meeting with members of my national security team, including those from our intelligence, homeland security, and law enforcement agencies involved in the security reviews that I ordered after the failed attack on Christmas Day.

I called these leaders to the White House because we face a challenge of the utmost urgency. As we saw on Christmas, Al Qaida and its extremist allies will stop at nothing in their efforts to kill Americans. And we are determined not only to thwart those plans but to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat their networks once and for all.

Indeed, over the past year, we've taken the fight to Al Qaida and its allies wherever they plot and train, be it in Afghanistan and Pakistan, in Yemen and Somalia, or in other countries around the world.

Here at home, our intelligence, homeland security, and law enforcement agencies have worked together with considerable success, gathering intelligence, stitching it together, and making arrests—from Denver to Texas, from Illinois to New York—disrupting plots and saving American lives. And these successes have not come without a price, as we saw last week in the loss of our courageous CIA officers in Afghanistan.

But when a suspected terrorist is able to board a plane with explosives on Christmas Day, the system has failed in a potentially disastrous way. And it's my responsibility to find out why and to correct that failure so that we can prevent such attacks in the future.

And that's why, shortly after the attempted bombing over Detroit, I ordered two reviews. I directed Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano to review aviation screening technology and procedures. She briefed me on her initial findings today, and I'm pleased that this review is drawing on the best science and technology, including the expertise of Secretary of Energy Steven Chu and his Department.

I also directed my Counterterrorism and Homeland Security Adviser, John Brennan, to lead a thorough review into our terrorist watch-listing system so we can fix what went wrong. As we discussed today, this ongoing review continues to reveal more about the human and systemic failures that almost cost nearly 300 lives. We will make a summary of

this preliminary report public within the next few days, but let me share some of what we know so far.

As I described over the weekend, elements of our intelligence community knew that Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab had traveled to Yemen and joined up with extremists there. It now turns out that our intelligence community knew of other red flags, that Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula sought to strike not only American targets in Yemen but the United States itself. And we had information that this group was working with an individual who was known—who we now know was in fact the individual involved in the Christmas attack.

The bottom line is this: The U.S. Government had sufficient information to have uncovered this plot and potentially disrupt the Christmas Day attack. But our intelligence community failed to connect those dots, which would have placed the suspect on the no-fly list.

In other words, this was not a failure to collect intelligence, it was a failure to integrate and understand the intelligence that we already had. The information was there. Agencies and analysts who needed it had access to it. And our professionals were trained to look for it and to bring it all together.

Now, I will accept that intelligence, by its nature, is imperfect, but it is increasingly clear that intelligence was not fully analyzed or fully leveraged. That's not acceptable, and I will not tolerate it. Time and again, we've learned that quickly piecing together information and taking swift action is critical to staying one step ahead of a nimble adversary.

So we have to do better, and we will do better, and we have to do it quickly. American lives are on the line. So I made it clear today to my team, I want our initial reviews completed this week; I want specific recommendations for corrective actions to fix what went wrong; I want those reforms implemented immediately, so that this doesn't happen again and so we can prevent future attacks. And I know that every member of my team that I met with today understands the urgency of getting this right. And I appreciate that each of them took responsibility for the shortfalls within their own agencies.

Immediately after the attack, I ordered concrete steps to protect the American people: new screening and security for all flights, domestic and international, more explosive detection teams at airports, more air marshals on flights, and deepening cooperation with international partners.

In recent days, we've taken additional steps to improve security. Counterterrorism officials have reviewed and updated our terrorist watch list system, including adding more individuals to the no-fly list. And while our review has found that our watch-listing system is not broken, the failure to add Abdulmutallab to the no-fly list shows that this system needs to be strengthened.

The State Department is now requiring Embassies and consulates to include current visa information in their warning on individuals with terrorist or suspected terrorist connections. As of yesterday, the Transportation Security Administration, or TSA, is requiring enhanced screening for passengers flying into the United States from or flying through, nations on our list of state sponsors of terrorism or other countries of interest. And in the days ahead, I will announce further steps to disrupt attacks, including better integration of information and enhanced passenger screening for air travel.

Finally, some have suggested that the events on Christmas Day should cause us to revisit the decision to close the prison at Guantanamo Bay. So let me be clear: It was always our intent to transfer detainees to other countries only under conditions that provide assurances that our security is being protected.

With respect to Yemen in particular, there's an ongoing security situation, which we have been confronting for some time, along with our Yemeni partner. Given the unsettled situation, I've spoken to the Attorney General and we've agreed that we will not be transferring additional detainees back to Yemen at this time.

But make no mistake: We will close Guantanamo prison, which has damaged our national security interests and become a tremendous recruiting tool for Al Qaida. In fact, that was an explicit rationale for the formation of Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. And as I've always said, we will do so—we will close the prison in a

manner that keeps the American people safe and secure.

Our reviews, and the steps that we've taken and will continue to take, go to the heart of the kind of intelligence and homeland security we need in the 21st century. Just as Al Qaida and its allies are constantly evolving and adapting their efforts to strike us, we have to constantly adapt and evolve to defeat them, because as we saw on Christmas, the margin for error is slim and the consequences of failure can be catastrophic.

As these violent extremists pursue new havens, we intend to target Al Qaida wherever they take root, forging new partnerships to deny them sanctuary, as we are doing currently with the Government in Yemen. As our adversaries seek new recruits, we'll constantly review and rapidly update our intelligence and our institutions. As they refine our tactics, we'll enhance our defenses, including smarter screening and security at airports and investing in the technologies that might have detected the kind of explosives used on Christmas.

In short, we need our intelligence, homeland security, and law enforcement systems, and the people in them, to be accountable and to work as intended: collecting, sharing, integrating, analyzing, and acting on intelligence as quickly and effectively as possible to save innocent lives, not just most of the time, but all of the time. That's what the American people deserve. As President, that's exactly what I will demand.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:43 p.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, suspect in the December 25, 2009, explosive device incident on Northwest Airlines Flight 253. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Senator Byron L. Dorgan's Decision Not To Seek Reelection
January 5, 2010

Senator Dorgan should be very proud of his more than 30 years of devoted service in the United States Congress and to the people of North Dakota. From fighting for our energy future to standing with North Dakota's families through difficult economic times, Senator Dorgan has been a trusted leader for the people of his State. He has also been a champion for our family farmers and a powerful voice for Indian Country, particularly through his recent work to improve Indian health care services.

Michelle and I extend our gratitude for his service to our Nation and our very best wishes for the future for him and his family.

Remarks Honoring Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Educators
January 6, 2010

Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. Thank you. Well, it is wonderful to be here. Barbara, thank you for the outstanding introduction. I want to acknowledge a few other special guests that we have here. First of all, my terrific Vice President, mainly because he takes orders from Dr. Jill Biden. [*Laughter*] Dr. Jill Biden and Vice President Joe Biden are here. Somebody—I've never met somebody who's more passionate about making sure that young people do well than my Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan—Arne Duncan. My—before I won a Nobel Peace Prize, this guy had won it, and nobody questioned whether he deserved it or not—[*laughter*]—my Secretary of Energy, Steven Chu.

Three wonderful Members of Congress who have devoted a lot of energy to the issue of science and math education; I want to acknowledge them. Representative Bart Gor-

don, who's the chairman of the Science and Technology Committee, Democrat from Tennessee—where's Bart? There he is—thank you, Bart. Representative William Lacy Clay, from the great State of Missouri, and his district is home to two teachers who are being honored here today, so he's very proud of them. And a great champion of education generally, he's the chairman of the Education and Labor Committee, Representative George Miller of California who's in the house.

We also—since so many people were inspired in this country originally from our space program to think about math and science in new ways, it's terrific to have our NASA Administrator and former astronaut Charles Bolden in the house. We've got Regina Dugan, who is the Director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, or DARPA, as many of you know. We can thank them for the Internet and all kinds of other stuff. So please give Regina a big round of applause. And our National Science Foundation Director, Arden Bement, is here. Thank you so much, Arden.

Now, most importantly, to all the teachers who are here, as President, I am just thrilled to welcome you, teachers and mentors, to the White House, because I believe so strongly in the work that you do. And as I mentioned to some of you, because I've got two girls upstairs with math tests coming up, I figure that a little extra help from the best of the best couldn't hurt. So you're going to have assignments after this. [*Laughter*] These awards were not free. [*Laughter*]

We are here today to honor teachers and mentors like Barb who are upholding their responsibility not just to the young people who they teach, but to our country, by inspiring and educating a new generation in math and science. But we're also here because this responsibility can't be theirs alone. All of us have a role to play in building an education system that is worthy of our children and ready to help us seize the opportunities and meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Whether it's improving our health or harnessing clean energy, protecting our security or succeeding in the global economy, our future depends on reaffirming America's role as the world's engine of scientific discovery and technological innovation. And that leadership tomorrow depends on how we educate our students today, especially in math, science, technology, and engineering.

But despite the importance of education in these subjects, we have to admit we are right now being outpaced by our competitors. One assessment shows American 15-year-olds now ranked 21st in science and 25th in math when compared to their peers around the world. Think about that, 21st and 25th, that's not acceptable. And year after year the gap between the number of teachers we have and the number of teachers we need in these areas is widening. The shortfall is projected to climb past a quarter of a million teachers in the next 5 years, and that gap is most pronounced in predominately poor and minority schools.

And meanwhile, other nations are stepping up, a fact that was plain to see when I visited Asia at the end of last year. The President of South Korea and I were having lunch, and I asked him, What's the biggest education challenge that you have? He told me his biggest challenge in education wasn't budget holes, it wasn't crumbling schools, it was that the parents were too demanding. [*Laughter*] He's had to import thousands of foreign teachers because parents insisted on English language training in elementary school. The mayor of Shanghai, China, a city of over 20 million people, told me that even in such a large city, they had no problem recruiting teachers in whatever subject, but particularly math and science, because teaching is revered and the pay scales are comparable to professions like doctors.

So make no mistake: Our future is on the line. The nation that outeducates us today is going to outcompete us tomorrow. To continue to cede our leadership in education is to cede our position in the world. That's not acceptable to me, and I know it's not acceptable to any of you. And that's why my administration has set a clear goal: to move from the middle to the top of the pack in science and math education over the next decade.

To reach this goal, we've paid particular attention to how we can better prepare and support, reward and retain, good teachers. So the

Recovery Act included the largest investment in education by the Federal Government in history while preventing more than 300,000 teachers and school workers from being fired because of State budget shortfalls. The Department of Education will be announcing an additional $10 [$100]* million in grants for innovative programs to train new teachers, whether a young person embarking on his or her first career, or a scientist or engineer starting his or her second.

And under the outstanding leadership of Arne Duncan, we've launched a $4 billion Race to the Top Fund, one of the largest investments in education reform in history. Through the Race to the Top, States are competing for funding, and producing the most innovative programs in science and math will be an advantage in this competition, as will allowing scientists and statisticians and engineers to more easily become teachers. We want States and school districts to start being more creative about how they can attract more science and math teachers.

We're also pursuing reforms to better serve America's math and science teachers so that each and every one can be as effective as the educators that we honor today. So we're challenging States to raise standards, to use data to better inform decisions, to recruit and retain more good teachers, and to promote stronger curricula that encourage young people to not only learn the facts in a textbook, but to explore and discover the world around them.

Now as important as this will be, the success we seek is not going to be attained by government alone. And that's why I've challenged the scientific community to think of new and creative ways to engage young people in their fields. That's why we launched the "Educate to Innovate" campaign, a nationwide effort by citizens, non-for-profits, universities, and companies from across America to help us move to the top of the pack in math and science education.

And today we're expanding this campaign. Several new public-private partnerships are going to offer additional training to more than 100,000 teachers and prepare more than 10,000 new teachers in the next 5 years alone. And through the partnerships we are announcing today, support for the "Educate to Innovate" campaign has doubled to more than half a billion dollars in private funding. That's a figure that we only expect to grow.

To help educators already in the classroom, Intel is launching a 10-year, $200 million campaign to train math and science teachers in all 50 States to better use new technologies and techniques in their lessons plans. PBS and the National Science Teachers Association will also create a new online platform so science and math teachers can share best practices and learn from one another.

To bring more educators into the classroom, the National Math and Science Initiative is working with Texas Instruments and the Dell Foundation to prepare almost 5,000 new math and science teachers in the next 5 years through a program that allows young people to earn teaching certificates and science degrees at the same time. And presidents from more than 75 of the largest public universities in the country have committed to produce thousands of additional science and math teachers at their institutions. And the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation is expanding, with the help of several States and nonprofits, to place more math and science teachers in more high-need schools.

And just because you aren't a teacher, that doesn't mean you can't help educate our young people. We need to look no further than the mentors that we honor here today. I'm calling on all 200,000 scientists who work for the Federal Government to do their part in their communities: to speak at schools, to create hands-on learning opportunities through efforts like National Lab Day, and to help stoke that same curiosity in students which perhaps led them to pursue a career in science in the first place. NASA will also be launching an enrichment program to bring their scientists and engineers to students in the classroom and to bring students to NASA, so that they might experience that same sense of won-

* White House correction.

der and excitement while maybe learning a little bit at the same time.

And finally, as President, I'm going to try to do my part. We've held science-themed events like astronomy night here at the White House. That was very fun, by the way. [*Laughter*] We're planning an annual science fair to honor the student winners of national science and technology competitions. Secretary Duncan and I will be working to promote the teaching profession to show young people that teaching is one of the best and most rewarding ways to serve our country. And we are of course recognizing the folks in this room with awards for excellence in teaching and mentoring.

It's with these men and women that I'd like to conclude today, because in the end, the work that you do and the difference you make are what all these reforms are all about. Whether it's showing students how to record the habits of a resident reptile or teaching kids to test soil samples on a class trip to Costa Rica, whether it's helping young people from tough neighborhoods in Chicago to become junior paleontologists or creating a mentoring program that connects engineering students with girls and minorities, who are traditionally underserved in the field, all of you are demonstrating why teaching and mentoring is so important, and why we have to support you, equip you, and send in some reinforcements for you.

Every person in this room remembers a teacher or mentor that made a difference in their lives. Every person in this room remembers a moment in which an educator showed them something about the world, or something about themselves, that changed their lives. It could be a word of encouragement, a helping hand, a lesson that sparked a question that ignited a passion and ultimately may have propelled a career. And innovators, folks like Michael Dell who are here today, are made in those moments. Scientists and engineers are made in those moments; doctors are made in those moments; teachers are made in those moments, those small interactions.

So yes, improving our schools is about training a new generation of workers and succeeding in new industries. But a good education, provided with the help of great teachers and mentors, is about something more. It's about instilling in a young person a love of learning and a sense of possibility in their own lives, an understanding of the world around them that will serve them no matter what they do. That's what we have to do as a nation. That's what all of you do every day. And that's what, at root, will lead to greater opportunities and brighter horizons for the next generation and for generations to come.

So thank you very much everybody. Congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:46 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Barbara Stoflet, recipient of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching; President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea; Mayor Han Zheng of Shanghai, China; and Michael S. Dell, founder and member of the board of directors, Michael & Susan Dell Foundation.

Statement on Senator Christopher J. Dodd's Decision Not To Seek Reelection

January 6, 2010

From his time as a young Peace Corps volunteer to his five terms in the United States Senate, Chris Dodd has devoted his life to public service. Over the years, he has worked tirelessly to improve the lives of our children and families, support good jobs for hard-working Americans, and keep our Nation strong and prosperous, building a remarkable record of achievement for the people of Connecticut and our country. While his work in the Senate is not yet finished, his leadership in that institution will be missed.

Michelle and I extend our thanks to Senator Dodd for his service to our Nation and offer our best wishes for the future to him and his family.

Remarks on Improving Homeland Security
January 7, 2010

Good afternoon, everybody. The immediate reviews that I ordered after the failed Christmas terrorist attack are now complete. I was just briefed on the findings and recommendations for reform, and I believe it's important that the American people understand the new steps that we're taking to prevent attacks and keep our country safe.

This afternoon my Counterterrorism and Homeland Security Adviser, John Brennan, will discuss his review into our terrorist watch list system, how our Government failed to connect the dots in a way that would have prevented a known terrorist from boarding a plane for America, and the steps we're going to take to prevent that from happening again.

Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano will discuss her review of aviation screening, technology, and procedures, how that terrorist boarded a plane with explosives that could have killed nearly 300 innocent people, and how we'll strengthen aviation security going forward.

So today I want to just briefly summarize their conclusions and the steps that I've ordered to address them. In our ever-changing world, America's first line of defense is timely, accurate intelligence that is shared, integrated, analyzed, and acted upon quickly and effectively. That's what the intelligence reforms after the 9/11 attacks largely achieved. That's what our intelligence community does every day. But unfortunately, that's not what happened in the lead-up to Christmas Day. It's now clear that shortcomings occurred in three broad and compounding ways.

First, although our intelligence community had learned a great deal about the Al Qaida affiliate in Yemen called Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula—that we knew that they sought to strike the United States, and that they were recruiting operatives to do so—the intelligence community did not aggressively follow up on and prioritize particular streams of intelligence related to a possible attack against the homeland.

Second, this contributed to a larger failure of analysis, a failure to connect the dots of intelligence that existed across our intelligence community and which together could have revealed that Abdulmutallab was planning an attack.

Third, this in turn fed into shortcomings in the watch-listing system, which resulted in this person not being placed on the no-fly list, thereby allowing him to board that plane in Amsterdam for Detroit.

In sum, the U.S. Government had the information—scattered throughout the system—to potentially uncover this plot and disrupt the attack. Rather than a failure to collect or share intelligence, this was a failure to connect and understand the intelligence that we already had.

Now, that's why we took swift action in the immediate days following Christmas, including reviewing and updating the terrorist watch list system and adding more individuals to the no-fly list and directing our Embassies and consulates to include current visa information in their warnings of individuals with terrorist or suspected terrorist ties.

Today I'm directing a series of additional corrective steps across multiple agencies. Broadly speaking, they fall into four areas.

First, I'm directing that our intelligence community immediately begin assigning specific responsibility for investigating all leads on high-priority threats so that these leads are pursued and acted upon aggressively, not just most of the time, but all of the time. We must follow the leads that we get, and we must pursue them until plots are disrupted. And that means assigning clear lines of responsibility.

Second, I'm directing that intelligence reports, especially those involving potential threats to the United States, be distributed more rapidly and more widely. We can't sit on information that could protect the American people.

Third, I'm directing that we strengthen the analytical process, how our analysis—how our analysts process and integrate the intelligence

that they receive. My Director of National Intelligence, Denny Blair, will take the lead in improving our day-to-day efforts. My Intelligence Advisory Board will examine the longer term challenge of sifting through vast universes of intelligence and data in our information age.

And finally, I'm ordering an immediate effort to strengthen the criteria used to add individuals to our terrorist watch lists, especially the no-fly list. We must do better in keeping dangerous people off airplanes while still facilitating air travel.

So taken together, these reforms will improve the intelligence community's ability to collect, share, integrate, analyze, and act on intelligence swiftly and effectively. In short, they will help our intelligence community do its job even better and protect American lives.

But even the best intelligence can't identify in advance every individual who would do us harm. So we need the security—at our airports, ports, and borders, and through our partnerships with other nations—to prevent terrorists from entering America.

At the Amsterdam airport, Abdulmutallab was subjected to the same screening as other passengers. He was required to show his documents, including a valid U.S. visa. His carry-on bag was x-rayed. He passed through a metal detector. But a metal detector can't detect the kind of explosives that were sewn into his clothes.

As Secretary Napolitano will explain, the screening technologies that might have detected these explosives are in use at the Amsterdam airport, but not at the specific checkpoints that he passed through. Indeed, most airports in the world and in the United States do not yet have these technologies. Now, there's no silver bullet to securing the thousands of flights into America each day, domestic and international. It will require significant investments in many areas. And that's why, even before the Christmas attack, we increased investments in homeland security and aviation security. This includes an additional $1 billion in new systems and technologies that we need to protect our airports: more baggage screening, more passenger screening, and more advanced explosive detection capabilities, including those that can improve our ability to detect the kind of explosive used on Christmas. These are major investments, and they'll make our skies safer and more secure.

Now, as I announced this week, we've taken a whole range of steps to improve aviation screening and security since Christmas, including new rules for how we handle visas within the Government and enhanced screening for passengers flying from or through certain countries.

And today I'm directing that the Department of Homeland Security take additional steps, including strengthening our international partnerships to improve aviation screening and security around the world, greater use of the advanced explosive detection technologies that we already have, including imaging technology, and working aggressively in cooperation with the Department of Energy and our national labs to develop and deploy the next generation of screening technologies.

Now, there is, of course, no foolproof solution. As we develop new screening technologies and procedures, our adversaries will seek new ways to evade them, that was—as was shown by the Christmas attack. In the never-ending race to protect our country, we have to stay one step ahead of a nimble adversary. That's what these steps are designed to do. And we will continue to work with Congress to ensure that our intelligence, homeland security, and law enforcement communities have the resources they need to keep the American people safe.

I ordered these two immediate reviews so that we could take immediate action to secure our country. But in the weeks and months ahead, we will continue a sustained and intensive effort of analysis and assessment so that we leave no stone unturned in seeking better ways to protect the American people.

I have repeatedly made it clear—in public with the American people and in private with my national security team—that I will hold my staff, our agencies, and the people in them accountable when they fail to perform their responsibilities at the highest levels.

Now, at this stage in the review process, it appears that this incident was not the fault of a single individual or organization, but rather a systemic failure across organizations and agen-

cies. That's why, in addition to the corrective efforts that I've ordered, I've directed agency heads to establish internal accountability reviews and directed my national security staff to monitor their efforts. We will measure progress. And John Brennan will report back to me within 30 days and on a regular basis after that. All of these agencies and their leaders are responsible for implementing these reforms, and all will be held accountable if they don't.

Moreover, I am less interested in passing out blame than I am in learning from and correcting these mistakes to make us safer, for ultimately, the buck stops with me. As President, I have a solemn responsibility to protect our Nation and our people. And when the system fails, it is my responsibility.

Over the past 2 weeks, we've been reminded again of the challenge we face in protecting our country against a foe that is bent on our destruction. And while passions and politics can often obscure the hard work before us, let's be clear about what this moment demands. We are at war. We are at war against Al Qaida, a far-reaching network of violence and hatred that attacked us on 9/11, that killed nearly 3,000 innocent people, and that is plotting to strike us again. And we will do whatever it takes to defeat them.

And we've made progress. Al Qaida's leadership is hunkered down. We have worked closely with partners, including Yemen, to inflict major blows against Al Qaida leaders. And we have disrupted plots at home and abroad and saved American lives.

And we know that the vast majority of Muslims reject Al Qaida. But it is clear that Al Qaida increasingly seeks to recruit individuals without known terrorist affiliations, not just in the Middle East, but in Africa and other places, to do their bidding. That's why I've directed my national security team to develop a strategy that addresses the unique challenges posed by lone recruits. And that's why we must communicate clearly to Muslims around the world that Al Qaida offers nothing except a bankrupt vision of misery and death, including the murder of fellow Muslims, while the United States stands with those who seek justice and progress.

To advance that progress, we've sought new beginnings with Muslim communities around the world, one in which we engage on the basis of mutual interest and mutual respect and work together to fulfill the aspirations that all people share: to get an education, to work with dignity, to live in peace and security. That's what America believes in. That's the vision that is far more powerful than the hatred of these violent extremists.

Here at home we will strengthen our defenses, but we will not succumb to a siege mentality that sacrifices the open society and liberties and values that we cherish as Americans, because great and proud nations don't hunker down and hide behind walls of suspicion and mistrust. That is exactly what our adversaries want, and so long as I am President, we will never hand them that victory. We will define the character of our country, not some band of small men intent on killing innocent men, women, and children.

And in this cause, every one of us—every American, every elected official—can do our part. Instead of giving into cynicism and division, let's move forward with the confidence and optimism and unity that defines us as a people. For now is not a time for partisanship, it's a time for citizenship, a time to come together and work together with the seriousness of purpose that our national security demands.

That's what it means to be strong in the face of violent extremism. That's how we will prevail in this fight. And that's how we will protect our country and pass it safer and stronger to the next generation.

Thanks very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:34 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, suspect in the December 25, 2009, explosive device incident on Northwest Airlines Flight 253.

Statement on the Great Feast of the Nativity
January 7, 2010

To those of the Orthodox Christian faith who are celebrating the Great Feast of the Nativity today, Michelle and I wanted to extend our warmest wishes to you and your family. The holiday season is a time to reflect upon and cherish what's most important in life: our most deeply held values, the love of friends and family, and the bond of community and country. May this continue to be a time of fellowship and generosity to our fellow citizens.

Memorandum on the Attempted Terrorist Attack on December 25, 2009: Intelligence, Screening, and Watchlisting System Corrective Actions
January 7, 2010

Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, the Secretary Energy, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Director of National Intelligence, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Director of the National Security Agency, the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center

Subject: Attempted Terrorist Attack on December 25, 2009: Intelligence, Screening, and Watchlisting System Corrective Actions

After receiving the conclusions of the White House-led review of the U.S. watchlisting system and the performance of the intelligence, homeland security, and law enforcement communities as related to the attempt to bring down a Detroit-bound flight on December 25 by detonating an explosive device, and a Department of Homeland Security-led review on Aviation Screening, Technology and Procedures; I have concluded that immediate actions must be taken to enhance the security of the American people. These actions are necessary given inherent systemic weakness and human errors revealed by the review of events leading up to December 25th. They also are required to ensure that standards, practices, and business processes that have been in place since the aftermath of 9/11 are appropriately robust to address the evolving terrorist threat facing our Nation in the coming years.

Department of State

- Review visa issuance and revocation criteria and processes, with special emphasis on counterterrorism concerns; determine how technology enhancements can facilitate and strengthen visa-related business processes.

Department of Homeland Security

- Aggressively pursue enhanced screening technology, protocols, and procedures, especially in regard to aviation and other transportation sectors, consistent with privacy rights and civil liberties; strengthen international partnerships and coordination on aviation security issues.
- Develop recommendations on long-term law enforcement requirements for aviation security in coordination with the Department of Justice.

Director of National Intelligence

- Immediately reaffirm and clarify roles and responsibilities of the counterterrorism analytic components of the Intelligence Community in synchronizing, correlating, and analyzing all sources of intelligence related to terrorism.
- Accelerate the information technology enhancements, to include knowledge discovery, database integration, cross-database searches, and the ability to correlate

biographic information with terrorism-related intelligence.

- Take further steps to enhance the rigor and raise the standard of tradecraft of intelligence analysis, especially analysis designed to uncover and prevent terrorist plots.
- Ensure resources are properly aligned with issues highlighted in strategic warning analysis.

The Central Intelligence Agency

- Issue guidance aimed at ensuring the timely distribution of intelligence reports.
- Strengthen procedures related to how watchlisting information is entered, reviewed, searched, analyzed, and acted upon.

Federal Bureau of Investigation/Terrorist Screening Center

- Conduct a thorough review of Terrorist Screening Database holdings and ascertain current visa status of all "known and suspected terrorists," beginning with the No Fly list.
- Develop recommendations on whether adjustments are needed to the watchlisting Nominations Guidance, including biographic and derogatory criteria for inclusion in the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment and Terrorist Screening Database, as well as the subset Selectee No Fly lists.

National Counterterrorism Center

- Establish and resource appropriately a process to prioritize and to pursue thoroughly and exhaustively terrorism threat threads, to include the identification of appropriate follow-up action by the intelligence, law enforcement, and homeland security communities.
- Establish a dedicated capability responsible for enhancing record information on possible terrorists in the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment for watchlisting purposes.

National Security Agency

- Develop and begin implementation of a training course to enhance analysts' awareness of watchlisting processes and procedures in partnership with National Counterterrorism Terrorist Center and the Terrorist Screening Center.

National Security Staff

- Initiate an interagency policy process to review the systemic failures leading to the attempted terror attack on December 25, 2009, in order to make needed policy adjustments and to clarify roles and responsibilities within the counterterrorism community.
- Initiate an interagency review of the watchlisting process, including business processes, procedures, and criteria for watchlisting, and the interoperability and sufficiency of supporting information technology systems.

I have designated my Assistant for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John Brennan to be the responsible and accountable White House official to ensure rapid progress is made in all areas. A monthly status report on actions underway should be submitted to be through Mr. Brennan. In addition, I am directing Mr. Brennan to work with departments and agencies and the Office of Management and Budget on resource requirements that are necessary to address the shortcomings uncovered by our review. Finally, I will ask my Intelligence Advisory Board to look at broader analytic and intelligence issues associated with this incident, including how to meet the challenge associated with exploiting the ever-increasing volume of information

available to the Intelligence Community. As we go forward, it is imperative that we work together to correct problems highlighted by this incident, focusing on concrete solutions. We are all responsible for the safety and security of the American people and must redouble our efforts to be effective in carrying out this solemn responsibility.

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks on the Economy and Clean Energy
January 8, 2010

Good afternoon, everybody. Before I announce a significant new investment we're making in clean energy, I want to give an update on a matter of concern to every American, and that's our employment picture.

The jobs numbers that were released by the Labor Department this morning are a reminder that the road to recovery is never straight and that we have to continue to work every single day to get our economy moving again. For most Americans, and for me, that means jobs. It means whether we are putting people back to work.

Job losses for the last quarter of 2009 were one-tenth of what we were experiencing in the first quarter. In fact, in November, we saw the first gain in jobs in nearly 2 years. Now, last month, however, we slipped back, losing more jobs than we gained, though the overall trend of job loss is still pointing in the right direction.

What this underscores, though, is that we have to continue to explore every avenue to accelerate the return to hiring, which brings me to my announcement today. The Recovery Act has been a major force in breaking the trajectory of this recession and stimulating growth and hiring. And one of the most popular elements of it has been a clean energy manufacturing initiative that will put Americans to work while helping America gain the lead when it comes to clean energy.

It's clear why such an effort is so important. Building a robust clean energy sector is how we will create the jobs of the future, jobs that pay well and can't be outsourced. But it's also how we will reduce our dangerous dependence on foreign oil, a dependence that endangers our economy and our security. And it is how we will combat the threat of climate change and leave our children a planet that's safer than the one we inherited.

Now, harnessing new forms of energy will be one of the defining challenges of the 21st century. And unfortunately, right now the United States, the Nation that pioneered the use of clean energy, is being outpaced by nations around the world. It's China that has launched the largest effort in history to make their economy energy efficient. We spearheaded the development of solar technology, but we've fallen behind countries like Germany and Japan in producing it. And almost all of the batteries that we use to power our hybrid vehicles are still manufactured by Japanese companies or in Asia. Though, because of one of the steps like the one we're taking today, we're beginning to produce more of these batteries here at home.

Now, I welcome and am pleased to see a real competition emerging around the world to develop these kinds of clean energy technologies. Competition is what fuels innovation. But I don't want America to lose that competition. I don't want the industries that yield the jobs of tomorrow to be built overseas. I don't want the technology that will transform the way we use energy to be invented abroad. I want the United States of America to be what it has always been, and that is a leader—the leader—when it comes to a clean energy future.

And that's exactly what this clean energy manufacturing initiative will help us do. It will help close the clean energy gap that's grown between America and other nations. Through this initiative, we're awarding $2.3 billion in tax credits for American manufacturers of clean energy technologies, companies that build wind turbines, and produce solar panels, and assemble cutting-edge batteries. The initiative we're outlining today will likely generate 17,000 jobs, and the roughly $5 billion more that we'll leverage in the private sector investments could help create tens of thousands of additional jobs.

At the same time, this initiative will give a much needed boost to our manufacturing sector by building new plants or upgrading old ones. And we'll take an important step toward meeting the goal I've set of doubling the amount of renewable power we use in the next 3 years with wind turbines and solar panels built right here in the U.S. of A. Put simply, this initiative is good for middle class families. It is good for our security. It's good for our planet.

Over 180 projects in over 40 States will receive these tax credits. And one of them is TPI Composites, Inc., which is based in Newton, Iowa, one of America's leading wind turbine manufacturers. Because of these tax credits, TPI Composites will not only be able to expand an existing facility in Newton, they'll not only be able to build a brand new facility in Nebraska, they'll also be able to hire over 200 new workers. And it's my hope that similar stories will be told in cities and towns across America because of this initiative.

In fact, this initiative has been so popular that we've—we have far more qualified applicants than we've been able to fund. We received requests for roughly three times as much in funding—$7.6 billion—as we could provide. And that's why, as part of the jobs package on which I'm urging Congress to act, I've called for investing another 5 billion in this program, which could put even more Americans to work right away building and equipping clean energy manufacturing facilities here in the United States.

You know, in the letters that I receive at night, and I—many of you know I get about 10 letters a night that I take a look at—I often hear from Americans who are facing hard times, Americans who've lost their jobs or can't afford to pay their bills; they're worried about what the future holds. I am confident that if we harness the ingenuity of companies like TPI Composites, if we can tap the talents of our workers and our innovators and our entrepreneurs, if we can gain the lead in clean energy worldwide, then we'll forge a future where a better life is possible in our country over the long run. That's a future we're now closer to building because of the steps that we're taking today.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:14 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

The President's Weekly Address
January 9, 2010

A year ago, when I took office in the midst of the worst recession since the Great Depression, I promised you two things. The first was that there would be better days ahead. And the second was that the road to recovery would be long and sometimes bumpy.

That was brought home again yesterday. We learned that in November, our economy saw its first month of job gains in nearly 2 years, but last month, we lost more than we gained. Now, we know that no single month makes a trend, and job losses for the final quarter of 2009 were one-tenth of what they were in the first quarter. But until we see a trend of good, sustainable job creation, we will be relentless in our efforts to put America back to work.

That task goes even deeper than replacing the 7 million jobs that have been lost over the past 2 years. We need to rebuild our economy in such a way that our families can feel a measure of security again. Too many of the folks I've talked with this year, and whose stories I read in letters at night, tell me that they've known their own private recessions since long before economists declared one, and they'll still feel the recession long after economists have declared it over.

And that's because for decades, Washington avoided doing what was right in favor of doing what was easy. And the result was an economy where some made out well, but the middle class too often took a beating.

Over the past decade, the income of the average household actually declined, and we lost

as many jobs as we created. Hard-working folks who did everything right suddenly found themselves forced to downscale their dreams because of economic factors beyond their control. We're talking about simple dreams, American dreams: a good job with a good wage, a secure and dignified retirement, stable health care so you don't go broke just because you get sick, the chance to give our kids a better shot than we got.

And that's why, as we begin to emerge from this crisis, we will not return to that complacency that helped cause the crisis. Even as we focus on putting America back to work, we're building a new foundation for our economy to create the good, lasting jobs and shared prosperity of tomorrow.

We're making historic investments in science and in the clean energy economy that will generate and keep the jobs and industries of the future right here in America. We're reforming our education system so that our kids are fully prepared to compete with workers anywhere in the world and win the race for the 21st century. We're fixing our broken health insurance system that's crushing families, eating away at workers' take-home pay, and nailing small businesses with double-digit premium increases.

And that's what I'd like to focus on for a moment. After a long and thorough debate, we are on the verge of passing health insurance reform that will finally offer Americans the security of knowing they'll have quality, affordable health care whether they lose their job, change their jobs, move, or get sick. The worst practices of the insurance industry will be forever banned. And costs will finally come down for families, businesses, and our Government.

Now, it'll take a few years to fully implement these reforms in a responsible way. But what every American should know is that once I sign health insurance reform into law, there are dozens of protections and benefits that will take effect this year.

Uninsured Americans with a preexisting illness or condition will finally be able to purchase coverage they can afford. Children with preexisting conditions will no longer be refused coverage, and young adults will be able to stay on their parent's policy until they're 26 or 27 years old. Small-business owners who can't afford to cover their employees will be immediately offered tax credits to purchase coverage. Early retirees who receive coverage from their employers will see their coverage protected and their premiums go down. Seniors who fall into the coverage gap known as the doughnut hole will receive discounts of up to 50 percent on their prescriptions as we begin to close that gap altogether. And every patient's choice of doctor will be protected, along with access to emergency care.

Here's what else will happen within the first year. Insurance plans will be required to offer free preventive care to their customers so that we can start catching preventable illnesses and diseases on the front end. They'll no longer be allowed to impose restrictive annual limits on the amount of coverage you receive or lifetime limits on the amount of benefits you receive. They'll be prohibited from dropping your coverage when you get sick and need it most. And there will be a new, independent appeals process for anyone who feels they were unfairly denied a claim by their insurance company.

In short, once I sign health insurance reform into law, doctors and patients will have more control over their health care decisions and insurance company bureaucrats will have less. All told, these changes represent the most sweeping reforms and toughest restrictions on insurance companies that this country has ever known. That's how we'll make 2010 a healthier and more secure year for every American, for those who have health insurance and those who don't.

And we enter a new decade now with new perils, but we're going to meet them. It's also a time of tremendous promise, and we're going to seize it. We will rebuild the American Dream for our middle class and put the American economy on a stronger footing for the future. And this year, I am as hopeful and as confident as ever that we're going to rise to this moment the same way that generations of Americans always have, as one Nation and one people. Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:10 p.m. on January 8 in the Blue Room at the White

House for broadcast on January 9. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 8, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 9. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on Senator Harry M. Reid
January 9, 2010

Harry Reid called me today and apologized for an unfortunate comment reported today. I accepted Harry's apology without question because I've known him for years, I've seen the passionate leadership he's shown on issues of social justice, and I know what's in his heart. As far as I am concerned, the book is closed.

Statement on the Earthquake in Haiti
January 12, 2010

My thoughts and prayers go out to those who have been affected by this earthquake. We are closely monitoring the situation, and we stand ready to assist the people of Haiti.

Remarks on Earthquake Relief Efforts in Haiti
January 13, 2010

Good morning, everybody. This morning I want to extend to the people of Haiti the deep condolences and unwavering support of the American people following yesterday's terrible earthquake.

We are just now beginning to learn the extent of the devastation, but the reports and images that we've seen of collapsed hospitals, crumbled homes, and men and women carrying their injured neighbors through the streets are truly heart wrenching. Indeed, for a country and a people who are no strangers to hardship and suffering, this tragedy seems especially cruel and incomprehensible. Our thoughts and prayers are also with the many Haitian Americans around our country who do not yet know the fate of their families and loved ones back home.

I have directed my administration to respond with a swift, coordinated, and aggressive effort to save lives. The people of Haiti will have the full support of the United States in the urgent effort to rescue those trapped beneath the rubble and to deliver the humanitarian relief—the food, water, and medicine—that Haitians will need in the coming days. In that effort, our Government, especially USAID and the Departments of State and Defense, are working closely together and with our partners in Haiti, the region, and around the world.

Right now our efforts are focused on several urgent priorities. First, we're working quickly to account for U.S. Embassy personnel and their families in Port-au-Prince, as well as the many American citizens who live and work in Haiti. Americans trying to locate family members in Haiti are encouraged to contact the State Department at 888–407–4747. I'm going to repeat that: 888–407–4747.

Second, we've mobilized resources to help rescue efforts. Military overflights have assessed the damage, and by early afternoon our civilian disaster assistance team are beginning to arrive. Search and rescue teams from Florida, Virginia, and California will arrive throughout today and tomorrow, and more rescue and medical equipment and emergency personnel are being prepared. Because in disasters such as this, the first hours and days are absolutely critical to saving lives and avoiding even greater tragedy, I have directed my teams to be as forward leaning as possible in getting the help

on the ground and coordinating with our international partners as well.

Third, given the many different resources that are needed, we are taking steps to ensure that our Government acts in a unified way. My national security team has led an interagency effort overnight. And to ensure that we coordinate our effort going forward, I've designated the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Dr. Raj Shah, to be our Government's unified disaster coordinator.

Now, this rescue and recovery effort will be complex and challenging. As we move resources into Haiti, we will be working closely with partners on the ground, including the many NGOs from Haiti and across Haiti, the United Nations Stabilization Mission, which appears to have suffered its own losses, and our partners in the region and around the world. This must truly be an international effort.

Finally, let me just say that this is a time when we are reminded of the common humanity that we all share. With just a few hundred miles of ocean between us and a long history that binds us together, Haitians are our neighbors in the Americas and here at home. So we have to be there for them in their hour of need.

Despite the fact that we are experiencing tough times here at home, I would encourage those Americans who want to support the urgent humanitarian efforts to go to whitehouse.gov, where you can learn how to contribute. We must be prepared for difficult hours and days ahead as we learn about the scope of the tragedy. We will keep the victims and their families in our prayers. We will be resolute in our response, and I pledge to the people of Haiti that you will have a friend and partner in the United States of America today and going forward.

May God bless the people of Haiti and those working on their behalf. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Remarks on Earthquake Relief Efforts in Haiti
January 14, 2010

Good morning, everybody. I've directed my administration to launch a swift, coordinated, and aggressive effort to save lives and support the recovery in Haiti. The losses that have been suffered in Haiti are nothing less than devastating, and responding to a disaster of this magnitude will require every element of our national capacity: our diplomacy and development assistance, the power of our military, and most importantly, the compassion of our country. And this morning I'm joined by several members of my national security team who are leading this coordinated response.

I've made it clear to each of these leaders that Haiti must be a top priority for their departments and agencies right now. This is one of those moments that calls out for American leadership. For the sake of our citizens who are in Haiti, for the sake of the Haitian people, who have suffered so much, and for the sake of our common humanity, we stand in solidarity with our neighbors to the south, knowing that, but for the grace of God, there we go.

This morning I can report that the first waves of our rescue and relief workers are on the ground and at work. A survey team worked overnight to identify priority areas for assistance and shared the results of that review throughout the United States Government and with international partners who are also sending support. Search and rescue teams are actively working to save lives. Our military has secured the airport and prepared it to receive the heavy equipment and resources that are on the way and to receive them around the clock, 24 hours a day. An airlift has been set up to deliver high-priority items like water and medicine. And we're coordinating closely with the Haitian Government, the United Nations, and other countries who are also on the ground.

Now, we have no higher priority than the safety of American citizens, and we've airlifted injured Americans out of Haiti. We're running additional evacuations and will continue to do so in the days ahead. I know that many Americans, especially Haitian Americans, are desper-

ate for information about their family and friends, and the State Department has set up a phone number and e-mail address that you can find at www.state.cov—www.state.gov—to inquire about your loved ones. And you should know that we will not rest until we account for our fellow Americans in harm's way.

Even as we move as quickly as possible, it will take hours, and in many cases days, to get all of our people and resources on the ground. Right now in Haiti roads are impassable, the main port is badly damaged, communications are just beginning to come online, and aftershocks continue.

None of this will seem quick enough if you have a loved one who's trapped, if you're sleeping on the streets, if you can't feed your children. But it's important that everybody in Haiti understand, at this very moment one of the largest relief efforts in our recent history is moving towards Haiti. More American search and rescue teams are coming, more food, more water, doctors, nurses, paramedics, more of the people, equipment, and capabilities that can make the difference between life and death.

The United States Armed Forces are also on their way to support this effort. Several Coast Guard cutters are already there, providing everything from basic services like water to vital technical support for this massive logistical operation. Elements of the Army's 82d Airborne Division will arrive today. We're also deploying a Marine expeditionary unit, the aircraft carrier USS *Carl Vinson*, and the Navy's hospital ship, the *Comfort*.

And today I'm also announcing an immediate investment of $100 million to support our relief efforts. This will mean more of the lifesaving equipment, food, water, and medicine that will be needed. This investment will grow over the coming year as we embark on the long-term recovery from this unimaginable tragedy.

The United States of America will also forge the partnerships that this undertaking demands. We will partner with the Haitian people. And that includes the Government of Haiti, which needs our support as they recover from the devastation of this earthquake. It also includes the many Haitian Americans who are determined to help their friends and family. And I've asked Vice President Biden to meet in south Florida this weekend with members of the Haitian American community and with responders who are mobilizing to help the Haitian people.

Now, we will partner with the United Nations and its dedicated personnel and peacekeepers, especially those from Brazil, who are already on the ground due to their outstanding peacekeeping efforts there. And I want to say that our hearts go out to the United Nations, which has experienced one of the greatest losses in its history. We have no doubt that we can carry on the work that was done by so many of the U.N. effort that have been lost, and we see that their legacy is Haiti's hope for the future.

Now, we will partner with other nations and organizations. And that's why I've been reaching out to leaders from across the Americas and beyond who are sending resources to support this effort. And we will join with the strong network of nongovernmental organizations across the country who understand the daily struggles of the Haitian people.

Yet even as we bring our resources to bear on this emergency, we need to summon the tremendous generosity and compassion of the American people. I want to thank the many Americans who have already contributed to this effort. I want to encourage all Americans who want to help to go to whitehouse.gov to learn more. And in the days ahead, we will continue to work with those individuals and organizations who want to assist this effort so that you can do so.

Finally, I want to speak directly to the people of Haiti: Few in the world have endured the hardships that you have known. Long before this tragedy, daily life itself was often a bitter struggle. And after suffering so much for so long, to face this new horror must cause some to look up and ask, have we somehow been forsaken?

To the people of Haiti, we say clearly and with conviction: You will not be forsaken; you will not be forgotten. In this, your hour of greatest need, America stands with you. The

world stands with you. We know that you are a strong and resilient people. You have endured a history of slavery and struggle, of natural disaster and recovery. And through it all, your spirit has been unbroken and your faith has been unwavering. So today, you must know that help is arriving; much, much more help is on the way.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Remarks on the Financial Crisis Responsibility Fee
January 14, 2010

Thank you, everybody, for being here. As we all know, our country has endured the deepest recession we've faced in generations. And much of the turmoil was caused by irresponsibility on the part of banks and financial institutions. Now, firms took reckless risks in pursuit of short-term profits and soaring bonuses, triggering a financial crisis that nearly pulled the economy into a second great depression.

Now, it was a little more than a year ago that we stood on that precipice. And several of the world's largest financial institutions had already failed. Credit markets froze, and banks refused to lend. Trillions of dollars in household savings evaporated as stocks, pensions, and home values plummeted. And we were losing hundreds of thousands of jobs each month. It was at this time that many large financial firms—those left standing—teetered on the brink of collapse, overwhelmed by the consequences of their irresponsible decisions.

Now, even though these firms were largely facing a crisis of their own making, their failure could have led to an even greater calamity for the country. So the Federal Reserve and other agencies took emergency measures to prevent that outcome. And the previous administration started a program, the Troubled Asset Relief Program, or TARP, to provide these financial institutions with funds to survive the turmoil that they had helped unleash. It was a distasteful but necessary thing to do.

Now, we've worked over the last year to manage this program effectively, to hold firms accountable, and to recoup as much tax money as possible. Many originally feared that most of the $700 billion in TARP money would be lost. But because of the management of this program by Secretary Geithner and my economic team, we've now recovered the majority of the funds provided to banks.

As far as I'm concerned, however, that's not good enough. My commitment is to the taxpayer. My commitment is to recover every single dime the American people are owed. And my determination to achieve this goal is only heightened when I see reports of massive profits and obscene bonuses at some of the very firms who owe their continued existence to the American people, folks who have not been made whole and who continue to face real hardship in this recession.

We want our money back, and we're going to get it. And that's why I'm proposing a financial crisis responsibility fee to be imposed on major financial firms until the American people are fully compensated for the extraordinary assistance they provided to Wall Street. If these companies are in good enough shape to afford massive bonuses, they are surely in good enough shape to afford paying back every penny to taxpayers.

Now, our estimate is that the TARP program will end up costing taxpayers around $117 billion, obviously a lot less than the $700 billion that people had feared, but still a lot of money. The fee will be in place for 10 years or as long as it takes to raise the full amount necessary to cover all taxpayer losses. This will not be a cost borne by community banks or small financial firms; only the largest firms with more than $50 billion in assets will be affected. And the size of the fee each bank owes will be based on its size and exposure to debt, so that we are recovering tax dollars while promoting reform of the banking practices that contributed to this crisis.

Now, the fact is these financial institutions are essential to our economy. They provide cap-

ital and credit to families purchasing homes, students attending college, businesses seeking to start up or expand. And that's why the rescue program was as necessary as it was unfortunate. And that is why, through this fee and broader reforms that we seek, our goal is not to punish Wall Street firms, but rather to prevent the abuse and excess that nearly caused the collapse of many of these firms and the financial system itself.

We cannot go back to business as usual. And when we see reports of firms once again engaging in risky bets to reap quick rewards, when we see a return to compensation practices that seem not to reflect what the country's been through, all that looks like business as usual to me. The financial industry has even launched a massive lobbying campaign, locking arms with the opposition party to stand in the way of reforms to prevent another crisis. That too, unfortunately, is business as usual. And we're already hearing a hue and cry from Wall Street suggesting that this proposed fee is not only unwelcome but unfair, that by some twisted logic, it is more appropriate for the American people to bear the costs of the bailout rather than the industry that benefited from it, even though these executives are out there giving themselves huge bonuses.

What I'd say to these executives is this: Instead of sending a phalanx of lobbyists to fight this proposal or employing an army of lawyers and accountants to help evade the fee, I suggest you might want to consider simply meeting your responsibilities. And I'd urge you to cover the costs of the rescue not by sticking it to your shareholders or your customers or fellow citizens with the bill, but by rolling back bonuses for top earners and executives. And more broadly, I am continuing to call on these firms to put greater effort into helping families stay in their homes, to provide small businesses with needed loans, and to embrace, rather than fight, serious financial reform.

Ultimately, it is by taking responsibility—on Wall Street, here in Washington, all the way to Main Street—that we're going to move past this period of turmoil. That's how we're going to avoid the cycles of boom and bust that have caused so much havoc. That's how we're going to promote vibrant markets that reward innovation and entrepreneurship and hard work. That's how we're going to create sustained growth without the looming threat of another costly crisis. That's not only in the best interests of the economy as a whole, it's actually in the interest of these large banks.

So I'm going to be working closely with Congress on this proposal. And on behalf of the American people, I look forward to signing it into law.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:44 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Remarks at the Opening Session of the Forum on Modernizing Government
January 14, 2010

Thank you. Please have a seat, everybody. Thank you so much. Well, good afternoon, everyone, and thanks for all of you for being here today.

I'd like to recognize the Deputy Cabinet Secretaries who are with us for their leadership at our agencies. And it's exciting to see the leaders of some of the most innovative, cutting-edge, tech-savvy companies in the world gathered in the city where I had to fight tooth and nail just to get a BlackBerry. [*Laughter*] There may be a little bit of a cultural clash here—[*laughter*]—but that's exactly why we want you here. I really appreciate the time all of you have taken to be in Washington for this forum. I know how busy all of you are.

We stand in the midst of challenging times for our economy. I don't think that's any secret. And I know that many of you have felt these challenges in your industries and in your businesses. Some of you have felt them quite acutely. But I also know how you've managed to meet them and managed through them, experimenting and innovating and finding new ways to increase productivity and better serve

your customers. We're here today because I believe your Government should be doing exactly the same thing.

When I first started campaigning for this office, I said, I want to change the way that Washington works. And when I said that, I meant how it works for the American people. I meant making Government more responsive to their needs. I meant getting rid of the waste and the inefficiencies that bloat our deficits and squander their hard-earned savings. I meant finally revamping the outdated technologies and information systems that undermine our efficiency and threaten our security and fail to serve their interests. And I asked all of you to this forum on Government modernization today because I believe that this last objective, bringing our Government into the 21st century, is critical to achieving all those other objectives.

Now, I can say without any hesitation that our Government employees are some of the hardest working, most dedicated, most competent people I know. Government workers get a bad rap. They are dedicated, they put in a lot of hours, and they care deeply about what they do. And they desperately want to provide the very best service for the American people. But all too often, their best efforts are thwarted because the technological revolution that has transformed our society over the past two decades has yet to reach many parts of our Government. Many of these folks will tell you that their kids have better technology in their backpacks and in their bedrooms than they have at the desks at their work.

To this day, there are still places in the Federal Government where reams of yellow files in manila envelopes are walked from desk to desk or boxes of documents are shipped back and forth between offices because files aren't yet online. Believe it or not, in our Patent Office—now, this is embarrassing; this is an institution responsible for protecting and promoting innovation—our Patent Office receives more than 80 percent of patent applications electronically, then manually prints them out, scans them, and enters them into an outdated case management system. Now, this is one of the reasons why the average processing time for a patent is roughly 3 years. Imminently solvable; hasn't been solved yet.

Even worse, too often, when we've attempted to update or replace outdated technology, we end up spending exorbitant sums of money on technologies that don't meet our needs or that took so long to implement that they were obsolete before we even started using them.

I just met with Department of Veterans Affairs, Eric Shinseki, who, a veteran himself, cares so deeply about making sure that veterans get their claims processed efficiently. We've been talking for 10 years about putting electronic systems in place for Veterans Affairs to reduce the backlog, and so far, it has not yet happened, not because people don't want it to happen, but partly because previous purchasing decisions have mismatched what VA has with what the Department of Defense has. They don't speak to each other; they don't merge.

None of this is acceptable, particularly at a time when we're experiencing such economic difficulty and so many people are struggling. We've got to get the best bang for every single dollar that the Government has in its possession. And when Washington lags a generation behind in how we do business, that has real and serious impact on people's lives. When we waste billions of dollars, in part because our technology is out of date, that's billions of dollars we're not investing in better schools for our children, in tax relief for our small businesses, in creating jobs and funding research to spur the scientific breakthroughs and economic growth of this new century.

And we know that the tools, the technology, the solutions are out there. You know because you put them in place every day. It's time we started putting them to work for the American people. If you can book dinner on OpenTable or a flight on Southwest or United online, then why shouldn't you be able to make an appointment at your local Social Security office the same way? If you can track your UPS package with your iPhone, then why not be able to check the status of your citizenship application on a web site, rather than having to write a letter and wait for a letter back?

Now, these are simple, cost-effective steps, ones which we've already taken or, at least, are

in the process of taking. But these are just the beginning. Going forward, I want to see solutions like this in every agency. I want to ask ourselves every day, how are we using technology to make a real difference in people's lives? How are we making it easier for small-business owners to get loans so they can open their doors and expand their operations and create new jobs? How are we helping young people get student loans so they can get the education they need to pursue their dreams? How are we ensuring that the brave men and women who've served this country get their benefits as quickly and as easily as possible? How are we cutting costs and reducing our deficit so that our children and our grandchildren aren't saddled with debt?

Now, improving the technology our Government uses isn't about having the fanciest bells and whistles on our web site. It's about how we use the American people's hard-earned tax dollars to make Government work better for them. And this is something I'm very serious about.

Now, this is why I appointed the very first ever Federal Government CIO and CTO, and Vivek Kundra and Aneesh Chopra are both coordinating our efforts and ensuring that we're embracing the best, most effective technologies possible.

It's also why we introduced our IT Dashboard at USAspending.gov. Here's a web site, which I've personally reviewed, where the American people can monitor every IT project in the Federal Government. If a project is over budget or behind schedule, this site tells you that and by how much, and it provides the name, the e-mail, and the phone number of the person responsible. To date, the site's gotten 78 million hits. We've already terminated a number of projects that weren't performing, and going forward, we won't hesitate to cut more and then take that money and reinvest it in someplace that's actually going to make a difference.

But here's the reason all of you are here: We can't do this alone. Many of you are pioneers, harnessing new technologies to build thriving businesses. Some of you have revolutionized industries. You've changed the ways that we look at the world. And if I had any doubt about how much Government has to learn from all of you, then the homework assignment you all completed would have certainly convinced me otherwise. I think the depth and the thoughtfulness of your responses indicate that all of you spent real time on preparing for today, and I deeply thank you for it.

I hope all of you will continue these efforts at the forum today. I want the very best of what you've got. I want you to tell us not just what we can do to better serve the American people, but how we can do it. How we can do it without spending a whole lot of taxpayer dollars is especially what I want to hear from you.

I just—and I also want to emphasize, I don't want to just hear your input today. We're going to need it in the months and years ahead as well. A lot of this stuff takes time to implement, even when it's implemented well. And that's why I've charged our Federal Chief Performance Officer, Jeff Zients, who you already heard from, to work with Vivek and Aneesh and all of you to make sure the changes we make have a lasting impact.

Now, we'll need each of you to keep stepping up and sharing your insights and your ideas and your expertise. We're going to need you to help us build the kind of Government that the American people expect and the kind of Government that they deserve, and that's one that spends their money wisely, serves their interests well, and is fully worthy of their trust and their respect.

So that's the purpose of today's forum. That's the ongoing mission of this administration. And I very much look forward to hearing what you have to offer us. Thank you very much for being here, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:03 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

Remarks at the House Democratic Caucus Retreat
January 14, 2010

Thank you, House of Representatives. Please, everybody have a seat. Have a seat.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. To Xavier, thank you; Jim Clyburn; outstanding work by Chris Van Hollen; and of course, Steny Hoyer. To all the leadership, to all the Members, thank you for inviting me here today. Thank you.

The House of Representatives has been an incredible partner throughout this year, but I hope you don't mind me singling out one of the best partners any President could ever have, and that is your unbelievable Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi. I was out in California doing—I think it was a DNC event, and Nancy introduced me, and I said, you know, Nancy, she's smart, she's articulate, she knows her issues. But what people don't understand is, Nancy is tough. [*Laughter*] She is tough. And she is tough for her Members, for this caucus, and she's tough for the American people. And so—[*applause*]—her extraordinary leadership is one of the reasons why the House of Representatives has consistently set the bar on a whole host of issues that—and legislative accomplishments that we've seen this year and—this past year and that we're going to see this year coming up.

Now, before I begin, I want to give all of you a quick update on our urgent efforts to save lives and support the recovery in Haiti. Our, obviously, thoughts and prayers go out to all the people of Haiti, Haitian Americans who have family members. One of my top advisers, Patrick Gaspard, is Haitian American. He's got cousins and aunts and uncles who are still missing. His family priest, who he's known since he was a baby, who baptized him, is suspected dead. Those stories ripple throughout the Haitian American community, but obviously, they ripple throughout all humanity when we see the kind of tragedy that we're seeing.

I want everybody here to understand that I've directed my administration to take swift and coordinated and aggressive action. I've made it clear to my national security team that this has to be a top priority across agencies—Department of Defense, Department of State, USAID. All the agencies involved—Homeland Security, our FEMA director—they are all intimately involved in making sure that we can get in there as quickly as possible to engage in search and rescue and to provide immediate medical attention, and then long-term help with the recovery.

Now, our highest priority is the safety of American citizens, and we are currently airlifting injured Americans out of Haiti. I know many of you have constituents desperate for news of their loved ones, and you should direct them to the State Department web site for a phone number and e-mail address and let them know that we will not rest until we have accounted for every single of our fellow Americans that are in harm's way.

The first wave of our rescue and relief workers arrived on the ground yesterday. Search and rescue teams are now working around the clock to save lives. More waves of major assets are going to be arriving. This morning I announced an immediate investment of $100 million to support our relief efforts in the early days of this crisis. Most of this is for the basics: lifesaving equipment, food, water, medicine. This investment will grow over the year as we help our neighbors embark on what is going to be a long-term recovery.

And so I just want everybody in the House of Representatives to understand, this is a moment for American leadership. This is a time when the world looks to us and they say, given our capacity, given our unique capacity to project power around the world, that we have to project that not just for our own interests, but for the interests of the world as a whole. And my national security team understands that I will not put up with any excuses for us not doing the very best in this time of tragedy.

Now, it is good to be here with all of you. I want to make a guarantee that 2010 will not be a boring year. [*Laughter*] Let me also say this: 2010 will mark a year of remarkable progress for the American people. And much of the reason for that is because of actions that were taken by the House of Representatives.

I just want everybody to go back, because sometimes in this town memories are short. When this Congress convened a year ago, after 8 years of failed policies and decades of broken politics, we faced down the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. So we knew that we were going to confront an unprecedented battery of challenges, not to mention long-simmering problems that had been put off for decades. We knew the solutions would not be quick and they would not be easy and they would not always be popular. But we made a decision that we were going to govern. There was—there were easier paths to take, because we knew that when I was sworn in, for example, we had already lost 650,000 jobs; we were going to lose another 700,000 jobs the month I was sworn in, the next month, 650,000 jobs. We knew that the recovery coming out of this extraordinary recession was going to be long and hard, and the easiest thing to do would have been to not take tough decisions and simply to point fingers. There is a long and hallowed tradition in Washington of doing that.

But that's not what you did. And think about what's happened as a consequence. In one of America's darkest hours, you answered the call. Time and again you stood up and you led. And thanks to what you did we can say now what we couldn't say a year ago: that America is moving forward again. The economy is growing. Job losses have slowed to a trickle. Job losses over the last quarter of 2009 were still unacceptable, but they were one-tenth of what we endured in the first quarter.

So you have a lot to be proud of, but let's be honest with each other. I mean, this is still a tough environment for a huge number of Americans. This is a tough time for this country. I know that what you've seen in your districts, the same thing that I've seen in towns across this country, the same thing I read about in letters each and every day: pain and anxiety and sometimes anger felt by our friends and our constituents and our fellow Americans.

There are 7 million Americans out there who have lost their jobs over the past 2 years and they still need our help. What they can expect from this administration, and I know what they can expect from you, is that we are going to have a sustained and relentless focus over the next several months on accelerating the pace of job creation, because that's priority number one.

Last month, I outlined the next steps that I believe we have to take to spur job creation, and the House has already acted on many of these: first, tax breaks and loans to help accelerate small-business hiring; second, additional investment in putting people to work modernizing our national infrastructure; third, incentives for consumers to make their homes more energy efficient, which doesn't just create jobs, but also saves consumers money and puts us on the path of energy independence. And I want to thank all of you for stepping up to pass a jobs bill along these lines.

Now, if these were ordinary times, the legislative victories of this Congress, the ones we've already accomplished, would be historic by any measure. Think about the enormous challenges we faced. That explains why some of the things we already did haven't gotten as much attention as they deserve.

What's so amazing, though, is out of the major initiatives we were talking about before we took office, you've either completed or set the stage for almost all of them. Because of what you did, we cut taxes for small businesses and 95 percent of working Americans, just as we said we would. Because of what you did, women now are getting equal pay for equal work. Because of what you did, 4 million children now have health insurance that didn't have it before.

Our veterans know that they're going to be taken care of in a way that had been neglected for too long. Before—because of what you did, there will finally be new rules preventing credit card companies from ripping off Americans and tobacco companies from targeting our children. And there are new laws in place to protect consumers from mortgage fraud and predatory lending. Because of what you did, young people and old people alike have new pathways to serve this country through our national service legislation. Because of what you did, we've strengthened protections against

hate crimes based solely on who you are or what you look like or who you love.

We made historic investments—I know Eric Schmidt's here today, an extraordinary leader in our corporate community and in our technology communities—he knows what we've done in science and technology and a clean energy economy: historic investments, the largest that have ever been made. We made historic investments in education so that we're fully prepared to win the race for the 21st century.

We reformed our defense spending to cut out waste and save taxpayers billions of dollars while keeping us safe. I don't know if you saw today, the Washington Times, not known for a big promoter of the Obama agenda, pointed out that we had succeeded where previous administrations had failed because of the work that was done here in this Congress to finally get serious on some of these spending cuts that had been talked about for years. And this House passed commonsense financial regulatory reform to help prevent a crisis like this from ever happening again.

So each achievement represents promises kept. And we're not stopping. Today we are on the doorstep of accomplishing something that Washington has been talking about since Teddy Roosevelt was President, and that is reforming health care and health insurance here in America.

Now, believe me, I know how big a lift this has been. I see the polls. I get 40,000 letters every day, and I read a stack of them each night. I catch the occasional blog post or cable clip that breathlessly declares what something means for a political party, without really talking much about what it means for a country. I know that the virtues of this legislation for Americans with insurance and Americans without it have been entirely obscured by fear and distraction.

But I also know what happens once we get this done, once we sign this law—sign this bill into law. The American people will suddenly learn that this bill does things they like and doesn't do things that people have been trying to say it does. The worst fears will prove groundless, and the American people's hope for a fair shake from their insurance companies for quality, affordable health care they need will finally be realized.

This year alone, this reform will ban some of the worst practices of the insurance industry forever. They'll no longer be allowed to refuse coverage for preexisting conditions for children or drop coverage when folks get sick and need it the most. They'll no longer be allowed to impose restrictive annual limits on the amount of coverage that you receive, lifetime limits on the amounts of benefits received. They'll be required to offer free preventive care, like checkups and routine tests and mammograms, at no cost. Patients will have rights. They will get what they pay for. And that's just the beginning.

All told, it's reform that finally offers Americans the security of knowing that they'll have quality, affordable health care whether they lose their job or change their job or they get sick. And by the way, it's reform that begins to bring down costs for families and businesses and governments.

And for those of you who are concerned about the deficit, when you've got the Congressional Budget Office that says in the second 10 years this brings down the deficit by a trillion dollars, in the first 10 years it brings it down by over $100 billion, you have nothing to apologize for when it comes to talking about deficit reduction. The irresponsible thing would have been to do nothing, and that's not what you've decided to do. This represents the biggest step towards deficit reduction in years.

So I know everybody in the media is all in a tizzy: "Oh, what's this going to mean politically?" Well, let me tell you something. If Republicans want to campaign against what we've done by standing up for the status quo and for insurance companies over American families and businesses, that is a fight I want to have. If their best idea is to return to the bad policies and the bad ideas of yesterday, they are going to lose that argument. What are they going to say, "Well, you know, the old system really worked well; let's go back to the way it was"? That's not going to appeal to seniors who are now seeing the possibility of that doughnut hole finally closing, and so they can finally get discounts on their prescriptions. That's not going to appeal to the small businesses who find out all the tax

credits that they're going to get for doing right by their employees, something that they have been wanting to do, but may not have been able to afford. It's not going to be very appealing to Americans who, for the first time, are going to find out that they can provide coverage to their children, their dependents, all the way up to the age of 26 or 27.

And that's why I'll be out there waging a great campaign from one end of the country to the other, telling Americans with insurance or without insurance what they stand to gain; about the arsenal of consumer protections; about the long-awaited stability that they're going to begin to experience. And I'm going to tell them that I am proud we are putting the future of America before the politics of the moment, the next generation before the next election. And that, after all, is what we were sent up here to do: standing up for the American people against the special interests, solve problems that we've been talking about for decades, make their lives a little bit better, make tough choices sometimes when they're unpopular. And that's something that every one of you who support this bill can be proud to campaign on in November.

Now, I know that some of the fights we've been going through have been tough. I know that some of you have gotten beaten up at home. Some of the fights that we're going to go through this year are going to be tough as well. But just remember why each of us got into public service in the first place: We found something that was worth fighting for. There was something we thought was important enough that we were willing to stand up in the public square, risk loss, risk embarrassment, because we knew in our hearts that something wasn't right, that we weren't, in some measure, living up to the American ideal, and that we thought that if we got involved and engaged in the democratic process, somehow we could make it a little bit better.

We've asked the American people for the chance to lead at this defining moment, and they have entrusted that extraordinary privilege to us. And if we live up to that responsibility, if we're fighting for the American people with the same sense of urgency that they feel in their own lives, then I am absolutely confident we're going to be able to look back at the end of this year and say that things are getting better; that we've reignited confidence in our economy, in America, and in each other; that we've restored a sense of responsibility here in Washington; and that, above all, we've begun to renew the American Dream and keep it alive, not just for this time, but for all time.

That's what you did last year. That's what I want you to join me in doing this year and all the years to come.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:15 p.m. in the Visitor Center at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Xavier Becerra; Assistant to the President for Political Affairs Patrick H. Gaspard; and Eric E. Schmidt, chairman of the board and chief executive officer, Google, Inc.

Remarks on Earthquake Relief Efforts in Haiti
January 15, 2010

Good afternoon, everybody. I wanted to just make a brief statement on the latest situation in Haiti so that the American people are fully up to date on our efforts there.

This morning I spoke with President Preval of Haiti, who has been in regular contact with our Ambassador on the ground. I expressed to President Preval my deepest condolences for the people of Haiti and our strong support for the relief efforts that are underway.

Like so many Haitians, President Preval himself has lost his home, and his Government is working under extraordinarily difficult conditions. Many communications are down and remain—and many people remain unaccounted for. The scale of the devastation is extraordinary, as I think all of us are seeing on television, and the losses are heartbreaking.

I pledged America's continued commitment to the Government and the people of

Haiti in the immediate effort to save lives and deliver relief and in the long-term effort to rebuild. President Preval and I agreed that it is absolutely essential that these efforts are well coordinated among the United States and the Government of Haiti, with the United Nations, which continues to play an essential role, and with the many international partners and aid organizations that are now on the ground.

Meanwhile, American resources continue to arrive in Haiti. Search and rescue efforts continue to work, pulling people out of the rubble. Our team has saved both the lives of American citizens and Haitian citizens, often under extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

Now, this morning the aircraft carrier USS *Carl Vinson* arrived, along with helicopters that will be critical in delivering assistance in the days to come. They are preparing to move badly needed water, food, and other lifesaving supplies to priority areas in Port-au-Prince. Food, water, and medicine continues to arrive, along with doctors and aid workers.

At the airport, help continues to flow in, not just from the United States, but from Brazil, Mexico, Canada, France, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic, among others. This underscores the point that I made to the President this morning: The entire world stands with the Government and the people of Haiti. For in Haiti's devastation, we all see the common humanity that we share.

And as the international community continues to respond, I do believe that America has a continued responsibility to act. Our Nation has a unique capacity to reach out quickly and broadly and to deliver assistance that can save lives.

That responsibility obviously is magnified when the devastation that's been suffered is so near to us. Haitians are our neighbors in the Americas, and for Americans, they are family and friends. It's characteristic of the American people to help others in time of such severe need. That's the spirit that we will need to sustain this effort as it goes forward.

There are going to be many difficult days ahead. So many people are in need of assistance. The port continues to be closed, and the roads are damaged. Food is scarce, and so is water. It will take time to establish distribution points so that we can ensure that resources are delivered safely and effectively and in an orderly fashion.

But I want the people of Haiti to know that we will do what it takes to save lives and to help them get back on their feet. In this effort, I want to thank our people on the ground: our men and women in uniform, who have moved so swiftly; our civilians and Embassy staff, many of whom suffered their own losses in this tragedy; and those members of search and rescue teams from Florida and California and Virginia, who've left their homes and their families behind to help others. To all of them: I want you to know that you demonstrate the courage and decency of the American people, and we are extraordinarily proud of you.

I also want to thank the American people more broadly. In these tough times, you've shown extraordinary compassion, already donating millions of dollars. I encourage all of you who want to help to do so through whitehouse.gov, where you can learn about how to contribute.

And tomorrow I will be meeting with President Clinton and President George W. Bush here at the White House to discuss how to enlist and help the American people in this recovery and rebuilding effort going forward.

I would note that as I ended my call with President Preval, he said that he has been extremely touched by the friendship and the generosity of the American people. It was an emotional moment. And this President, seeing the devastation around him, passed this message to the American people. He said, "From the bottom of my heart and on behalf of the people of Haiti, thank you, thank you, thank you."

As I told the President, we realize that he needs more help and his country needs more help, much more. And in this difficult hour, we will continue to provide it.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:08 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Ambassador to Haiti Kenneth H. Merten. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Review of Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996
January 15, 2010

Dear _____:

Consistent with section 306(c)(2) of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–114) (the "Act"), I hereby determine and report to the Congress that suspension, for 6 months beyond February 1, 2010, of the right to bring an action under title III of the Act is necessary to the national interests of the United States and will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Daniel K. Inouye, chairman, and W. Thad Cochran, vice chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations; John F. Kerry, chairman, and Richard G. Lugar, ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; David R. Obey, chairman, and Jerry Lewis, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations; and Howard L. Berman, chairman, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, ranking member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The President's Weekly Address
January 16, 2010

Over the past 2 years, more than 7 million Americans have lost their jobs. Countless businesses have been forced to shut their doors. Few families have escaped the pain of this terrible recession. And rarely does a day go by that I don't hear from folks who are hurting. That's why we have pushed so hard to rebuild this economy.

But even as we work tirelessly to dig our way out of this hole, it's important that we address what led us into such a deep mess in the first place. Much of the turmoil of this recession was caused by the irresponsibility of banks and financial institutions on Wall Street. These financial firms took huge, reckless risks in pursuit of short-term profits and soaring bonuses. They gambled with borrowed money without enough oversight or regard for the consequences. And when they lost, they lost big. Little more than a year ago, many of the largest and oldest financial firms in the world teetered on the brink of collapse, overwhelmed by the consequences of their irresponsible decisions. This financial crisis nearly pulled the entire economy into a second great depression.

As a result, the American people, struggling in their own right, were placed in a deeply unfair and unsatisfying position. Even though these financial firms were largely facing a crisis of their own making, their failure could have led to an even greater calamity for the country as a whole. And that's why the previous administration started a program, the Troubled Asset Relief Program, or TARP, to provide these financial institutions with funds to survive the turmoil that they had helped unleash. It was a distasteful but necessary thing to do.

Now, many originally feared that most of the $700 billion in TARP money would be lost forever. But when my administration came into office, we put in place rigorous rules for accountability and transparency, which cut the costs of the bailout dramatically. We've now recovered most of the money we provided to the banks. That's good news, but as far as I'm concerned, it's not good enough. We want the

taxpayers' money back, all of it, and we're going to collect every dime.

That's why this week I proposed a new fee on major financial firms to compensate the American people for the extraordinary assistance they provided to the financial industry. And the fee would be in place until the American taxpayer is made whole. Only the largest financial firms with more than $50 billion in assets will be affected, not community banks. And the bigger the firm, and the more debt it holds, the larger the fee. Because we are not only going to recover our money and help close our deficits, we are going to attack some of the banking practices that led to the crisis.

That's important. The fact is, financial firms play an essential role in our economy. They provide capital and credit to families purchasing homes, students attending college, businesses looking to start up or expand. That's critical to our recovery. That's why our goal with this fee—and with the commonsense financial reforms we seek—is not to punish the financial industry. Our goal is to prevent the abuse and excess that nearly led to its collapse. Our goal is to promote fair dealings while punishing those who game the system, to encourage sustained growth while discouraging the speculative bubbles that inevitably burst. Ultimately, that's in the shared interest of the financial industry and the American people.

And of course, I would like the banks to embrace this sense of mutual responsibility. So far, though, they have ferociously fought financial reform. The industry has even joined forces with the opposition party to launch a massive lobbying campaign against commonsense rules to protect consumers and prevent another crisis.

Now, like clockwork, the banks and the politicians who curry their favor are already trying to stop this fee from going into effect. The very same firms reaping billions of dollars in profits and reportedly handing out more money in bonuses and compensation than ever before in history are now pleading poverty. It's a sight to see.

Those who oppose this fee say the banks can't afford to pay back the American people without passing on the costs to their shareholders and customers. But that's hard to believe when there are reports that Wall Street is going to hand out more money in bonuses and compensation just this year than the cost of this fee over the next 10 years. If the big financial firms can afford massive bonuses, they can afford to pay back the American people.

Those who oppose this fee have also had the audacity to suggest that it's somehow unfair, that because these firms have already returned what they borrowed directly, their obligation is fulfilled. But this willfully ignores the fact that the entire industry benefited not only from the bailout, but from the assistance extended to AIG and homeowners and from the many unprecedented emergency actions taken by the Federal Reserve, the FDIC, and others to prevent a financial collapse. And it ignores a far greater unfairness: sticking the American taxpayer with the bill.

That's unacceptable to me and to the American people. We're not going to let Wall Street take the money and run. We're going to pass this fee into law. And I'm going to continue to work with Congress on commonsense financial reforms to protect people and the economy from the kind of costly and painful crisis we've just been through. Because after a very tough 2 years, after a crisis that has caused so much havoc, if there is one lesson that we can learn, it's this: We cannot return to business as usual.

Thanks very much.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:35 p.m. on January 15 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on January 16. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 15, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 16. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on Earthquake Relief Efforts in Haiti
January 16, 2010

Good morning, everybody. In times of great challenge in our country and around the world, Americans have always come together to lend a hand and to serve others and to do what's right. That's what the American people have been doing in recent days with their extraordinary generosity and contributions to the Haitian people.

At this moment, we're moving forward with one of the largest relief efforts in our history, to save lives and to deliver relief that averts an even larger catastrophe. The two leaders with me today will ensure that this is matched by a historic effort that extends beyond our Government, because America has no greater resource than the strength and the compassion of the American people.

We just met in the Oval Office, an office they both know well. And I'm pleased that President George W. Bush and President Bill Clinton have agreed to lead a major fundraising effort for relief, the Clinton Bush Haiti Fund. On behalf of the American people, I want to thank both of you for returning to service and leading this urgent mission.

This is a model that works. After the terrible tsunami in Asia, President Bush turned to President Clinton and the first President Bush to lead a similar fund. That effort raised substantial resources for the victims of that disaster, money that helped save lives, deliver aid, and rebuild communities. And that's exactly what the people of Haiti desperately need right now.

Every day that goes by, we learn more about the horrifying scope of this catastrophe, destruction and suffering that defies comprehension: entire communities buried under mountains of concrete, families sleeping in the streets, injured desperate for care, many thousands feared dead. That's why thousands of American personnel, civilian and military, are on the scene working to distribute clean drinking water and food and medicine, and thousands of tons of emergency food supplies are arriving every day.

It will be difficult. It is an enormous challenge to distribute this aid quickly and safely in a place that has suffered such destruction. That's what we're focused on now, working closely with our partners, the Haitian Government, the United Nations, and many organizations and nations, friends from Argentina and France, from Dominican Republic and Brazil, and countries all around the world.

And Secretary Hillary Clinton will be in Haiti today to meet with President Preval and continue our close coordination with his Government. But we also know that our longer-term effort will not be measured in days and weeks; it will be measured in months and even years. And that's why it's so important to enlist and sustain the support of the American people. That's why it's so important to have a point of coordination for all the support that extends beyond our Government.

Here at home, Presidents Bush and Clinton will help the American people to do their part, because responding to a disaster must be the work of all of us. Indeed, those wrenching scenes of devastation remind us not only of our common humanity, but also of our common responsibilities. This time of suffering can and must be a time of compassion.

As the scope of the destruction became apparent, I spoke to each of these gentlemen, and they each asked the same simple question: How can I help? In the days ahead, they'll be asking everyone what they can do: individuals, corporations, NGOs, and institutions. And I urge everyone who wants to help to visit www.clintonbushhaitifund.org.

We're fortunate to have the service of these two leaders. President Bush led America's response to the Asian tsunami, aid and relief that prevented even greater loss of life in the months after that disaster. And his administration's efforts to fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa treated more than 10 million men, women, and children.

As President, Bill Clinton helped restore democracy in Haiti. As a private citizen, he has helped to save the lives of millions of people

around the world. And as the United Nations Special Envoy to Haiti, he understands intimately the daily struggles and needs of the Haitian people.

And by coming together in this way, these two leaders send an unmistakable message to the people of Haiti and to the people of the world: In these difficult hours, America stands united. We stand united with the people of Haiti, who have shown such incredible resilience, and we will help them to recover and to rebuild.

Yesterday we witnessed a small but remarkable display of that determination—some of you may have seen it—Haitians with little more than the clothes on their back marched peacefully through a ruined neighborhood, and despite all their loss and all their suffering, they sang songs of faith and songs of hope.

These are the people we're called upon to help. Those are the hopes that we're committed to answering. That's why the three of us are standing together today. And with that, I would invite each President to say a few words. I'm going to start with President Bush.

[*At this point, former Presidents George W. Bush and William J. Clinton made brief remarks.*]

Well, these gentlemen are going to do an extraordinary job, but really what they're going to be doing is just tapping into the incredible generosity, the ingenuity, the can-do spirit of the American people in helping our neighbors in need. So I want to thank each of them not only for being here today, but what I know is going to be an extraordinary effort.

I want to make sure that everybody got that web site one more time. Obviously, we're just standing it up, but it will immediately give people a means to contact our offices: www.clintonbushhaitifund.org.

And I just want to amplify one thing that was said—we were talking in the back. In any extraordinary catastrophe like this, the first several weeks are just going to involve getting immediate relief on the ground. And there are going to be some tough days over the next several days. People are still trying to figure out how to organize themselves. There's going to be fear, anxiety, a sense of desperation in some cases.

I've been in contact with President Preval. I've been talking to the folks on the ground. We are going to be making slow and steady progress, and the key now is to—for everybody in Haiti to understand that there is going to be sustained help on the way.

But what these gentlemen are going to be able to do is when the news media starts seeing its attention drift to other things but there's still enormous needs on the ground, these two gentlemen of extraordinary stature, I think, are going to be able to help ensure that these efforts are sustained. And that's why it's so important and that's why I'm so grateful that they agreed to do it.

Thank you, gentlemen.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:02 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of former Presidents George W. Bush and William J. Clinton. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Ordering the Selected Reserve and Certain Individual Ready Reserve Members of the Armed Forces to Active Duty

January 16, 2010

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Effective today, pursuant to sections 121 and 12304 of title 10, United States Code, I have authorized the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Homeland Security with respect to the Coast Guard when it is not operating as a service in the Navy, to order to active duty any units, and any individual members not assigned to a unit organized to serve as a unit, of the Selected Reserve, or any member in the Individual Ready Reserve mobilization category and

designated as essential under regulations prescribed by the Secretary concerned, and to terminate the service of those units and members ordered to active duty. Members of the Armed Forces ordered to active duty pursuant to these authorities will augment the active forces in support of operations for Haiti. The authorities that have been invoked will ensure the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security can fully support the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development.

A copy of the Executive Order I have issued is enclosed.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 17. The Executive order of is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Church Service Honoring Martin Luther King, Jr.
January 17, 2010

The President. Good morning. Praise be to God. Let me begin by thanking the entire Vermont Avenue Baptist Church family for welcoming our family here today. It feels like a family. Thank you for making us feel that way. To Pastor Wheeler, first lady Wheeler, thank you so much for welcoming us here today. Congratulations on Jordan Denice, a.k.a. Cornelia. [*Laughter*]

Michelle and I have been blessed with a new nephew this year as well, Austin Lucas Robinson. So maybe at the appropriate time we can make introductions. [*Laughter*] Now, if you're—if Jordan's father is like me, then that will be in about 30 years. [*Laughter*] That is a great blessing.

Michelle and Malia and Sasha and I are thrilled to be here today. And I know that sometimes you have to go through a little fuss to have me as a guest speaker. [*Laughter*] So let me apologize in advance for all the fuss.

We gather here on a Sabbath during a time of profound difficulty for our Nation and for our world. In such a time, it soothes the soul to seek out the Divine in a spirit of prayer, to seek solace among a community of believers. But we are not here just to ask the Lord for His blessing. We aren't here just to interpret His Scripture. We're also here to call on the memory of one of His noble servants, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Now, it's fitting that we do so here, within the four walls of Vermont Avenue Baptist Church, here in a church that rose like the phoenix from the ashes of the Civil War; here in a church formed by freed slaves, whose founding pastor had worn the Union blue; here in a church from whose pews congregants set out for marches and from whom choir anthems of freedom were heard, from whose sanctuary King himself would sermonize from time to time.

Now, one of those times was Thursday, December 6, 1956. Pastor, I think you said you were a little older than me, so were you around at that point? [*Laughter*]

Pastor Cornelius R. Wheeler. I was 3 years old.

The President. You were 3 years old, all right, okay. [*Laughter*] I wasn't born yet. [*Laughter*]

On Thursday, December 6, 1956, and before Dr. King had pointed us to the mountaintop, before he told us about his dream in front of the Lincoln Memorial, King came here, as a 27-year-old preacher, to speak on what he called "The Challenge of a New Age." The challenge of a new age. It was a period of triumph, but also uncertainty for Dr. King and his followers, because just weeks earlier, the Supreme Court had ordered the desegregation of Montgomery's buses, a hard-wrought, hard-fought victory that would put an end to the 381-day historic boycott down in Montgomery, Alabama.

And yet as Dr. King rose to take that pulpit, the future still seemed daunting. It wasn't clear what would come next for the movement that Dr. King led. It wasn't clear how we were going to reach the promised land, because segregation was still rife, lynchings still a fact. Yes, the Supreme Court had ruled not only on the Montgomery buses, but also on *Brown* v. *Board of Education*. And yet that ruling was defied throughout the South by schools and by States; they ignored it with impunity. And here in the Nation's Capital, the Federal Government had yet to fully align itself with the laws on its books and the ideals of its founding.

So it's not hard for us, then, to imagine that moment. We can imagine folks coming to this church, happy about the boycott being over. We can also imagine them, though, coming here concerned about their future, sometimes second-guessing strategy, maybe fighting off some creeping doubts, perhaps despairing about whether the movement in which they had placed so many of their hopes, a movement in which they believed so deeply, could actually deliver on its promise.

So here we are, more than half a century later, once again facing the challenges of a new age. Here we are, once more marching toward an unknown future, what I call the Joshua generation to their Moses generation, the great inheritors of progress paid for with sweat and blood and sometimes life itself.

We've inherited the progress of unjust laws that are now overturned. We take for granted the progress of a ballot being available to anybody who wants to take the time to actually vote. We enjoy the fruits of prejudice and bigotry being lifted, slowly, sometimes in fits and starts, but irrevocably, from human hearts. It's that progress that made it possible for me to be here today, for the good people of this country to elect an African American the 44th President of the United States of America.

Reverend Wheeler mentioned the Inauguration, last year's election. You know, on the heels of that victory over a year ago, there were some who suggested that somehow we had entered into a postracial America, all those problems would be solved. There were those who argued that because I had spoke of a need for unity in this country that our Nation was somehow entering into a period of postpartisanship. That didn't work out so well. [*Laughter*] There was a hope shared by many that life would be better from the moment that I swore that oath.

Of course, as we meet here today, 1 year later, we know the promise of that moment has not yet been fully fulfilled. Because of an era of greed and irresponsibility that sowed the seeds of its own demise, because of persistent economic troubles unaddressed through the generations, because of a banking crisis that brought the financial system to the brink of catastrophe, we are being tested—in our own lives and as a nation—as few have been tested before.

Unemployment is at its highest level in more than a quarter of a century. Nowhere is it higher than the African American community. Poverty is on the rise. Home ownership is slipping. Beyond our shores, our sons and daughters are fighting two wars. Closer to home, our Haitian brothers and sisters are in desperate need. Bruised, battered, many people are legitimately feeling doubt, even despair, about the future. Like those who came to this church on that Thursday in 1956, folks are wondering, where do we go from here?

I understand those feelings. I understand the frustration and sometimes anger that so many folks feel as they struggle to stay afloat. I get letters from folks around the country every day; I read 10 a night out of the 40,000 that we receive. And there are stories of hardship and desperation, in some cases, pleading for help: "I need a job." "I'm about to lose my home". "I don't have health care; it's about to cause my family to be bankrupt." Sometimes you get letters from children: "My mama or my daddy have lost their jobs. Is there something you can do to help?" Ten letters like that a day we read.

So yes, we're passing through a hard winter. It's the hardest in some time. But let's always remember that, as a people, the American people, we've weathered some hard winters before. This country was founded during some harsh winters. The fishermen, the laborers, the craftsmen who made camp at Valley Forge, they weathered a hard winter. The slaves and the freedmen who rode an underground railroad, seeking the light of justice under the cover of

night, they weathered a hard winter. The seamstress whose feet were tired, the pastor whose voice echoes through the ages, they weathered some hard winters. It was for them, as it is for us, difficult in the dead of winter to sometimes see spring coming. They too sometimes felt their hopes deflate. And yet each season, the frost melts, the cold recedes, the Sun reappears. So it was for earlier generations, and so it will be for us.

What we need to do is to just ask what lessons we can learn from those earlier generations about how they sustained themselves during those hard winters, how they persevered and prevailed. Let us in this Joshua generation learn how that Moses generation overcame.

Let me offer a few thoughts on this. First and foremost, they did so by remaining firm in their resolve. Despite being threatened by sniper fire or planted bombs, by shoving and punching and spitting and angry stares, they adhered to that sweet spirit of resistance, the principles of nonviolence that had accounted for their success.

Second, they understood that as much as our Government and our political parties had betrayed them in the past, as much as our Nation itself had betrayed its own ideals, government, if aligned with the interests of its people, can be—and must be—a force for good. So they stayed on the Justice Department. They went into the courts. They pressured Congress; they pressured their President. They didn't give up on this country. They didn't give up on government. They didn't somehow say government was the problem. They said, we're going to change government; we're going to make it better. Imperfect as it was, they continued to believe in the promise of democracy, in America's constant ability to remake itself, to perfect this Union.

Third, our predecessors were never so consumed with theoretical debates that they couldn't see progress when it came. Sometimes I get a little frustrated when folks just don't want to see that even if we don't get everything, we're getting something. King understood that the desegregation of the Armed Forces didn't end the movement, because Black and White soldiers still couldn't sit together at the same lunch counter when they came home. But he still insisted on the rightness of desegregating the Armed Forces. That was a good first step, even as he called for more. He didn't suggest that somehow by the signing of the Act that somehow all discrimination would end. But he also didn't think that we shouldn't sign the Act because it hasn't solved every problem. Let's take a victory, he said, and then keep on marching. Forward steps, large and small, were recognized for what they were, which was progress.

Fourth, at the core of King's success was an appeal to conscience that touched hearts and opened minds, a commitment to universal ideals—of freedom, of justice, of equality—that spoke to all people, not just some people. For King understood that without broad support, any movement for could not be sustained. That's why he marched with the White auto worker in Detroit. That's why he linked arm with the Mexican farm worker in California and united people of all colors in the noble quest for freedom.

Of course, King overcame in other ways as well. He remained strategically focused on gaining ground—his eyes on the prize constantly—understanding that change would not be easy, understand that change wouldn't come overnight, understanding that there'd be setbacks and false starts along the way, but understanding, as he said in 1956, that "we can walk and never get weary, because we know there is a great camp meeting in the promised land of freedom and justice."

And it's because the Moses generation overcame that the trials we face today are very different from the ones that tested us in previous generations. Even after the worst recession in generations, life in America is not even close to being as brutal as it was back then for so many. That's the legacy of Dr. King and his movement. That's our inheritance. Having said that, let there be no doubt: The challenges of our new age are serious in their own right, and we must face them as squarely as they faced the challenges they saw.

Now, I know it's been a hard road we've traveled this year to rescue the economy, but

the economy is growing again. The job losses have finally slowed, and around the country, there's signs that businesses and families are beginning to rebound. We are making progress.

I know it's been a hard road that we've traveled to reach this point on health reform. I promise you I know. [*Laughter*] But under the legislation I will sign into law, insurance companies won't be able to drop you when you get sick, and more than 30 million people, our fellow Americans, will finally have insurance. More than 30 million men and women and children, mothers and fathers, won't be worried about what might happen to them if they get sick. This will be a victory not for Democrats; this will be a victory for dignity and decency, for our common humanity. This will be a victory for the United States of America.

Let's work to change the political system, as imperfect as it is. I know people can feel down about the way things are going sometimes here in Washington. I know it's tempting to give up on the political process. But we've put in place tougher rules on lobbying and ethics and transparency, tougher rules than any administration in history. It's not enough, but it's progress. Progress is possible. Don't give up on voting. Don't give up on advocacy. Don't give up on activism. There are too many needs to be met, too much work to be done. Like Dr. King said, "We must accept finite disappointment but never lose infinite hope."

Let us broaden our coalition, building a confederation not of liberals or conservatives, not of red States or blue States, but of all Americans who are hurting today and searching for a better tomorrow. The urgency of the hour demands that we make common cause with all of America's workers—White, Black, Brown—all of whom are being hammered by this recession, all of whom are yearning for that spring to come. It demands that we reach out to those who've been left out in the cold even when the economy is good, even when we're not in recession: the youth in the inner cities, the youth here in Washington, DC; people in rural communities who haven't seen prosperity reach them for a very long time. It demands that we fight discrimination, whatever form it may come. That means we fight discrimination against gays and lesbians, and we make common cause to reform our immigration system.

And finally, we have to recognize, as Dr. King did, that progress can't just come from without, it also has to come from within. And over the past year, for example, we've made meaningful improvements in the field of education. I've got a terrific Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan. He's been working hard with States and working hard with the DC school district, and we've insisted on reform, and we've insisted on accountability. And we we're putting in more money, and we've provided more Pell grants and more tuition tax credits and simpler financial aid forms. We've done all that, but parents still need to parent. Kids still need to own up to their responsibilities. We still have to set high expectations for our young people. Folks can't simply look to government for all the answers without also looking inside themselves, inside their own homes, for some of the answers.

Progress will only come if we're willing to promote that ethic of hard work, a sense of responsibility, in our own lives. I'm not talking, by the way, just to the African American community. Sometimes when I say these things people assume, well, he's just talking to Black people about working hard. No, no, no. I'm talking to the American community, because somewhere along the way, we as a nation began to lose touch with some of our core values. You know what I'm talking about. We became enraptured with the false prophets who prophesized an easy path to success, paved with credit cards and home equity loans and get-rich-quick schemes, and the most important thing was to be a celebrity; it doesn't matter what you do, as long as you get on TV. That's everybody.

We forgot what made the bus boycott a success, what made the movement a success, what made the United States of America a success, that in this country, there's no substitute for hard work, no substitute for a job well done, no substitute for being responsible stewards of God's blessings.

What we're called to do, then, is rebuild America from its foundation on up. To reinvest in the essentials that we've neglected for too long, like health care, like education, like a bet-

ter energy policy, like basic infrastructure, like scientific research. Our generation is called upon to buckle down and get back to basics.

We must do so not only for ourselves, but also for our children and their children, for Jordan—[*laughter*]—and for Austin. That's a sacrifice that falls on us to make. It's a much smaller sacrifice than the Moses generation had to make, but it's still a sacrifice.

Yes, it's hard to transition to a clean energy economy. Sometimes it may be inconvenient, but it's a sacrifice that we have to make. It's hard to be fiscally responsible when we have all these human needs and we're inheriting enormous deficits and debt, but that's a sacrifice that we're going to have to make. You know, it's easy, after a hard day's work, to just put your kid in front of the TV set—you're tired, don't want to fuss with them—instead of reading to them, but that's a sacrifice we must joyfully accept.

Sometimes it's hard to be a good father and good mother. Sometimes it's hard to be a good neighbor or a good citizen, to give up time in service of others, to give something of ourselves to a cause that's greater than ourselves, as Michelle and I are urging folks to do tomorrow to honor and celebrate Dr. King. But these are sacrifices that we are called to make. These are sacrifices that our faith calls us to make: our faith in the future, our faith in America, our faith in God.

And on his sermon all those years ago, Dr. King quoted a poet's verse:

> Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne,—
> . . . and, behind the dim unknown,
> Stands God within the shadows, keeping watch above his own.

Even as Dr. King stood in this church, a victory in the past and uncertainty in the future, he trusted God. He trusted that God would make a way, a way for prayers to be answered, a way for our Union to be perfected, a way for the arc of the moral universe, no matter how long, to slowly bend towards truth and bend towards freedom, to bend towards justice. He had faith that God would make a way out of no way.

You know, folks ask me sometimes why I look so calm. [*Laughter*] They say, "All this stuff coming at you, how come you just seem calm?" And I have a confession to make here. There are times where I'm not so calm. [*Laughter*] Reggie Love knows. My wife knows. There are times when progress seems too slow. There are times when the words that are spoken about me hurt. There are times when the barbs sting. There are times when it feels like all these efforts are for naught, and change is so painfully slow in coming, and I have to confront my own doubts.

But let me tell you, during those times, it's faith that keeps me calm. It's faith that gives me peace, the same faith that leads a single mother to work two jobs to put a roof over her head when she has doubts; the same faith that keeps an unemployed father to keep on submitting job applications even after he's been rejected a hundred times; the same faith that says a teacher, even if the first nine children she's teaching she can't reach, that that 10th one she's going to be able to reach; the same faith that breaks the silence of an earthquake's wake with the sound of prayers and hymns sung by a Haitian community; a faith in things not seen, in better days ahead, in Him who holds the future in the hollow of His hand; and a faith that lets us mount up on wings like eagles, lets us run and not be weary, lets us run—lets us walk and not faint.

So let us hold fast to that faith, as Joshua held fast to the faith of his fathers, and together, we shall overcome the challenges of a new age. Together, we shall seize the promise of this moment. Together, we shall make a way through the winter, and we're going to welcome the spring. Through God all things are possible.

May the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King continue to inspire us and ennoble our world and all who inhabit it, and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12 p.m. at the Vermont Avenue Baptist Church. In his remarks, he referred to Cornelius R. Wheeler, senior pastor, Vermont Avenue Baptist Church, his wife Carla, their son Jason, and their granddaughter Jordan Denice; and Personal Aide to the President Reginald L. Love.

Remarks at a Rally for Senatorial Candidate Martha M. Coakley in Boston, Massachusetts

January 17, 2010

The President. How's it going, Boston? You fired up? Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Fired up! Fired up! First of all, I'm going to let Michelle know you all sang her "Happy Birthday." She'll be pleased to know.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back. You know I do.

Let me begin by thanking Liz Bonacci for the wonderful introduction. Where did Liz go? There she is. Give her a big round of applause. Nice job. I told Liz on the way out here, I said, "Oh, you're going to be great." She says, "Yes, I'm going to rock the house." [*Laughter*] She did.

I want to thank Northeastern. Thank you, Northeastern. And President Aoun—President Aoun and his lovely wife, thank you so much for the hospitality. I want to thank Boston mayor, Tom Menino, who's in the house; Governor Deval Patrick; the great senior Senator from this—[*laughter*]—I know where we are—[*laughter*]—Massachusetts—the great Commonwealth of Massachusetts, John Kerry. I want to thank Vicki Kennedy and the entire Kennedy family. They have been great friends for so long. To all the outstanding Members of Congress who are in the house today, thank you. And we are so thankful to Pastor Laguerre for reminding us once again of the incredible obligations that we have to help the people of Haiti in this time of extraordinary need.

So it's good to be back in Boston. I love this town. I spent 3 years here stuck in a library, trying to graduate. But I still had a little fun.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]—Worcester.

The President. I had a good time in Worcester too. I came back here a few years ago and gave a little speech that turned out pretty well. Something about Boston folks have just always been good to me. Even though I've got to say that I was going to wear my White Sox jacket today.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Come on, now. You want a guy who's loyal to his hometown team. But I love Boston.

And today I've come to talk about one thing. I've come to talk about Tuesday. On Tuesday, you have the unique and special responsibility to fill the Senate seat that you sent Ted Kennedy to fill for nearly 47 years. And I am here to tell you that the person for that job is your attorney general, Martha Coakley.

Now, there's been a lot said in this race about how it's not the Kennedys' seat, it's the people's seat. And let me tell you, the first person who would agree with that was Ted Kennedy. See, the only thing he loved more than the people of this Commonwealth was serving the people of this Commonwealth. He waged a personal battle on behalf of every single one of you, even if you don't know it: for seniors who are living on fixed incomes, for families struggling to get health coverage for their children, for students who dream of a college education. He fought for the working men and women, whether they were teachers in Pittsfield or longshoremen in New Bedford. Ted Kennedy was always on your side in so many of the battles that led this Commonwealth and this Nation forward.

Now, Martha knows the struggles Massachusetts working families face because she's lived those struggles. Their stories are her story. You heard her. She was raised in North Adams, one of five kids. Her dad owned a small business. Her mother was a homemaker. She worked her way up. Nothing was handed to her. And she became a lawyer, not to cash in, but to give hard-working people a fair shake. She became a

lawyer to fight for families like the one she grew up in, families who are the backbone of this Commonwealth and the backbone of this Nation.

And that's what she's done. Look at her record. As a prosecutor, she took on cases most of us don't even want to think about, putting murderers and child abusers away. As attorney general, she took on Wall Street and recovered millions for Massachusetts taxpayers, took on predatory lenders that were taking advantage of Massachusetts families. She went after big insurance companies that misled people into buying coverage only to deny it when they got sick. She went after big polluters who put the health of your family at risk. Time and again, Martha has taken on those who game the system at expense of hard-working, middle class families.

Audience member. Let's go, Martha!

The President. That's the kind of leader the people of Massachusetts need now more than ever. That—you need somebody——

[*At this point, there was an disruption in the audience*.]

Audience members. Boo!

The President. You need somebody—that's all right. That's all right. No, no, we're doing okay. We're all right. No, no, no, no, we're okay.

Audience members. Martha! Martha! Martha!

The President. I couldn't—I—we're doing fine. Now, listen——

[*The disruption continued*.]

Audience members. Martha! Martha! Martha!

The President. Now, where were we? All right, let's go, everybody. Now, listen. Now more than ever—that's all right. Hold up, everybody. Hold up.

Now more than ever, you don't need just another politician who talks the talk. And you don't need just people yelling at each other. Right now what we need is somebody who's got a proven track record, a leader who has walked the walk, somebody who has fought for the people of Massachusetts every single day. Because I don't need to tell you we're in tough times right now. We're still dealing with an economic crisis unlike any that we've seen since the Great Depression. It's done a lot of damage to so many people. And even before that storm hit with its full fury, middle class families were weathering tough economic times throughout this past decade, working harder and harder just to keep up. So people are frustrated and they're angry, and they have every right to be. I understand. Because progress is slow, and no matter how much progress we make, it can't come fast enough for the people who need help right now, today.

But here's the thing. You know how politics is. At times like this, there are always some who are eager to exploit that pain and anger to score a few political points. There are always folks who think that the best way to solve these problems are to demonize others. And unfortunately, we're seeing some of that politics in Massachusetts today.

Now, I've heard about some of the ads that Martha's opponent's running. He's driving his truck around the Commonwealth—[*laughter*]—and he says that he'll—he gets you, that he fights for you, that he'll be an independent voice. And I don't know him; he may be a perfectly nice guy. I don't know his record, but I don't know whether he's been fighting for you up until now, but——

Audience members. No!

The President. But here's what I do know, is I do want somebody who's independent. I want a Senator who's always going to put the interests of working folks all across Massachusetts first, ahead of party, ahead of special interests. And here's what I know, is that Martha has done so. She's got a track record of doing so. I know there are things on which she and I disagree. I respect her for that. She doesn't just call herself independent; she has the character to be independent.

So I hear her opponent is calling himself an independent. Well, you've got to look under the hood—[*laughter*]—because what you learn makes you wonder. Now, if as a legislator he voted with the Republicans 96 percent of the time—96 percent of the time—it's hard to

suggest that he's going to be significantly independent from the Republican agenda. When you listen closely to what he's been saying, it's very clear that he's going to do exactly the same thing in Washington.

So look, forget the ads. Everybody can run slick ads. Forget the truck. [*Laughter*] Everybody can buy a truck. [*Laughter*] Here's the question you need to ask yourselves before you go to vote on Tuesday, Massachusetts: When the chips are down, when the tough votes come, on all the fights that matter to middle class families across this Commonwealth, who is going to be on your side?

Audience members. Martha!

The President. That's what this race on Tuesday is all about. When—because it's easy to say you're independent and you're going to bring people together and all that stuff, until you actually have to do it. And when the vote comes on energy, and there's a choice between standing with big oil or fighting for the clean energy jobs of the future, whose side are you going to be on?

Audience members. Martha!

The President. Martha is going to be on your side.

When the vote comes on taxes, and there's a choice between giving more tax breaks to the wealthiest few and corporations that ship American jobs overseas or giving them to the middle class and businesses that create jobs here, who's going to be on your side?

Audience members. Martha!

The President. Let me just say, by the way, because you'll hear a lot of stuff about taxes. You always do, every election. Last year, I kept a campaign promise to cut taxes for 95 percent of working Americans—cut taxes. And these Members of Congress right here voted to cut taxes here in the Commonwealth, not just for individuals, but also for small businesses. We cut taxes for middle class families. That was part of the Recovery Act. Now, you better check under the hood, because from everything I see, Martha's opponent would have voted against those taxes—he would have voted against those tax cuts—would have voted against those tax cuts.

When it comes to taking on the worst practices of an insurance industry that routinely denies the American people the care they need and leaves too many families one serious illness away from bankruptcy, who's going to be on your side?

Audience members. Martha!

The President. You know she will because she always has. When the vote comes on financial regulatory reform, and the choice is between standing with Wall Street or standing up for commonsense reforms that will protect consumers and protect our economy from future crises, who's going to be on your side?

Audience members. Martha!

The President. Now, we learned the answer to that one this week. Now, keep in mind, Democrats in Congress voted for tax cuts for middle class families and businesses. Now what we're proposing is to make sure that taxpayers get their money back from the rescue that we had to engage in at the beginning of this year, thanks to the bad regulatory policies of the previous administration. And so we asked Martha's opponent what's he going to do. And he decided to park his truck on Wall Street. [*Laughter*]

Now, it was your tax dollars that saved Wall Street banks from their own recklessness, keeping them from collapsing and dragging our entire economy down with them. But today, those same banks are once again making billions in profits and on track to hand out more money in bonuses than ever before, while the American people are still in a world of hurt. Now, we've actually recovered most of your money already, but I don't think most of your money is good enough. We want all our money back. We're going to collect every dime. That's why I proposed a new fee on the largest financial firms, to pay the American people back for saving their skins.

But instead of taking the side of working families in Massachusetts, Martha's opponent's already walking in lockstep with Washington Republicans, opposing that fee, defending the same fat cats who are getting rewarded for their failure. Now, there's a big difference here. It gives you a sense of who the respective candidates are going to be fighting for, despite the rhetoric, despite the television ads, despite the truck. [*Laughter*] Martha's going to make sure

you get your money back. She's got your back. Her opponent's got Wall Street's back. Now, let me be clear: Bankers don't need another vote in the United States Senate. They've got plenty.

Audience member. Where's mine?

The President. Where's yours? That's the question.

And it wouldn't just be any vote. We know that on many of the major questions of our day, a lot of these votes are going to—a lot of these measures are going to rest on one vote in the United States Senate. That's why the opponents of change and progress have been pouring money and resources into the Commonwealth, in hopes of promoting gridlock and failure. They want to keep things just as they are.

So I'd think long and hard about getting in that truck with Martha's opponent. [*Laughter*] It might not take you where you want to go. [*Laughter*] And where we don't want to go right now is backwards to the same policies that got us into this mess in the first place, when we've just started to make progress cleaning it up.

Now, Massachusetts, we have had 1 year to make up for 8. It hasn't been quick. It hasn't been easy. But we've begun to deliver on the change you voted for. I mean, think about it, what some of these Members that I just talked about have done, what we've done just over the last several months. We've started to see the economy grow again. We've given tax cuts to small businesses. We're forcing the banks finally to start lending again on Main Street and not just worry about profits. We've made sure that police officers and teachers and critical workers across this Commonwealth haven't been laid off. But we've got so much more work to do. So many families are out there hurting.

I get 10 letters for—out of the 40,000 that I receive every single day, I select 10 out to read every night. And they're heartbreaking: people talking about losing their jobs, losing their homes. Sometimes it's young children who are writing: "Mr. President, can you help? My dad has lost his job." "Mr. President, can you help? My brother is sick, and we don't have health insurance."

We've got so much work left to do. And as much progress as we've made, I can't do it alone. I need leaders like Martha by my side so we can kick it into high gear, so we can finish what we've started.

You know, we always knew that change was going to be hard. And what we also understood—I understood this the minute I was sworn into office—was that there were going to be some who stood on the sidelines, who were protectors of the big banks and protectors of the big insurance companies, protectors of the big drug companies, who would say: "You know what? We can take advantage of this crisis, because it's going to be so bad, even though we helped initiate these policies, there's going to be a sleight of hand here because we're going to let Democrats take responsibility. We're going to let them make the tough choices. We're going to let them rescue the economy. And then we can tap into that anger and that frustration."

It's the oldest play in the book. But everybody here knows that the choices that have to be made in order to get this economy moving, to make sure that people are actually working in jobs that pay a living wage, that we have a green energy economy that is freeing ourselves from dependence on foreign oil, that young people can actually afford to go to college and can look forward to graduating to careers that are building this country, that those things aren't going to happen overnight and they're not going to be easy. But we sure aren't going to get there if we look backwards and try to reinstitute the same failed policies that we've had over the past decade.

That's not going to work. We've been there; we've done that. What Martha's opponent is preaching, we've already tried, and it didn't work. So understand what's at stake here, Massachusetts. It's whether we're going forward or going backwards.

Audience members. Forward!

The President. It's whether we're going to have a future where everybody gets a shot in this society or just the privileged few. If you were fired up in the last election, I need you

more fired up in this election. I need you out there working just as hard right now in those final days. I need you knocking on doors. I need you making phone calls. I need you talking to your friends and your neighbors and telling them what's at stake on Tuesday, that every vote matters, that every voice matters.

And if you do that—if you do that, if you are willing not only to cast your vote for Martha Coakley, but if you're willing to get out the vote for Martha Coakley, then you won't just win this election. You will carry on the best progressive, forward-looking values of this proud Commonwealth and send a leader to Washington who is going to work tirelessly every single day to turn this economy around, to move this country forward, and to keep the American Dream alive in our time and for all time. That's what Martha Coakley's about. And we need you. We need you on Tuesday.

Thank you very much, Boston. Thank you, Northeastern. Thank you, Commonwealth.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:06 p.m. at Northeastern University. In his remarks, he referred to Liz Bonacci, niece of senatorial candidate Coakley; Joseph E. Aoun, president, Northeastern University, and his wife Zeina; Victoria R. Kennedy, wife of former Massachusetts Sen. Edward M. Kennedy; Pierre Eddy Laguerre, pastor, Philadelphie Haitian American 7th Day Adventist Church, Malden, MA; and State Sen. Scott P. Brown, Massachusetts senatorial candidate.

Remarks Following an Intergenerational Conversation on the Movement
January 18, 2010

Hello, everybody. We have just had a wonderful conversation. I want to just tell you a little bit about why we did this. I think sometimes in celebration of Dr. King's birthday we act as if this history was so long ago.

And the reason we brought together some elders and some young people very briefly was not just to visit the Oval Office and see the Emancipation Proclamation, which is going to be on loan to us, but it's also just to remind us that there were some extraordinarily courageous young people like Dr. Dorothy Height, like Mrs. Eleanor Banks and Romaine Thomas and her husband, and others who were actively involved in bringing about one of the great moments in United States history.

And so what we've done is, we've heard some stories, shared—Dr. Height's shared with us what it was like meeting Martin Luther King when he was a 15-year-old at Morehouse, visiting there. We heard from Ms. Glanton, Willie Glanton, who is a great activist in Iowa, about the work that she's done there on behalf of the movement, reminding us that it wasn't just isolated in some areas.

I am especially proud to have the Harveys here, Mr. Joseph Harvey and Ms. Mabel Harvey. Mr. Joseph Harvey is 105, and Ms. Mabel Harvey here is the spry young one at 102. [*Laughter*] And Ms. Harvey just now was whispering in my ear, as you guys were walking in, that this must be the Lord's doing, because we've come a mighty long way. [*Laughter*] That's what she said. And so that's wonderful to hear.

We've heard from some young people here who were sharing in these stories and understanding that this is a living history. And I was very pleased to hear from Taylor Branch, author of one of the definitive biographies of the movement and Dr. King. He shared, I thought, a really interesting idea, which is that not only is Dr. King's birthday a time to celebrate service, to reflect and study on how we have helped to perfect our Union, but that it should be a day in which each of us individually also try to stretch out of our comfort zones and try to do something for others and to reach out and learn about things that maybe we've shied away from, because part of what the movement was all about was changing people's hearts and minds and breaking out of old customs and old habits.

And that's, I think, an important lesson for all of us on this day, is—are the things that we can try to do that might have seemed impossible but we know are worth doing, and can we apply those principles that we know to be true in our own lives and in our society.

So I'm just so grateful that we had this opportunity to share with everybody. And I want to wish everybody around the country a day in which they reflect on the extraordinary contributions that ordinary citizens can make each and every day to make America the most hopeful country in the world.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:05 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Raye Lyneer Thomas, husband of activist Romaine Thomas.

Statement on the Death of Carlos Hernandez Gomez
January 18, 2010

I was saddened to hear of the passing of Carlos Hernandez Gomez. Our paths first crossed when I was a State senator. He was a throwback in the style of Chicago's storied political reporters. He loved Chicago, and he relentlessly sought to tell its story with the commitment to truth and the insatiable curiosity that any good reporter has to have. I quickly learned that when you saw his sharp fedora in a crowd, hard questions were coming. But Carlos always played it straight. And I always enjoyed our interactions in Springfield, Chicago, or on the campaign trail.

Carlos was a role model to many and an integral part of the Chicago story he strived to tell. My thoughts and prayers are with his wife Randi and his family.

Remarks at the "Let Freedom Ring" Concert Celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr.
January 18, 2010

Thank you. To Dr. DeGioia, thank you so much; to the entire Georgetown family; to my Cabinet, who is working tirelessly each and every day on behalf of the American people; to Members of Congress who are in attendance; to dignitaries and Ambassadors; to tonight's honorees; to Coach. It is wonderful to be here this evening. It is a great privilege. Thank you.

It is a great privilege to be with all of you tonight in this place that we set aside to celebrate America's arts, but on this day we set aside to commemorate an American giant. And it's fitting that we are commemorating the life of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King with an evening of song. Because songs played, as all of you know, an important part in the movement that he led.

It's been said that during the movement, Dr. King and his associates would go around to different communities in the hopes of organizing and mobilizing them, and they'd know which were serious about the boycott, which had the discipline to actually help pull it off, if folks in those communities were singing freedom songs. And when he saw young people singing in the face of hostility, he said that's when he first saw "the real meaning of the movement." He said it was about the "faith in the future." He said that it was "based on hope." So I'm pleased to be here tonight to listen to some beautiful music that I think would have made Dr. King share a little extra faith in our future.

Of course, as we gather here to celebrate Dr. King's life with an evening of the arts, we're also mindful that this is a difficult time for our people and for our world. Across this country, Americans are struggling, and few more than African Americans, those very same inheritors of progress sown by Dr. King and the movement; too many are struggling right now. Around the world, our sons and daughters are fighting two wars. Closer to home, our Haitian neighbors are in desperate need. Across an ocean, in Africa, many people are still living amid poverty and violence and disease—of the kind that Dikembe Mutombo, who's being honored here tonight, is attacking

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.

Studies by the Government Accountability Office have identified tens of thousands of such deadbeat companies that are being awarded Government contracts. One company owner who owed over $1 million in taxes was paid over $1 million as a defense contractor, and instead of using that money to pay his back taxes, he chose to buy a boat, some cars, and a home abroad with his earnings. The total amount owed in unpaid taxes by companies like that is estimated at more than $5 billion.

Now, in Washington, $5 billion might not seem like a lot of money. But if we were to invest that money in education, it would be enough to cover the cost of annual college tuition for more than half a million students. If we were to invest in health care, it would be enough to cover 2½ million children. If we were to invest it in energy, it would be enough to weatherize more than half a million homes.

In a time of great need, when our families and our Nation are finding it necessary to tighten our belts and be more responsible with how we spend our money, we can't afford to waste taxpayer dollars. And we especially can't afford to let companies game the system. We need to make sure every tax dollar we spend is going to address our Nation's urgent needs and to make a difference in the lives of our people.

The status quo, then, is inefficient and it's wasteful. But the larger and more fundamental point is that it's wrong. It is simply wrong for companies to take taxpayer dollars and not be taxpayers themselves. So we need to insist on the same sense of responsibility in Washington that so many of you strive to uphold in your own lives, in your own families, and in your own businesses.

That's exactly what the memorandum I'm issuing today is meant to do. I'm directing my budget office, together with the Treasury Department and other Federal agencies, to take steps to block contractors who are seriously delinquent in their taxes from receiving new Government contracts. I'm also directing the IRS to conduct a review of the overall accuracy of companies' claims about tax delinquencies. We need to be sure that when a company says it's paying taxes, that company is, in fact, paying taxes.

Beyond these steps, I'm also calling on Congress to build on the kind of legislation that Senator McCaskill, Congressman Ellsworth, and Chairman Towns have introduced—and that I introduced when I was Senator—legislation that will crack down on tax cheats by allowing the IRS to share information about tax delinquency with contracting officials. And by the way, when I introduced that Senate bill, Claire stood by me, and Brad led the way in the House.

Further, my budget from last year proposed that if a company with lots of unpaid taxes receives a Federal contract, the Government ought to be able to pay taxpayers back in full before it's required to pay the contractors themselves. It also proposed that tax collection, on behalf of American taxpayers, should not be subject to long bureaucratic delays, it should be done swiftly. Since Congress did not act last year on this proposal, I am introducing it in this year's budget, and I once again urge Congress to act on it.

So the steps I'm directing today and the steps I'm calling on Congress to take are just basic commonsense steps. They're not going to eliminate all the waste or all the abuse in Government contracting in one fell swoop. And going forward, we'll also have to do more to hold contractors more accountable, not just for paying taxes, but for following other laws as well, including employment and environmental laws.

But the efforts I'm outlining today will scale back waste and abuse. And they will help bring the values of American Government and the values of America's companies in line with the values of the American people.

So with that, I'm going to sign this memorandum. And I'm expecting our team to implement it as quickly and as effectively as we can.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:14 a.m. in Room 430 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. The memorandum is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Reception Celebrating National Mentoring Month
January 20, 2010

Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. Thank you, Anthony, for that outstanding introduction. And thank you, Michelle Obama, also known around here as FLOTUS—[*laughter*]—which stands for First Lady of the United States; I'm POTUS. [*Laughter*]

Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome. I'm glad you all could join us today as we mark National Mentoring Month here at the White House. And as I said, Anthony did a wonderful job introducing me. I'm told that with the guidance of his mentor, Ben De Leon—where's Ben? There's Ben, right there. Anthony, I hear you're working hard, doing great in school. And so we are very proud of you, and we expect you to keep up the good work. And, Ben, thank you for your extraordinary service.

I do want to thank Michelle for launching our White House mentoring program. This is one of those that I can't take full credit for. She has shown extraordinary leadership on this issue in our administration.

Now, we've got several Members of Congress here: Representatives Susan Davis, Gwen Moore, and Mike Rogers. Why don't you guys just stand up so everybody can see you? They've done terrific work promoting mentoring. Thanks to Acting CEO Nicky Goren, as well as John Kelly and Kristin McSwain, from the Corporation of National and Community Service, and to the members of our Federal Mentoring Council for all their great work. Please give them a big round of applause.

And I want to recognize all the mentors who are here, including the people who are up on stage with their mentees, for their encouragement, their inspiration, the example they're providing to young people all across this country.

And finally, I want to recognize the outstanding young men who are here today who are joining our White House mentoring program. It's going to be a program that matches them up with caring adults from our staff here at the White House. And I had a chance to meet them earlier. They're wonderful young men, although one of them started talking trash about basketball already. [*Laughter*] I mean, it didn't take but 5 minutes before he was explaining how he was going to rain down jumpers on me. [*Laughter*]

Now, to all those young men, you were chosen because of the promise that you've shown, because of your willingness to work, your eagerness to learn, your determination to succeed. And all of you deserve enormous credit for that. Now, it's not easy being a young person these days. Fewer young people are growing up in homes with two parents. I'm one of those people who didn't grow up with two parents in a household. Parents are working longer hours, and they've got less time to spend with their kids. And many young people don't have the advantage of living in those tight-knit neighborhoods that many of us who are older grew up in, where people looked out for each other and for each other's children.

We've also seen a rise of a popular culture that doesn't exactly celebrate diligence and self-discipline, but instead, sends a message that you can be rich and famous without doing any work, that your ticket to success is only through rapping or basketball or being a reality TV star. And many young people don't have anyone in their lives to counteract that message, to tell them that gratification that comes instantaneously usually disappears just as quickly and that real success in life comes from commitment and persistence, effort, hard work.

I know something about the impact these factors can have in the life of a child. And as I mentioned earlier, my father left my family when I was 2 years old. I was raised by a single mom who struggled at times to provide for me and my sister. And while I was lucky to have loving grandparents who poured everything they had into helping my mother take care of us, I still felt the weight of my father's absence throughout my childhood.

So I wasn't always focused in school the way I should have been. I did some things I'm not proud of. I got in more trouble than I should have. Without a bunch of second chances and a

whole lot of luck, my life could have taken easily a turn for the worse.

But many kids today aren't as lucky. They've got a much smaller margin for error. A generation or two ago, if you didn't finish school or if you only had a high school diploma, you could still make a pretty decent living. That's usually not the case today. More than ever, success in life depends on success in school. And young people who start down the wrong path and don't have anybody to steer them straight aren't just consigning themselves to a life of financial hardship; they're consigning all of us to an economy that's less competitive and a nation that doesn't fulfill its promise.

That's why mentoring's so important. We know the difference a responsible, caring adult can make in a child's life: buck them up when they're discouraged, provide tough love when they veer off track, being that person in their lives who doesn't want to let them down and that they don't want to let down, and refusing to give up on them, even when they want to give up on themselves.

Now, studies have shown that young people in mentoring relationships get better grades in school, they're less likely to drink, they're less likely to do drugs. And you ask any successful person how they got to where they are today, chances are they'll tell you about a mentor they had somewhere along the way.

The great poet and author Maya Angelou didn't discover poetry until her mentor took her to the tiny library at her school and challenged her to read every book in the room. Cofounder and CEO of Apple Steve Jobs was an incorrigible troublemaker until his fourth grade teacher took him under her wing and convinced him to focus on math instead of mischief. That turned out pretty well. Ray Charles first discovered his gift for music when, at the age of 3, his next-door neighbor taught him how to play the piano. And it was the enthusiasm of her mentor, Dr. Elizabeth Blackburn, that drew Carol Greider to the groundbreaking work in genetics that would win both of them the Nobel Prize for medicine.

So there's no doubt about the value of mentoring. And there's no doubt about the tremendous need for mentors in this country, with at least 15 million young people in need of a mentor. What we need now is for committed adults to step forward and help us meet that need.

Now, I understand times are tough, and I know people are busy. And so sometimes people think, well, I'd like to do it, but I'm not sure I can make the commitment. Here's the thing people need to understand: It doesn't take much to make a big difference. A couple of hours a week shooting hoops, helping with homework, talking about what's going on in their lives can make a big, lasting impact in the life of a young person.

And as the folks up here on stage will tell you, the mentor usually gets as much or more out of it than the mentee. So I'm pleased that nonprofit organizations like Big Brothers Big Sisters are stepping up, expanding their efforts to connect children of deployed servicemembers to mentors, who are often veterans themselves.

Corporations are stepping up as well. Viacom, for example, is working with a national nonprofit called MENTOR to provide flextime to employees who sign up to be mentors and to produce educational materials for mentoring organizations across the country.

Government's doing its part too, launching the serve.gov/mentor web site to help people find mentoring opportunities and expanding mentoring efforts in Native American communities and in rural areas, working with the Federal Mentoring Council to ensure that our initiatives and investments are coordinated, effective, and focused on those most in need.

But here's the thing—and I'm talking specifically to the young people who are here today: In the end, we can start all kinds of mentoring programs and give you guys all the mentors in the world, but it won't make much of a difference unless you do your parts as well. That's the thing about mentoring; it's a two-way street.

So we need you engaged here. We need you to open up. As Michelle said, you've got to ask questions; you've got to ask for help when you need it. I do that every day. Michelle does that every day. It's not a sign of weakness to look

for help, to try to answer questions that you don't know the answers to; it's a sign of strength when you do that. It shows that you have the courage to admit when you're unsure of yourself and the willingness to learn and grow and become a better person.

Now, if young people like you are willing to do this, and if compassionate, committed adults are willing to step up, then think about the incredible impact that we can have. Think about the potential that we will discover and the talent that we will nurture and the lives that we can turn around and the effect that we can have on our schools and our communities and the future of this country.

Now, that's the power of mentoring. That's the purpose of what all of you are doing across America. And today I thank you for your work, and I look forward to working with all of you in the months and years ahead. And I'm especially looking forward to seeing all the young men who are here as they spend time in the White House over the next several months.

So thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:07 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady; and Big Brothers Big Sisters mentee Anthony Saldana. The National Mentoring Month proclamation of January 4 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process

January 20, 2010

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the emergency declared with respect to foreign terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process is to continue in effect beyond January 23, 2010.

The crisis with respect to the grave acts of violence committed by foreign terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process that led to the declaration of a national emergency on January 23, 1995, has not been resolved. Terrorist groups continue to engage in activities that have the purpose or effect of threatening the Middle East peace process and that are hostile to United States interests in the region. Such actions constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to foreign terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process and to maintain in force the economic sanctions against them to respond to this threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
January 20, 2010.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Financial Regulatory Reform and Consumer Protection Legislation

January 21, 2010

Good morning, everybody. I just had a very productive meeting with two members of my Economic Recovery Advisory Board: Paul Volcker, who's the former Chair of the Federal Reserve Board, and Bill Donaldson, previously the head of the SEC. And I deeply appreciate the counsel of these two leaders and the board that they've offered as we have dealt with a broad array of very difficult economic challenges.

Over the past 2 years, more than 7 million Americans have lost their jobs in the deepest recession our country has known in generations. Rarely does a day go by that I don't hear from folks who are hurting. And every day, we are working to put our economy back on track and put America back to work. But even as we dig our way out of this deep hole, it's important that we not lose sight of what led us into this mess in the first place.

This economic crisis began as a financial crisis, when banks and financial institutions took huge, reckless risks in pursuit of quick profits and massive bonuses. When the dust settled and this binge of irresponsibility was over, several of the world's oldest and largest financial institutions had collapsed or were on the verge of doing so. Markets plummeted, credit dried up, and jobs were vanishing by the hundreds of thousands each month. We were on the precipice of a second great depression.

To avoid this calamity, the American people, who were already struggling in their own right, were forced to rescue financial firms facing crises largely of their own creation. And that rescue, undertaken by the previous administration, was deeply offensive, but it was a necessary thing to do, and it succeeded in stabilizing the financial system and helping to avert that depression.

Since that time, over the past year, my administration has recovered most of what the Federal Government provided to banks. And last week, I proposed a fee to be paid by the largest financial firms in order to recover every last dime. But that's not all we have to do. We have to enact commonsense reforms that will protect American taxpayers and the American economy from future crises as well.

For while the financial system is far stronger today than it was 1 year ago, it's still operating under the same rules that led to its near collapse. These are rules that allowed firms to act contrary to the interests of customers, to conceal their exposure to debt through complex financial dealings, to benefit from taxpayer-insured deposits while making speculative investments, and to take on risks so vast that they posed threats to the entire system.

That's why we are seeking reforms to protect consumers. We intend to close loopholes that allowed big financial firms to trade risky financial products, like credit default swaps and other derivatives without oversight, to identify system-wide risks that could cause a meltdown, to strengthen capital and liquidity requirements to make the system more stable, and to ensure that the failure of any large firm does not take the entire economy down with it. Never again will the American taxpayer be held hostage by a bank that is too big to fail.

Now, limits on the risks major financial firms can take are central to the reforms that I've proposed. They are central to the legislation that has passed the House under the leadership of Chairman Barney Frank and that we're working to pass in the Senate under the leadership of Chairman Chris Dodd. As part of these efforts, today I'm proposing two additional reforms that I believe will strengthen the financial system, while preventing future crises.

First, we should no longer allow banks to stray too far from their central mission of serving their customers. In recent years, too many financial firms have put taxpayer money at risk by operating hedge funds and private equity funds and making riskier investments to reap a quick reward. And these firms have taken these risks while benefiting from special financial privileges that are reserved only for banks.

Our Government provides deposit insurance and other safeguards and guarantees to firms that operate banks. We do so because a stable and reliable banking system promotes sustained growth and because we learned how dangerous the failure of that system can be during the Great Depression.

But these privileges were not created to bestow banks operating hedge funds or private equity funds with an unfair advantage. When banks benefit from the safety net that taxpayers provide, which includes lower cost capital, it is not appropriate for them to turn around and use that cheap money to trade for profit. And that is especially true when this kind of trading often puts banks in direct conflict with their customers' interests.

The fact is, these kinds of trading operations can create enormous and costly risks, endangering the entire bank if things go wrong. We simply cannot accept a system in which hedge funds or private equity firms inside banks can place huge, risky bets that are subsidized by taxpayers and that could pose a conflict of interest. And we cannot accept a system in which shareholders make money on these operations if the bank wins, but taxpayers foot the bill if the bank loses.

It's for these reasons that I'm proposing a simple and commonsense reform, which we're calling the "Volcker rule," after this tall guy behind me. Banks will no longer be allowed to own, invest, or sponsor hedge funds, private equity funds, or proprietary trading operations for their own profit, unrelated to serving their customers. If financial firms want to trade for profit, that's something they're free to do. Indeed, doing so responsibly is a good thing for the markets and the economy. But these firms should not be allowed to run these hedge funds and private equities funds while running a bank backed by the American people.

In addition, as part of our efforts to protect against future crises, I'm also proposing that we prevent the further consolidation of our financial system. There has long been a deposit cap in place to guard against too much risk being concentrated in a single bank. The same principle should apply to wider forms of funding employed by large financial institutions in today's economy. The American people will not be served by a financial system that comprises just a few massive firms. That's not good for consumers; it's not good for the economy. And through this policy, that is an outcome we will avoid.

My message to Members of Congress of both parties is that we have to get this done. And my message to leaders of the financial industry is to work with us, and not against us, on needed reforms. I welcome constructive input from folks in the financial sector. But what we've seen so far, in recent weeks, is an army of industry lobbyists from Wall Street descending on Capitol Hill to try and block basic and commonsense rules of the road that would protect our economy and the American people.

So if these folks want a fight, it's a fight I'm ready to have. And my resolve is only strengthened when I see a return to old practices at some of the very firms fighting reform and when I see soaring profits and obscene bonuses at some of the very firms claiming that they can't lend more to small business, they can't keep credit card rates low, they can't pay a fee to refund taxpayers for the bailout without passing on the cost to shareholders or customers. That's the claims they're making. It's exactly this kind of irresponsibility that makes clear reform is necessary.

And we've come through a terrible crisis. The American people have paid a very high price. We simply cannot return to business as usual. That's why we're going to ensure that Wall Street pays back the American people for the bailout. That's why we're going to rein in the excess and abuse that nearly brought down our financial system. That's why we're going to pass these reforms into law.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:34 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Remarks to the United States Conference of Mayors
January 21, 2010

Thank you very much. Please have a seat. Have a seat. Well, welcome to the White House, everybody. And let me, first of all, say what a outstanding job that the Vice President has done, not just on a whole range of issues in this administration, but in working with the mayors to make sure this Recovery Act works the way it should. So please give Joe Biden a big round of applause.

A couple of other acknowledgements I have to make: First of all, I want to say congratulations to Elizabeth Kautz, the new president. Congratulations. Give Elizabeth a big round of applause. I have to acknowledge my own mayor, Mayor Richard Daley, for the outstanding work he's done in Chicago. I want to say thank you to Joe Riley of Charleston, not only for creating one of the greatest—helping to make one of the greatest cities in the country bloom, but also for giving us David Agnew. So give him a big round of applause. Mayor John Hickenlooper of Denver, who also is running for the Governor of Colorado; I hope you all talk to him still even when he becomes Governor. And I've got to acknowledge Mufi Hannemann because he was such a great host for me and my family when we were there in Honolulu. So thank you, Mufi. I have to say, Rich, the weather was a lot better—[*laughter*]—in Honolulu. I just want to let you know. [*Laughter*]

Now, I know all of you met the First Lady yesterday to begin an important national discussion on our national childhood obesity epidemic. I hate following my wife. [*Laughter*] She's more charming, smarter, tougher, better looking. But I am looking forward to a productive discussion with all of you on the urgent need to create jobs and move our metropolitan areas forward.

Now, I always enjoy meeting with mayors because it reminds me of where I got my start, working with folks at the local level, doing our best to make a real impact on the lives of ordinary Americans, and that's what each of you does every single day. You're the first interaction citizens have with their government when they step outside every morning. The things that make our cities work and our people go—transit and public safety, safe housing, sanitation, parks, recreation—all these tasks fall to you. It was President Johnson who once said: "When the burdens of the Presidency seem unusually heavy, I always remind myself it could be worse. I could be a mayor." [*Laughter*]

So I—it's why we organized this meeting today. [*Laughter*] I look at all of you and I say, I'm doing fine. [*Laughter*] It's just not easy being a mayor. But rarely, if ever, has it been more difficult than it is today. Your constituents are feeling the pain of the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression, not to mention an economy that wasn't working for a lot of them long before this particular crisis hit.

Many have lost jobs; many have lost their health care; some may have even lost their homes. And they're looking to you and all of us to regain some sense of economic security. And just when they need more from you, you're stuck with falling revenues, leaving you with impossible choices that keep mounting up—putting projects on hold or having to furlough key employees. I know some of you have had the heartbreak of laying folks off. I also know that each and every one of you is 100 percent resolved to pick your city up and move it forward.

And that's why, even as we worked to rescue our broader economy last year, we took some steps to help. We cut taxes, as Joe mentioned, for workers and small businesses. We extended unemployment insurance and health benefits for those who lost their jobs. We provided aid to local governments so you could keep essential services running and keep cops and firefighters and teachers, who make your cities safe places to grow and to learn, on your payroll.

We invested in proven strategies like the COPS program and the Byrnes Grants that you rely on to bring down crime and boost public safety. We funded and awarded more

than 1,800 of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants that you conceived, flexible products that reduce energy use, put people back to work, and save taxpayers' money.

We increased funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program, helping more than 300,000 young people hit especially hard by the recession. That did more than just give them a chance to earn money; it gave them the critical chance to gain experience in good jobs that build good skills so that they can come out of this crisis in a better position to build a life for themselves.

And we're working every day to get our economy back on track and put America back to work. Because while Wall Street may be recovering, you and I know your Main Streets have a long way to go. Unemployment in your cities is still far too high. And because our metropolitan areas account for 90 percent of our economic output, they are the engines that we need to get started again.

Now, last month, I announced some additional targeted steps to spur private sector hiring and boost small businesses by building on the tax cuts in the Recovery Act and increasing access to the loans they desperately need to grow. I said we'd rebuild and modernize even more of our transportation and communications networks across the country, in addition to the infrastructure projects that are already scheduled to come on line this year. I called for the extension of emergency relief to help hurting Americans who've lost their jobs. And you can expect a continued, sustained, and relentless effort to create good jobs for the American people. I will not rest until we've gotten there.

But I also know that each of you worries about the longer term effects this economy might have on your children, on your families, and on workers. You worry about what shape everything will be in once we emerge from this crisis. So you're focused on addressing the pressing problems we face today, but you've also got a vision for your city. And no matter what party you belong to or where you've traveled here from, that vision is one I share: of vibrant communities that provide our children with every chance to learn and to grow, that allow our businesses and workers the best opportunity to innovate and succeed, that let our older Americans live out their best years in the midst of all that metropolitan life has to offer. All of us have an obligation to make sure that even as we work to rescue and rebuild our economy, we don't lose sight of that, because job creation and investing in our communities aren't competing priorities, they are complementary.

Now, 2 years ago, I addressed your gathering, and I outlined a new strategy for urban America that changed the way Washington does business with our cities and our metropolitan areas. And since taking office, my administration has taken a hard look at that relationship, from matters of infrastructure to transportation, education to energy, housing to sustainable development. My staff has traveled around the country to see the fresh ideas and successful solutions that you've devised. And we've learned a great deal about what we can do, and shouldn't do, to help rebuild and revitalize our cities and metropolitan areas for the future.

So the budget that I'll present next month will begin to back up this urban vision by putting an end to throwing money after what doesn't work and by investing responsibly in what does.

Our strategy to build economically competitive, environmentally sustainable, opportunity-rich communities that serve as the backbone for our long-term growth and prosperity—three items: First, we'll build strong regional backbones for our economy by coordinating Federal investment in economic and workforce development, because today's metropolitan areas don't stop at downtown. What's good for Denver, for example, is usually good for places like Aurora and Boulder too. Strong cities are the building blocks of strong regions, and strong regions are essential for a strong America.

Second, we'll focus on creating more livable and environmentally sustainable communities. Because when it comes to development, it's time to throw out old policies that encouraged sprawl and congestion, pollution, and ended up isolating our communities in the process. We need strategies that encourage smart development linked to quality public transportation that bring our communities together.

That's why we'll improve our Partnership for Sustainable Communities by working with HUD, EPA, and the Department of Transportation in making sure that when it comes to development, housing, energy, and transportation policy go hand in hand. And we will build on the successful TIGER discretionary grants program to put people to work and help our cities rebuild their roads and their bridges, train stations, and water systems.

Third, we'll focus on creating neighborhoods of opportunity. Many of our neighborhoods have been economically distressed long before this crisis hit, for as long as many of us can remember. And while the underlying causes may be deeply rooted and complicated, there are some needs that are simple: access to good jobs, affordable housing, convenient transportation that connects both, quality schools and health services, safe streets and parks, and access to a fresh, healthy food supply.

So we'll invest in innovative and proven strategies that change the odds for our communities, strategies like Promise Neighborhoods, neighborhood-level interventions that saturate our kids with the services that offer them a better start in life; strategies like Choice Neighborhoods, which focuses on new ideas for housing by recognizing that different communities need different solutions. And by the way, we're also expanding the successful Race to the Top competition to improve our schools and raise the bar for all our students to local school districts that are committed to change.

That's what we're doing to bring jobs and opportunity to every corner of our cities and our economy, focusing on what works. And that's what all of you do each and every day. You're not worried about ideology. Obviously, all of you are elected, so you think about politics, but it's not in terms of scoring cheap political points; you're going to be judged on whether you deliver the goods or not. You focus on solving problems for people who trusted us with solving them. And that's a commitment that all of us who serve should keep in mind.

As long as I'm President, I'm committed to being your partner in that work. We're going to keep on reaching out to you and listening to you and working with you towards our common goals. And I want to start that right now by taking some of your questions. But first, I think all these cameras are going to move out, so you can tell me the truth. [*Laughter*] All right? Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:32 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Elizabeth B. Kautz of Burnsville, MN; and White House Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs David Agnew. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden.

Statement on the United States Supreme Court Ruling on Campaign Finance

January 21, 2010

With its ruling today, the Supreme Court has given a green light to a new stampede of special interest money in our politics. It is a major victory for big oil, Wall Street banks, health insurance companies, and the other powerful interests that marshal their power every day in Washington to drown out the voices of everyday Americans. This ruling gives the special interests and their lobbyists even more power in Washington, while undermining the influence of average Americans who make small contributions to support their preferred candidates. That's why I am instructing my administration to get to work immediately with Congress on this issue. We are going to talk with bipartisan congressional leaders to develop a forceful response to this decision. The public interest requires nothing less.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Elyria, Ohio

January 22, 2010

The President. Hello, everybody! Hello, Ohio! Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. Everybody, please relax. [*Laughter*] We're going to be here for a little bit. Everybody take a seat if you have a seat. [*Laughter*] It is great to see you. Can everybody please give Jody a big round of applause for the introduction.

Everybody is a special guest, but we've got a few that I just want to mention. First of all, obviously, you've got one of the finest Governors in the country in Ted Strickland. Please give him a round of applause. My former colleague when he was in the Senate—nobody fights harder for working people than Sherrod Brown. Give him a big round of applause. We've got a dynamo pair of Members of the House of Representatives, who are so committed to their districts and committed to this State, Betty Sutton and Marcy Kaptur.

I have been having just a wonderful time here in town, and your mayor has just been a really nice person. He and I shared a burger over at Smitty's—[*applause*]—give Bill Grace a big round of applause.

And somebody who I'm hugely impressed with because I'm just so impressed with this institution, and his leadership obviously has been critical to it, Dr. Ray [Roy]* Church, your school president here at Lorain County Community College.

Well, listen, it is great to be here in Elyria. Thank you so much for the great hospitality, the wonderful reception. Look, it's just nice being out of Washington, let me say. [*Laughter*] I mean, there are some nice people in Washington, but it can drive you crazy. [*Laughter*] Am I wrong, Sherrod? [*Laughter*]

For 2 years, I had the privilege of traveling across this country, and I had a chance to talk to people like you, and go to diners and sit in barbershops, and hear directly about the challenges that all of you are facing in your lives, and the opportunities that you're taking advantage of, and all the things that we face together as a nation. And the single hardest thing—people ask me this all the time—the single hardest thing about being President is that it's harder for me to do that nowadays. It's harder to get out of the bubble.

I mean, don't get me wrong, the White House is a wonderful place to work. You live above the store—[*laughter*]—which means I've got a very short commute. I'm having—I see my daughters before they go to school, and I see them at night for dinner, even if I have to go back down to the office. And that makes everything so much better. But the truth is, this job is a little confining, and that is frustrating. I can't just go to the barbershop or sit in a diner. I can't always visit people directly.

This is part of the reason why I've taken to the practice of reading 10 letters, out of the 40,000 that I get, every night just so that I can stay in touch and hear from you. But nothing beats a day where I can make an escape, I break out. And so I appreciate the chance to come here and spend a day.

Before I came here I visited the EMC Precision Machining plant. I saw the great clean energy job training program here at Lorain County Community College. And I'm obviously thrilled to be able to spend some time with you.

Audience members. We love you!

The President. I love you back. Thank you.

Now, look, let's be honest. These are difficult and unsettling times. They're difficult times here in Elyria, they're tough in Ohio, they're tough all across the country. I walked into office a year ago in the middle of a raging economic storm that was wreaking devastation on your town and communities everywhere. And we had to take some very difficult steps to deal with that mess, to stave off an even greater economic catastrophe. We had to stabilize the financial system, which, given the role of the big banks in creating this mess, was a pretty tough pill to swallow.

* White House correction.

I knew it would be unpopular, and rightly so. But I also knew that we had to do it because if they went down, your local banks would have gone down. And if the financial system went down, it would have taken the entire economy and millions more families and businesses with it. We would have looked—we would have been looking at a second great depression.

So in my first months in office, we also had to save two of the Big Three automakers from a liquidation bankruptcy, complete collapse. Some people weren't happy about that either. I understand that. They felt like if you're in a business, you make a bad decision, you ought to reap the consequences, just like any business would. The problem was, if we let GM and Chrysler simply go under, hundreds of thousands of Americans would have been hurt, not just at those companies themselves, but at auto suppliers and other companies and dealers here in Michigan, up in—or here in Ohio, up in Michigan, all across this country.

So we said if you're willing to take some tough and painful steps to make yourself more competitive, we're willing to invest in your future. And earlier this week, we heard that the auto industry planned to make almost 3 million cars and trucks here in North America in the next 3 months, which is up 69 percent from the first 3 months of last year.

We also passed a Recovery Act to pull our economy back from the brink. Now, there's been a lot of misunderstanding about this Recovery Act. Sherrod and Marcy and Betty and I were talking about this on the way over here. If you ask the average person, what was the Recovery Act, the stimulus package, they'd say, "the bank bailout." So let me just be clear here: The Recovery Act was cutting taxes for 95 percent of working families, 15 different tax cuts for working families, 7 different tax cuts for small businesses so they can start up and grow and hire. The Recovery Act was extending and increasing unemployment insurance and making COBRA available at a cheaper rate for people who had lost their jobs so they could keep their health care.

We gave aid directly to states to help them through tough times. Ted can testify the help that it provided to the Ohio budget so we wouldn't have to lay off teachers and firefighters and police officers all across this State. And we made the largest investment in infrastructure since the creation of the Interstate Highway System, putting Americans to work rebuilding our roads, bridges, waterways, doing the work that America needs to be done.

Now, today, because we took those actions, the worst of this economic storm has passed. But families like yours and communities like this one are still reeling from the devastation that left in its wake. At one of the companies, at EMC, where I went today—wonderful company, passed on through generations—they have hung on with their precision manufacturing, high value added. They can do things that can't be shipped off to China because they're so attuned to their customers' needs. But they had 77 employees; now they've got 44. You know, that—they want to start hiring back, but it's going to take a little time. The good news is they're starting to see orders pick up just a little bit.

But it's tough. Folks have seen jobs you thought would last forever disappear. You've seen plants close and businesses shut down. I've heard about how the city government here is starting to cut into bone, not just fat. You can't get to work or go buy groceries like you used to because of cuts in the county transit system.

And this all comes after one of the toughest decades our middle class has faced in generations. I mean, think about what's happened over the last 10 years, even before the crisis hit. This is a decade where some folks made tons of money, but so many others were just pedaling faster and faster, but they were stuck in the same place, sometimes slipping behind. The average wage, the average income over the last decade actually flatlined, in some cases went down. That was before the crisis.

So for many of you, even as you found your paychecks shrinking, even as after the crisis you found the value of your biggest asset, your home, falling, the cost of everything else has gone up: the cost of groceries, the cost of sending your kids to college, costs of retirement. And you've also faced the breakneck,

unrelenting climb of costs for your health care needs.

Now, here's the message I want you to take away, and we're going to have a lot of time for questions, but I want to make this absolutely clear: I did not run for President to turn away from these challenges, I didn't run to kick these challenges down the road; I ran for President to confront them once and for all.

I ran for this office to rebuild our economy so it works not just for the fortunate few, but for everybody who's willing to work hard in this country: to create good jobs that can support a family, to get wages growing and incomes rising, to improve the quality of America's schools and lift up great community colleges like this one so that people are constantly learning, constantly retraining for the jobs of the 21st century, to make higher education affordable for the children of working families, and yes, to deal with the problem of runaway health insurance costs that are breaking family budgets and breaking business budgets and breaking our national budget.

Now, since this has been in the news a little bit this week—[*laughter*]—let me say a little something about health care. I had no illusions when I took this on that this was going to be hard. Seven Presidents had tried it, seven Congresses had tried it, and all of them had failed.

And I had a whole bunch of political advisers telling me: "This may not be the smartest thing to do." "You've got a lot on your plate: the biggest economic crisis since the Great Depression, two wars." "You may not get a lot of cooperation." "You're going to have a lot of pushback from the insurance companies and the drug companies." "It's complicated." "Don't do it."

Now, let me tell you why I did it. I knew that insurance premiums had more than doubled in the past decade. I knew that out-of-pocket expenses had skyrocketed. I knew that millions more people had lost their insurance, and I knew that because of that economic crisis that was only going to get worse. When you lose 7 million jobs, like we lost over the last 2 years, what do you think happens to those folks' health insurance? What happens when their COBRA runs out?

I took this up because I wanted to ease the burdens on all the families and small businesses that can't afford to pay outrageous rates. And I wanted to protect mothers and fathers and children by being targeted by some of the worst practices of the insurance industry that I had heard time and time again as I traveled through this country.

Now, let me just dispel this notion that somehow we were focused on that, and so, as a consequence, not focused on the economy. First of all, all I think about is how we're going to create jobs in this area. All I think about is how do we get banks lending again. I've been doing that the entire year. So have folks like Sherrod and Marcy and Betty. But what I also know is, is that health care is part of the drag on our economy. It's part of the eroding security that middle class families feel.

So here's the good news: We've gotten pretty far down the road. But I've got to admit, we hit a little bit of a buzz saw this week. [*Laughter*]

Now, I also know that part of the reason is, is that this process was so long and so drawn out. This is just what happens in Congress. I mean, it's just an ugly process. You're running headlong into special interests and armies of lobbyists and partisan politics that's aimed at exploiting fears instead of getting things done. And then you've got ads that are scaring the bejesus out of everybody. [*Laughter*] And the longer it take, the uglier it looks.

So I understand why people would say, "Boy, this is—I'm not so sure about this," even though they know that what they got isn't working. And I understand why, after the Massachusetts election, people in Washington were all in a tizzy, trying to figure out what this means for health reform, Republicans and Democrats; what does it mean for Obama? Is he weakened? Is he—oh, how's he going to survive this? [*Laughter*] That's what they do. [*Laughter*]

But I want you to understand, this is not about me. This is not about me. This is about you. This is not about me; this is about you. I didn't take this up to boost my poll numbers. You know, the way to boost your poll numbers is not do anything. [*Laughter*] That's how you do it. You don't offend anybody. I'd have real

high poll numbers. All of Washington would be saying, "What a genius!" [*Laughter*]

I didn't take this on to score political points. I know there are some folks who think if Obama loses, we win. But you know what? I think that I win when you win. That's how I think about it.

So if I was trying to take the path of least resistance, I would have done something a lot easier. But I'm trying to solve the problems that folks here in Ohio and across this country face every day. And I'm not going to walk away just because it's hard. We are going to keep on working to get this done, with Democrats, I hope with Republicans, anybody who's willing to step up. Because I'm not going to watch more people get crushed by costs or denied care they need by insurance company bureaucrats. I'm not going to have insurance companies click their heels and watch their stocks skyrocket because once again there's no control on what they do.

So long as I have some breath in me, so long as I have the privilege of serving as your President, I will not stop fighting for you. I will take my lumps, but I won't stop fighting to bring back jobs here. I won't stop fighting for an economy where hard work is rewarded. I won't stop fighting to make sure there's accountability in our financial system. I'm not going to stop fighting until we have jobs for everybody.

That's why I'm calling on Congress to pass a jobs bill to put more Americans to work, building off our Recovery Act; put more Americans back to work rebuilding roads and railways; provide tax breaks to small businesses for hiring people; offer families incentives to make their homes more energy efficient, saving them money while creating jobs.

That's why we enacted initiatives that are beginning to give rise to a clean energy economy. That's part of what's going on in this community college. If we hadn't done anything with the Recovery Act, talk to the people who are building wind turbines and solar panels. They would have told you their industry was about to collapse because credit had completely frozen. And now you're seeing all across Ohio some of the—this State has received more funds than just about anybody in order to build on that clean energy economy, new cutting-edge wind turbines and batteries that are going to be going into energy-efficient cars.

Almost $25 million of our investment went to a plant right here in Elyria that's helping produce the car batteries of the future. That's what we're going to keep on doing for the rest of 2010 and 2011 and 2012, until we've got this country working again.

So long as I'm President, I'll never stop fighting for policies that will help restore home values, to redeem the investment that folks have made. We've seen some of those values return in some places, in some pockets, but it's still tough out there. We're going to have to do more this year to make sure that banks are responsive to folks who are working hard, have been paying their mortgage, but have found themselves in a tough situation.

I'm not going to stop fighting to give our kids the best education possible, to take the tens of billions of dollars we pay banks to act as middlemen on student loans and invest that money in students who actually need it. We don't need the middlemen; cut them out.

I won't stop fighting to give every American a fair shake. That's why the very first bill I signed into law was the Lilly Ledbetter Act to uphold the principle of equal pay for equal work for men and women alike, especially when families need two paychecks to survive.

So long as I'm President, I won't stop fighting to protect you from the kinds of deceptive practices we've seen from some in the financial sector. That's why I signed a credit card bill of rights into law, to protect you from surprise charges and retroactive rate hikes and other unfair rules. That's why I'm fighting for a tough consumer financial protection agency to protect you against those hidden overdraft fees that can make a single ATM withdrawal cost 30 bucks.

Audience member. Thank you.

The President. Say, that happened to you, didn't it? I won't stop fighting to open up Government. Now, this is hard to do because we don't control every branch. But I can tell you we have put in place the toughest ethics laws

and toughest transparency rules of any administration in history. In history.

By the way, this is the first administration since the founding of the country where all of you can find out who visits the White House. First time in history. And that's just one example of how we're trying to constantly open the process.

And so long as I'm President, I won't stop fighting to cut waste and abuse in Washington, to eliminate what we don't need, to pay for what we do; to rein in exploding deficits that we've been accumulating not just last year, but for the last 10.

And I'm going to keep on fighting for real, meaningful health insurance reform. We expanded the Children's Health Insurance Program to include 4 million kids. We already did that. But we are also going to fight to hold the insurance industry accountable, to bring more stability and security to folks who are in our health care system. And yes, I want to make sure that people who don't have health care right now can get some. It's shameful that we don't do that.

Now, these are some of the fights we've already had, and I can promise you there will be more fights ahead. I'm not going to win every round. We're having a fight right now because I want to charge Wall Street a modest fee to repay taxpayers in full for saving their skins in a time of need. We want our money back. We want our money back. And we're going to get your money back, every dime, each and every dime.

But it's going to be a fight. You watch. I guarantee you, when we start on financial regulatory reform, trying to change the rules to prevent what has caused so much heartache all across the country, there are people who are going to say, "Why is he meddling in government—why is meddling in the financial industry?" "It's another example of Obama being big Government."

No, I just want to have some rules in place so that when these guys make dumb decisions, you don't end up having to foot the bill. That's pretty straightforward. I don't mind having that fight.

You know, I said at the beginning how much it means to me to be able to travel this country and how much it means for me to be here. And that is true now more than ever, because it is—there's no doubt that it's easy to get a pretty warped view of things in Washington. But then you start talking to the guys working on those machines, creating products all across the country, you go into the diner and you meet folks who are raising their kids and working hard and trying to keep things together, and I'm reminded of the strength and the resilience and the perseverance of the American people. I'm reminded of the fundamental character of the Americans that I'm so privileged to serve.

It's that character that has borne our Nation through the roughest of seas, a lot rougher than the ones we're going through right now. That's the character that will carry us through this storm to better days ahead. I am confident of that because of you. And I'm very grateful for all of you taking the time to be here today. Thank you. Thank you, everybody.

All right. Let's take some questions. You guys—everybody, sit down, sit back down. All right, so I'm just going to call on people. We're going to do girl, boy, girl, boy—[*laughter*]—so that there's no accusations of bias. But we'll try to get as many questions in as we can.

All right, this young lady right back here. Yes, you. There should be a microphone; wait till the mike comes so everybody can hear you. Oh, I'm sorry—that's okay, I'll call on you next. Well—[*laughter*]—one of you ask your question. [*Laughter*]

Student Loan Program/Financial Aid/Cost of Higher Education

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. It's an honor to be here with you today. I work here in LCCC's financial services office. I am proud to be part of finding pathways for students who attend college. I feel that a college education is a lifeline to the future of our citizens. We greatly appreciate the increase in the Pell grant, in which allowed our neediest students to access a college education. It increased buying power as college costs continue to rise. My question to you is, will your administration support continued in-

creases to the Pell grant so that our neediest students have access to higher education?

The President. The answer is yes. I want everybody to understand, we made—and this was the help—with the help of Members of Congress who are here—made an enormous investment in higher education, making sure that young people could afford to go to great institutions like this. So we significantly increased the level of each Pell grant, and we also put more money so that we could have more Pell grants.

Now, we want to continue to do this. I mentioned during my formal remarks the fact that a lot of banks and financial institutions are still serving as middlemen in the financial aid process, and they take out several billions dollars' worth of profits from that. It turns out that, actually, it can be administered in such a way where these loans go directly to the students. And if you do that, then you're saving several billion dollars that can then be put back into the system. We want to get that finalized; we want to get that done. That will be an enormous boost.

Now, one thing I have to say, though. Even as we put more money into the student loan program, we are also trying to reach out to university presidents and administrators to figure out how can we reduce the inflation in higher education, because the fact is, is that the only thing that has gone up faster in cost than health care is, guess what, higher education. And the problem is if we're not thinking about ways to curb the inflation, then even if we put more money in, what that money is buying becomes less and less. And so trying to find creative ways for universities to do more with less is going to be important.

Now, in fairness to universities and colleges, part of the reason they've been having to jack up their costs is they used to get more support from the State. State budgets got into a hole, and then it became harder, and so they had to make it up on the tuition side. Nevertheless, what is also true, though, is just their general costs of operating have gone up in ways that I think we can improve. So we're going to be working on that as well.

All right? Okay, I've got to call a gentleman, then I got to go back to you because you thought that I called you and I feel bad. [*Laughter*]

All right. This gentleman right here in the tie. Yes, you look sharp. [*Laughter*]

U.S. Manufacturing Sector/Steel Industry

Q. Okay, okay. Mr. President, thank you. It's an honor to stand before you. Thank you. Earlier in your message, you mentioned our transit system. Obviously, we do need help and we're in dire need to have some assistance there. But what I didn't hear in anything is your interest in our steel mill. That's a big part of our community and we desperately need help there as well. We just wondered where Washington's stance is on our steel mill. Thank you.

The President. Well, I was talking to your mayor about this. Obviously, he's a big advocate for manufacturing in the region. I do not have all the details in terms of what's happening at the steel mill at this moment. But what we've done is we've set up an office in the White House just focused on manufacturing, because it's my view that America's got to make things.

Now, we're not going to make—I want to be honest. Not all the manufacturing jobs that have gone are going to come back. And if people tell you they are, that's just not true, because a lot of that has moved to places where the wages are just much lower. And I know that some people say, "Well, then we should just set up tariffs so that folks can't ship them in." But these days the economy, the global economy is so interconnected that that's just not a practical solution.

The solution is to find—and I don't know the details of the steel mill here, but I know that the ones that have been successful, they do what EMC is doing as well, which is you find what's the high-end market, what's the market that involves a lot of technology, specialization, highly trained workers, quick turnarounds to spec so that the customers really feel like they're getting something special and different. That's how you compete, because that's something that a steel mill in China or in

Brazil can't do. They can't compete with you being on the spot working closely with customers.

So finding ways to develop specialty steels and so forth, that's going to be the key. Our manufacturing office will be working with folks here in town to see what we can do.

All right? Thank you. All right, back to this young lady here.

Combating Lead Poisoning

Q. First, I want to start by saying that I am very grateful to be here to meet you in person. I absolutely support you and back you. I feel like Rome wasn't built in a day, and I know that everybody is really impatient, but I know that with time things can be turned around. And I believe that your intentions are really honorable in that.

The President. Well, I appreciate that.

Q. I am a single mother of three, and I have two quick issues that are very important to me: one being that I have a 3-year-old, who has just turned 3, who got lead poisoning last year and almost died. And I've called everyone, including the EPA of Ohio, and I cannot seem to get any response to this.

The President. Well, guess what, I guarantee you that somebody from the EPA is going to call you in about 5 minutes. Before you sit down, there's going to be a phone call from the EPA. [*Laughter*]

All joking aside, and I know you have a second question, but I just want to focus on this. Lead poisoning, a lot of it from lead paint, from older homes all across the country and all across the Midwest is something that we have to be more aggressive on. This is something that I worked on when I was a U.S. Senator, when I was a State senator. I'm working on it as President, and I will find out directly from them how they can help not only with your particular situation, but what we're doing in this area in terms of lead abatement.

Q. Okay.

The President. Okay?

Equal Pay in the Work Force

Q. The second thing that I wanted to address to you is the unfair labor laws that they seem to have in some of these industries as far as discrimination and different issues of that nature that don't seem to get addressed from the bigger companies. I have actually worked for Ford—I'm a full-time student now here at LC, gratefully. And even when I was working there and I have—my whole family has actually come up through Ford—and there's a lot of very unjust situations that come about, but no attorneys will deal with it, no one will talk about it, and it's always pushed under the rug. And I do owe my—what I have now to Ford because it was what was bread and butter for my family. But at the same time, it's not fair that even at this point my mother still can't retire, she has to continue to suffer.

The President. Well, look, let me just say generally, one of the things that my administration has been able to do over the last year that does not cost money is just enforcing laws that are on the books a little more aggressively, making sure—I mentioned earlier—equal pay for equal work.

We are so past the point where it should be debatable that women get paid the same as men for doing the same job. And it is something that—especially because there was a study that was just released, I think last week, showing that, increasingly, wives are making more than the husbands in some circumstances. And whoever is making more, you've got to have two paychecks. So this is not just a feminist issue—quote, unquote. You know, sometimes guys say, "Well, why do I—why should I care about that?" Well, let me tell you something, if your wife is getting paid fairly, that means your family is getting paid fairly. And I want my daughters to be treated the same way as your sons. That's something we shouldn't be arguing about anymore.

All right, gentleman right back here. Yes, it's a guy's turn. Yes, sir.

Intellectual Property Rights/Free Trade

Q. Yes. My name is James Scurlock, and I'm an inventor, and I hold patent—U.S. patent number 7,397,731.

The President. Okay.

Q. And before I ask my question I'd like to make a sales pitch. [*Laughter*] If you can use

my patent in your next election, I think you can raise a ton of money worldwide. You should take a look at it.

The President. All right, we'll take a look. All right.

Q. If you can't use it, the Government could use it, and I could build a multibillion-dollar business here in Ohio. [*Laughter*]

The President. All right, we'll take a look at your patent. Go ahead, what's your question?

Q. Yes, okay, it has to do with international patent rights. With all this free trade and trade barriers falling, it's really hard for an individual like me with a global-scope patent to file all over the world and get patent protection everywhere, and having to go overseas to fight infringement. So if you're going to drop trade barriers, maybe you can extend my patent rights to the foreign countries.

The President. Well, this is a great question, and this is a huge problem. Look, the—our competitive advantage in the world is going to be people like this who are using their minds to create new products, new services. But that only helps us and helps you build a multibillion-dollar company if somebody can't just steal that idea and suddenly start making it in Indonesia or Malaysia or Bangladesh with very cheap workers.

And one of the problems that we have had is insufficient protection for intellectual property rights. That's true in China; it's true for everything from bootleg DVDs to very sophisticated software. And there's nothing wrong with other people using our technologies. We just want to make sure that it's licensed and you're getting paid.

So I've given instructions to my trade offices, and we actually highlight this at the highest levels of foreign policy, that these are issues that have to be addressed because that's part of the reciprocity of making our markets open. And so when I met with President Hu of China, this is a topic that at dinner I directly brought up with him. And—but as you point out, it's got to be sustained, because a lot of times they'll say, "Yes, yes, yes," but then there's no enforcement on their end.

And one of the things that we're also doing is using our export arm of the U.S. Government to help work with medium-sized businesses and small businesses, not just the big multinationals to protect their rights in some of these areas, because we need to boost exports.

Can I just say, we just went through a decade where we were told that it didn't matter, we'll just—you just keep on importing, buying stuff from other countries, you just take out a home equity loan and max out your credit card, and everything is going to be okay. And it looked for a lot of people like, well, the economy seems to be growing. But it was all built on a house of cards. That's what we now know. And that's why if we're going to have a successful manufacturing sector, we've got to have successful exports.

When I went and took this trip to China, and took this trip to Asia, a lot of people said, "Well, why is he going to Asia? He's traveling overseas too much. He needs to be coming back home and talking about jobs." I'm there because that's where we're going to find those jobs, is by increasing our exports to those countries, the same way they've been doing in our country. If we increased our exports, our share of exports by just 1 percent, that would mean hundreds of thousands of jobs here in the United States, 5 percent, maybe a million jobs, well-paying jobs. So we're going to have to pry those markets open. Intellectual property is part of that process.

All right, great question.

It's a woman's turn now. You guys just put down your hands. [*Laughter*] Oh, okay, well, this young lady right in front. We've got a microphone over here. You know, I would give it to you if I could reach, but—go ahead. [*Laughter*]

Social Security/Cost of Living Allowance/ Global Influenza Outbreak

Q. I introduce myself. My name is Jo-Ann Eichenlaub. I'm 83 years old. I know I don't look it. [*Laughter*]

The President. You don't. You don't. You look great.

Q. Thank you. I'm very concerned about Social Security. I think there's a few here who are probably living on that or supplementing

that. I understand that Congress has given themselves a raise but has denied us COLA for possibly the next 3 years. At the time of the H1N1 thing, people over 65 were not given the right to have the shot. For some reason or other this health care crisis was left on our senior backs. What can we do about this?

The President. Well, let me address all three of your issues, because you're raising actually three separate issues.

First is how do we make sure that Social Security is sustainable over the long term. Social Security is one of our entitlement programs that for now is stable, but will not be if we don't make some changes. Now, here's the good news. Compared to Medicare, Social Security is actually in reasonably good shape, and with some relatively small adjustments, you can have that solvent for a long time. So Social Security is going to be there. I know a lot of people are concerned about it. Social Security we can fix.

Now, in terms of the COLA, the formula—COLA stands for cost of living allowance—so it's put in place to make sure that Social Security is keeping up with inflation. Here's the problem: This past year, because of the severity of the recession, we didn't have inflation, we actually had deflation. So prices actually fell last year. As a consequence, technically, seniors were not eligible for a cost of living adjustment, to have it go up because prices did not go up in the aggregate. That doesn't mean that individual folks weren't being pinched by higher heating prices or what have you, but on average prices went down.

Here's what we did. Working with these key Members of Congress here, we did vote to provide a $250 one-time payment to seniors, which, when you factored it in, amounted to about 1.8 percent. So it was almost the equivalent of the COLA, even though it wasn't actually the COLA.

So we didn't forget seniors. We never forget seniors because they vote at very high rates. [*Laughter*] Not to mention you've changed our diapers and things. And so we appreciate that.

The third point that you made had to do with the H1N1 virus. The reason that seniors were not prioritized was because, unlike the seasonal flu shot, H1N1 was deadliest in young people and particularly children. And because the virus came up fairly late in the time frame for preparing flu shots, we had a limited number of vaccines, and we had to decide who gets the vaccines first.

Now, by the way, let me just do a little PSA here. Anybody who has not gotten a H1N1 shot, along with their seasonal flu, I would still advise you to get it, because, historically, there are two waves of this. Particularly, make sure your kids have gotten it, because there have been a significantly higher number of children killed under H1—who get H1N1 than those who just get the seasonal flu. It's still a small fraction; I don't want to make everybody afraid. But it's just—it's a little more serious than the normal seasonal flu.

So it's not that seniors were neglected here. What happened was, according to the science, according to the CDC, it was determined that we had to go to the most vulnerable groups the quickest, and that was children, particularly those who had underlying neurological disorders or immunity disorders.

All right? We haven't forgotten about you. And you don't look 83. [*Laughter*]

Okay. This young man, he's been standing up quite a long time here. There you go.

Q. Mr. President, my name is Jordan Brown. Can you hear me?

The President. Yes.

Q. Okay.

The President. Go ahead and give him the mike. I don't want to have him fall over there. [*Laughter*]

Q. Okay. I don't have a question, but I do want to know if I would like—if I can shake your hand. [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, yes, yes, you'll be able to come up here. If somebody lets you through, you'll—I'll definitely give you a handshake.

All right, who—I want to make sure—you know, there's another young man here so I'll call on him.

Job Market/Work Programs for Former Felons

Q. Yes. My name is Jerome Lowery. I'm 29 years old, and I've never had a job in my life. I went to the jail when I was younger, and it's, like, hard to get a job because of felonies. Is

this—any programs that hire people with felonies, like something that's just for us—because it's sad, it's like—29 years old, I'm 29.

The President. All right. Jerome——

Q. And also, I wanted to—I'm a poet, and I wrote a poem for you, and I've been dying to put this poem in your hand.

The President. Okay. You can give me the poem. First of all, it's never too late. It's never too late. One of these gentlemen here will hand this poem to me. There you go. I won't read it from the stage, but—because it's——

Q. I'd appreciate it, later when you get back to the White House.

The President. But I will definitely think about it.

Look, I'm proud of the fact that you're bringing this up, because there are people who've made mistakes, particularly when they're young, and it is in all of our interests to help them redeem themselves and then get on a straight path. Now, I don't blame employers obviously for being nervous about hiring somebody who has a record. It's natural if they've got a lot of applicants for every single job that that's a question that they'd have in their minds. On the other hand, I think one of the great things about America is we give people second chances.

And so what we've tried to do—and I want to say, this has been a bipartisan effort—when I was in the Senate, working with Sam Brownback, my Vice President, Joe Biden—passing a Second Chance Act that helps to fund programs that help the reintegration of ex-felons.

It's smart for us to do. You know, sometimes people say, "Well, that's just coddling people." No. You reduce the recidivism rate, they pay taxes, it ends up being smart for taxpayers to do.

I don't know, Jerome, what particular programs may exist in this county, but I promise you I'll find out. And we'll see if we can get you hooked up with one of them. All right?

Okay, right here. Yes. No, no, no. Right here. Yes. Go ahead.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Funds/Job Training

Q. Mr. President, my name is Doris Young. I started a Great Lakes Truck Driving School in 2008 in Lorain County.

The President. I'm sorry, what kind of school?

Q. Great Lakes Truck Driving School.

The President. Cross driving school? Oh, truck driving school, I'm sorry.

Q. Great Lakes Truck Driving School, started in 2008. Our first year we trained 287 people and we placed over 70 percent of those people into jobs. At that time there was enough money through the Workforce Investment Board to train those people. In the past few months we've had a number of people on a daily basis coming into our school that's unemployed, but there are no training funds for truck driver training. And I want to know why that has changed.

The President. Well, the Recovery Act put a huge amount of money into retraining. We are now preparing for next year's budget, and I know that we have actually allocated additional money for retraining.

I don't know specifically what's happening that would cause those dollars to dry up with respect to a truck driving school. Let me see if I can find out. I'll have one of my staff get your card, and maybe we can provide you some information.

Q. All right. Okay. Thank you very much.

The President. Here's the broader point, though. The story of retraining has become so important. When I went to EMC, the precision tool-making place, there were a group of guys—and one guy who said I should call him "Jerry the Mechanic." [*Laughter*] He shakes my hand, and he and his buddy are talking to me. I said, "How long have you been working here?" They said, "Twenty years." And I'd noticed that a lot of the equipment now is all digital and fancy, compared to the old machines on the other side of the building. I said, "Well, did you guys have to get additional training for this?" And they said, "Well, you know what happened was, we used to work in this old plant, and we got laid off. We came here to

Lorain Community College and took a 6-month, 12-hour-a-day course that completely retrained us, and that's what got us these new jobs, and we've been working for over a decade now at these new jobs."

Now, here's the thing. These guys were—these guys, first of all, they weren't plants, as far as I know—unless the mayor is a lot slicker than I think. [*Laughter*] But these guys did point out that it was JTPA funds, job training funds that the Federal Government and the State and local all work together to make sure that people have access to funds. They also said, though, during that time they were still working 8 hours a day because they had found sort of lower-paying jobs just to pay the rent while they were getting retrained. I said, "Okay, so you've been working 8 hours and going to class 12 hours?" "Yes." I said, "Well, when did you sleep?" "Well, in between class and taking the shift."

They did this for 6 months. I tell this story, one, to emphasize how important the college system is in making our workforce prepared for the 21st century. I make the point because, number two, it only works if the Government is providing some help for people to finance their educations, their retraining.

But point number three is, even if you've got a great community college, you've got the financing, you've also got to want it. You've also got to want it. Think about these guys. You work 8 hours, you go to class 12 hours, you're working—you're sleeping in between, doing that for 6 months. But because they were hungry and they had confidence about their ability to translate their old skills into new skills, they've had steady jobs ever since that allowed them to support their families.

Now, that's the partnership between the Government, the free market, businesses, individuals, that's what we're trying to forge. And I—that's why I get so frustrated when we have these ideological debates in Washington where people start saying how, "Oh, Obama is just trying to perpetrate big government." What big government exactly have we been trying to perpetrate here? We're trying to fund those guys who want to go to truck driving school. We want to make sure that they've got some money to get trained for a job in the private sector.

When we passed the Recovery Act, these aren't all a bunch of government jobs. These are jobs that private contractors contract with the State or the city or the county to build roads and highways, the same way that we built the Interstate Highway System and the intercontinental railroad system.

I mean, I understand how people have become mistrustful of government. We don't need big government; we need smart government that works and interacts with the private sector to create opportunity for ordinary people. But it can't be this constant ideological argument. People need help. We need to provide them a helping hand. That's what we stand for.

All right. I've got time for only, unfortunately, one more question. I've been having a great time. But it is a man's turn here. All right. Is that you, Joe? Well, this is a ringer. I'm going to talk—I'll talk to you separately. This is a friend of mine. People will say, "Ah, he called on a friend of his." I'll talk to you over to the side here.

Go ahead, this gentleman right here.

Availability of Financing/U.S. Patent System/ Health Care Reform/Energy

Q. Thank you for taking my question. Thank you for coming here. I'm a 52-year-old businessman from Akron, Ohio. I want to create 1,200 jobs. I spend $60,000 of my own money to do a due diligence, travel to China with a German-designed turbine, and they're producing it now in China. I have rights to North America, primarily the Great Lakes.

Two things that I'm challenged by, is, A, I'm having a very difficult time raising money. I'm not asking for a handout. All I'm asking is loan me the money; I'll account for it, every dollar, I'll pay it back.

Secondly—and I'm willing to risk millions and my—99 percent of my net worth. The second thing is that GE has a patent, and I believe in patents. I listened to this gentleman back here, and I can truly appreciate what he's going through. But in this instance, GE inherited this patent from Enron, and it's created a wall so that they can't—won't let people come in and

build turbines in the United States. Now, the patent is going to expire very soon. But now they're calling it a royalty, but it's really a gate to keep people out.

Is there any programs—I've talked to Governor Strickland, I've talked to Sherrod Brown, I've talked to Lee Fisher. This company was identified by the city of Akron and Donald Plusquellic's visionary leadership down in Akron. But I want to bring this to the United States. I want to bring these jobs, and this not about money for me. This is about creating jobs.

I can feel for that gentleman that wants to work. He should have a right to work. God bless him.

The President. Let me respond, first of all——

Q. Is there any—is there any Federal programs that can help me? I just want to borrow the money to create this factory and create these jobs.

The President. Well, obviously, I don't know about the particular situation so I'll just speak generally to it. And if you want to get one of my team your card, then maybe they can follow up with you.

But one of the things that we've done—or one of the things that we've seen coming out of the financial crisis is that banks are still not lending to small businesses enough. The mayor and I talked about this, the business owners that I talked to will confirm this. And if you ask why, if you ask the banks why, they'll say, well, it's a combination of, in some cases, demand really is down; businesses don't have as many customers as they used to so revenues are down and—so they don't want to lend. That's some cases. But in some cases what you've got is very profitable businesses that are ready to grow, ready to invest, got a proven track record—the banks feel as if regulators are looking over their shoulder and discouraging them from lending.

So what I've said to Treasury Secretary Geithner and others is we can't meddle with independent regulators—their job is to stay apart from politics and make sure the banking system is sound—but there should be a discussion about whether or not we have seen the pendulum swing too far, where it used to be they'd just lend anybody anything; then they lost all this money, and now they won't lend people with good credit anything. That is not good for the economy.

So what we've tried to do is to fill some of these gaps in the meantime. For example, our small-business lending through the SBA has actually gone up 70 percent. And we've been waiving fees, increasing guarantees, and what we're trying to do is streamline the process for SBA loans because right now there's just too much paperwork. It's typical Government not having caught up with the 21st century. And you can't have a 50-pound application form. People just—after a while, it's not worth it, in some cases. So we're trying to do all those things.

Now, with respect to patents, again, I don't know the particular situation. I will say this. It's important that we protect international—internationally intellectual property. It is also important though that we have a patent system that encourages innovation but doesn't just lock in big monopolies that prevent new people from bringing new products into the system.

The worst offender of this problem is actually the drug companies, because they will try to lock in their patents for as long as they can to prevent generics from coming onto the market, and that costs customers billions of dollars. And sometimes the drug company will redesign it so it's a caplet instead of a pill, and then try to get a new patent, to get another 7 or 9 or 10 years on up of coverage. That is something that we've got to change. Now, I don't know whether that applies to your particular situation, but we have to have a patent system that doesn't prevent competition. We want a patent system that encourages innovation.

Now, I'm out of time, but I want to say one last thing. First of all, because there's been so much attention focused on this health care issue this week, I just want to emphasize not the myths but the reality of what is trying to—that both the House and the Senate bill were trying to accomplish, because it's very—it's actually

very simple. There are a bunch of provisions in it, but it's pretty simple.

Number one, for those of you who have health insurance, we are trying to get in place reforms that make sure you are getting your money's worth for the insurance that you pay for. That means, for example, that they can't impose a lifetime cap where if I—if you really get sick and suddenly there's some fine print in there that says you're not completely covered. We're trying to make sure that there is a cap on out-of-pocket expenses so that you don't find out, when you read the fine print, that you've got to pay a huge amount that you thought you were covered for. We're trying to make sure that if you've got a preexisting condition, you can actually still get health insurance, because a lot of people have been banned from getting health insurance because of a preexisting condition.

One of the provisions, one of the reforms we wanted is to make sure that your 26- or 27-year-old could, up until that age, could stay on your insurance, so that once they get out of high school and college, they can stay on their parents' insurance for a few years until they've got a more stable job.

So you've got all these insurance reforms that we're trying to get passed. Now, some people ask, "Well, why don't you just pass that and forget everything else?" Here's the problem. Let's just take the example of preexisting conditions. We can't prohibit insurance companies from preventing people with preexisting conditions getting insurance unless everybody, essentially, has insurance. And the reason for that is, otherwise, what would happen is people would just—just wouldn't get insurance until they were sick and then they'd go and buy insurance and they couldn't be prohibited. And that would drive everybody else's premiums up.

So a lot of these insurance reforms are connected to some other things we have to do to make sure that everybody has some access to coverage. All right?

So the second thing we've been trying to do is to make sure that we're setting up an exchange, which is just a big pool so that people who are individuals, who are self-employed, who are small-business owners, they can essentially join a big pool of millions of people all across the country, which means that when you go to negotiate with your insurance company you've got the purchasing power of a Ford or a GM or Wal-Mart or a Xerox or the Federal employees. That's why Federal employees have good insurance, and county employees and State employees have good insurance, in part is because they're part of this big pool.

And our attitude is, can we make sure that everybody is part of a big pool to drive down costs. That's the second thing we were trying to do.

Third thing we were trying to do is to try to reduce costs overall because the system—how many of you, you go into the doctor's office, you fill out a form, you get a checkup, you go fill out another form, somebody else asks you for the form you just filled out. Then the doctor fills out a form, you got to take it to the pharmacist. The pharmacist can't read the doctor's—this is the only industry in the country that still does that, that still operates on paper systems, that still orders all kinds of unnecessary tests.

Because a lot of times, I walk in the doctor, I just do what I'm told; I don't know what he's doing. I don't know whether this test was necessary or whether we could have had the test that I took 6 months ago e-mailed to the doctor so I wouldn't have to take another test and pay for another test, right? So there are all these methods of trying to reduce costs. And that's what we've been trying to institute.

Now, I just want to say, as I said in my opening remarks, the process has been less than pretty. When you deal with 535 Members of Congress, it's going to be a somewhat ugly process, not necessarily because any individual Member of Congress is trying to do something wrong, it's just they may have different ideas, they have different interests, they've got a particular issue of a hospital in their district that they want to see if they can kind of get dealt with and this may be the best vehicle for doing it. They're looking out for their constituents a lot of times.

But when you put it all together, it starts looking like just this monstrosity. And it makes people fearful. And it makes people afraid. And they start thinking, you know what, this looks

like something that is going to cost me tax dollars, and I already have insurance, so why should I support this.

So I just want to be clear that there are things that have to get done. This is our best chance to do it. We can't keep on putting this off. Even if you've got health insurance right now, look at what's happening with your premiums and look at the trend. It is going to gobble up more and more of your paycheck. A half—there have to be a chunk of you folks in here who have seen your employers say you've got to pick up more of your payments in terms of higher deductibles or higher copayments. Some of you, your employers just said, we can't afford health insurance at all. That's going to happen to more and more people.

You asked about Social Security. Let me talk about Medicare. Medicare will be broke in 8 years if we do nothing. Right now we give about $17 billion in subsidies to insurance companies through the Medicare system, your tax dollars. But when we try to eliminate them, suddenly there were ads on TV, "Oh, Obama is trying to cut Medicare." I get all these seniors writing letters: "Why are you trying to cut my Medicare benefits?" I'm not trying to cut your Medicare benefits. I'm trying to stop paying these insurance companies all this money so I can give you a more stable program.

The point is this: None of the big issues that we face in this country are simple. Everybody wants to act like they're simple. Everybody wants to say that they can be done easily. But they're complicated. They're tough. The health care system is a big, complicated system, and doing it right is hard.

Energy: If we want to be energy independent, I'm for more oil production. I am for new forms of energy. I'm for a safe nuclear industry. I'm not ideological about this. But we also have to acknowledge that if we're going to actually have a energy-independent economy, that we've got to make some changes. We can't just keep on doing business the same way. And that's going to be a big, complicated discussion.

We can't shy away from it though. We can't sort of start suddenly saying to ourselves, America or Congress can't do big things, that we should only do the things that are noncontroversial, we should only do the stuff that's safe. Because if that's what happens, then we're not going to meet the challenges of the 21st century. And that's not who we are. That's not how we used to operate, and that's not how I intend us to operate going forward.

We are going to take these big things on, and I'm going to do it, and you're going to do it, because you know that we want to leave a better America for our children and our grandchildren. And that doesn't mean standing still, that means marching forward.

I want to march forward with you. I want to work with you. I want to fight for you. I hope you're willing to stand by me, even during these tough times, because I believe in a brighter future for America.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. at Lorain County Community College. In his remarks, he referred to Jody Hasman, student, Lorain County Community College. A participant referred to Lt. Gov. Lee Fisher of Ohio; and Mayor Donald L. Plusquellic of Akron, OH. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of the President's opening remarks.

Statement on the 37th Anniversary of the Supreme Court Decision in *Roe* v. *Wade*

January 22, 2010

Today we recognize the 37th anniversary of the Supreme Court decision in *Roe* v. *Wade*, which affirms every woman's fundamental constitutional right to choose whether to have an abortion, as well as each American's right to privacy from Government intrusion. I have and continue to support these constitutional rights. I also remain committed to working

with people of good will to prevent unintended pregnancies, support pregnant women and families, and strengthen the adoption system.

Today and every day, we must strive to ensure that all women have limitless opportunities to fulfill their dreams.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report Relating to the Interdiction of Aircraft Engaged in Illicit Drug Trafficking
January 22, 2010

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with the authorities related to official immunity in the interdiction of aircraft engaged in illicit drug trafficking (Public Law 107–108, 22 U.S.C. 2291–4), as amended, and in order to keep the Congress fully informed, I am providing a report by my Administration. This report includes matters related to support for the interdiction of aircraft engaged in illicit drug trafficking.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
January 22, 2010.

The President's Weekly Address
January 23, 2010

One of the reasons I ran for President was because I believed so strongly that the voices of everyday Americans, hard-working folks doing everything they can to stay afloat, just weren't being heard over the powerful voices of the special interests in Washington. And the result was a national agenda too often skewed in favor of those with the power to tilt the tables.

In my first year in office, we pushed back on that power by implementing historic reforms to get rid of the influence of those special interests. On my first day in office, we closed the revolving door between lobbying firms and the Government so that no one in my administration would make decisions based on the interests of former or future employers. We barred gifts from Federal lobbyists to executive branch officials. We imposed tough restrictions to prevent funds for our recovery from lining the pockets of the well connected, instead of creating jobs for Americans. And for the first time in history, we have publicly disclosed the names of lobbyists and nonlobbyists alike who visit the White House every day so that you know what's going on in the White House, the people's house.

We've been making steady progress. But this week, the United States Supreme Court handed a huge victory to the special interests and their lobbyists and a powerful blow to our efforts to rein in corporate influence. This ruling strikes at our democracy itself. By a 5–4 vote, the Court overturned more than a century of law, including a bipartisan campaign finance law written by Senators John McCain and Russ Feingold that had barred corporations from using their financial clout to directly interfere with elections by running advertisements for or against candidates in the crucial closing weeks.

This ruling opens the floodgates for an unlimited amount of special interest money into our democracy. It gives the special interest lobbyists new leverage to spend millions on advertising to persuade elected officials to vote their way, or to punish those who don't. That means that any public servant who has the courage to stand up to the special interests and stand up for the American people can find himself or herself under assault come election time. Even foreign corporations can now get into the act.

I can't think of anything more devastating to the public interest. The last thing we need to do is hand more influence to the lobbyists in Washington or more power to the special interests to tip the outcome of elections.

All of us, regardless of party, should be worried that it will be that much harder to get fair, commonsense financial reforms or close unwar-

ranted tax loopholes that reward corporations from sheltering their income or shipping American jobs offshore.

It will make it more difficult to pass commonsense laws to promote energy independence because even foreign entities would be allowed to mix in our elections. It would give the health insurance industry even more leverage to fend off reforms that would protect patients.

We don't need to give any more voice to the powerful interests that already drown out the voices of everyday Americans, and we don't intend to. When this ruling came down, I instructed my administration to get to work immediately with Members of Congress willing to fight for the American people to develop a forceful, bipartisan response to this decision. We've begun that work, and it will be a priority for us until we repair the damage that has been done.

One of the great Republican Presidents, Teddy Roosevelt, fought to limit special interest spending and influence over American political campaigns and warned of the impact of unbridled corporate spending. His message rings as true as ever today, in this age of mass communications, when the decks are too often stacked against ordinary Americans. And as long as I'm your President, I'll never stop fighting to make sure that the most powerful voice in Washington belongs to you.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 6 p.m. on January 21 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on January 23. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 22, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 23. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on Legislation Creating a Statutory Fiscal Commission
January 23, 2010

The serious fiscal situation that our country faces reflects not only the severe economic downturn we inherited, but also years of failing to pay for new policies, including a new entitlement program and large tax cuts that most benefited the well off and well connected. The result was that the surpluses projected at the beginning of the last administration were transformed into trillions of dollars in deficits that threaten future job creation and economic growth.

These deficits did not happen overnight, and they won't be solved overnight. We not only need to change how we pay for policies, but we also need to change how Washington works. The only way to solve our long-term fiscal challenge is to solve it together, Democrats and Republicans.

That's why I strongly support legislation currently under consideration to create a bipartisan, fiscal commission to come up with a set of solutions to tackle our Nation's fiscal challenges and call on Senators from both parties to vote for the creation of a statutory, bipartisan fiscal commission.

With tough choices made together, a commitment to pay for what we spend, and responsible stewardship of our economy, we will be able to lay the foundation for sustainable job creation and economic growth while restoring fiscal sustainability to our Nation.

Remarks During a Middle Class Task Force Meeting
January 25, 2010

Thank you. Thank you, Joe. Hey, guys, everybody have a seat, have a seat. Well, I wanted to stop by to comment on all the great work that the Middle Class Task Force is doing. And you've just seen why Joe is the right person to do it. No one brings to the table the

same combination of personal experience and substantive expertise. He's come a long way and achieved incredible things along the ride, but he's never forgotten where he came from and his roots as a working class kid from Scranton. He's devoted his life to making the American Dream a reality for everyone because he's lived it.

Now, we all know what that American Dream is. It's the idea that in America, we can make of our lives what we will. It's the idea that if you work hard and live up to your responsibilities, you can get ahead and enjoy some of the basic guarantees in life: a good job that pays a good wage, health care that will be there when you get sick, a secure retirement even if you're not rich, an education that will give our kids a better life than we had. They're very simple ideas, but they're the ideas that are at the heart of our middle class, the middle class that made the 20th century the American century.

Unfortunately, the middle class has been under assault for a long time. Too many Americans have known their own painful recessions long before any economist declared that there was a recession. We've just come through what was one of the most difficult decades the middle class has ever faced, a decade in which median income fell and our economy lost about as many jobs as it gained.

For 2 years, Joe and I traveled this country, and we heard stories that are all too familiar: stories of Americans barely able to stay afloat despite working harder and harder for less; premiums that were doubling, tuition fees that were rising almost as fast; savings being used up, retirements put off, dreams put on hold. That was all before the middle class got pounded by the full fury of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

Their stories are why Joe and I ran for this office: to reverse those trends, to fight for the middle class, to make sure working families have a voice in the White House, and to do everything within our power to make sure they don't just survive the crisis, but again they can thrive.

And when we walked through these doors last year, our first and most urgent task was to rescue our economy, to give immediate relief to those who were hurt by its downturn, but also to rebuild it on a new, stronger foundation for job creation. So we helped State and local governments keep cops and firefighters and teachers on the job, helping to plug their budgets. We invested in areas with the most potential for job growth—both immediate and lasting—in our infrastructure, in science and technology, in education, in clean energy. And these steps have saved or created about 2 million jobs so far.

But more than 7 million have been lost as a consequence of this recession, an epidemic that demands our relentless and sustained response. Now, last month, the House passed a new jobs bill. The Senate, as we speak, is hard at work developing its own job creation package. Creating good, sustainable jobs is the single most important thing we can do to rebuild the middle class, and I won't rest until we're doing just that.

But we also need to reverse the overall erosion in middle class security so that when this economy does come back, working Americans are free to pursue their dreams again. There are a variety of immediate steps we can take to do just that, steps we're poised to begin taking in the budget that I'll put forward next week.

Joe already spoke about some of these proposals in detail, proposals that make it a bit easier for families to get by, for students to get ahead, and for workers to retire. To make balancing work and family more realistic, we'll make it easier to care for children and aging loved ones. To make college more affordable, we'll make it easier for students to pay back their loans, and forgive their debt earlier if they choose a career in public service. And to make retirement more secure, we're going to make it easier to save through the workplace.

Joe and I are going to keep on fighting for what matters to middle class families: an education that gives our kids a chance in life, new clean energy economy that generates the good jobs of the future, meaningful financial reforms that protect consumers, and health reform that prohibits the worst practices of the insurance industry and restores some stability and peace of mind for middle class families.

Now, none of these steps alone will solve all the challenges facing the middle class. Joe understands that. So do I. So do all my members of the Cabinet and our economic team. But hopefully some of these steps will reestablish some of the security that's slipped away in recent years. Because in the end, that's how Joe and I measure progress, not by how the markets are doing, but by how the American people are doing. It's about whether they see some progress in their own lives.

So we're going to keep fighting to rebuild our economy so that hard work is once again rewarded, wages and incomes are once again rising, and the middle class is once again growing. And above all, we're going to keep fighting to renew the American Dream and keep it alive, not just in our time, but for all time.

So again, to our team—and that includes, by the way, the folks over here—thank you for the great work that you've done. I'm excited about a lot of the proposals that you've come up with. And we expect that we're going to be able to get some of these critical initiatives passed soon so that folks can get some help right away.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. in Room 430 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden.

Remarks Honoring the 2009 National Basketball Association Champion Los Angeles Lakers

January 25, 2010

The President. Thank you so much, everybody. Please have a seat. Welcome to the White House, and congratulations, a little belatedly, to the Los Angeles Lakers for winning your 15th—15th—NBA title and 4th in the past 10 years.

Before I say a few things about the Lakers, I just want to acknowledge some wonderful Members of Congress and big Lakers fans who are here: Congresswoman Jane Harman, Congresswoman Laura Richardson, Congressman Adam Schiff, Congressman Brad Sherman, and Lucille Roybal-Allard. Please, everybody, give them a big round of applause.

Now, as folks here will tell you, the only thing that is better than playing basketball—the only thing that's better than watching basketball is playing basketball, but I'm 48, and soon to be 49, and it's a little harder these days to move around on the court, especially when you're playing against kids who are half your age. But I still get enormous, enormous pleasure from watching great athletes on the court. And nobody exemplifies excellence in basketball better than the Los Angeles Lakers last year.

I want to congratulate everybody who helped make this team what it is, from the assistants to the front office staff, to the trainers and the ticket takers, all the fans back in L.A. who bleed purple and gold. You all should be very proud. That's you. Is that—yes? [*Laughter*]

I want to congratulate Jeanie Buss and the rest of the Buss family for guiding this team so well for the last 30 years.

I'm especially excited to meet Coach Phil Jackson, the Zen master. [*Laughter*] I've been a fan of Coach Jackson's ever since his days running the triangle offense in Chicago. I want to congratulate him on his 10th NBA championship, the most in history. I do want to point out that six of them came with the Bulls. [*Laughter*] I just want to point that out.

You remember that, Magic——

Earvin "Magic" Johnson, Jr. Yes, sir. [*Laughter*]

The President. ——'90–'91? Remember when Jordan went up and then—[*applause*]. You know, they won the first game, and they were feeling cocky. [*Laughter*] And then Paxson was hitting all those shots. Oh, anyway, we

don't want to—that's not why we're here. [*Laughter*]

I was hoping that, Coach, you were going to bring some books for Republicans and Democrats in Congress maybe to get them to start playing like a team together. [*Laughter*] Coach is famous for passing out books and helping people get the job done.

We are obviously honored to have one of the alltime greats in NBA history, Magic Johnson. Magic did pretty well during his time with the Lakers. He wasn't bad. [*Laughter*] And now a new generation is continuing his legacy. But obviously, part of what makes Magic special wasn't just how he played on the court, but also just the infectious enthusiasm about life and what he's now doing with businesses and minority communities. He's just been an outstanding leader in our country for a long time.

Of course, I've got to recognize Kobe Bryant, one of the most competitive players I've ever seen, for being named finals MVP last year—obviously already MVPs under his belt, the youngest player ever to reach 25,000 points in his career. And he's playing with a broken finger. Now, if I was—if I had a broken finger, I would have trouble getting out of bed. [*Laughter*] And he's still leading the team day in and day out.

This is a team that never lost its focus last season, from the first tipoff to the final buzzer. I know that the Lakers have a tradition of ending each team gathering—whether it's a practice or a game or a team meeting—with the chant, "One, two, three, rings." As Lamar Odom said, "We kind of always saw that light." Everyone was willing to do what it took to get a little stronger, to play a little harder, and to bring home that title.

But I think it's important to note that this team also knows that being a champ is about more than trophies and rings. It's about being a winner off the court as well as on it and giving back to those who are less fortunate. The Lakers and the NBA have always been about serving others, at home and around the world. And that tradition continued last week, when the NBA and the Players Association, led by Derek Fisher, pledged to donate $1 million to support relief efforts in Haiti. Jordan Farmar and Pau Gasol are also donating their money to the Clinton Bush Haiti Fund. Pau pledged $1,000 for every point he scored against the Knicks, and I'm glad he dropped 20—[*laughter*]—helping the Lakers to beat New York and changing the lives of Haitians thousands of miles away.

And earlier today, the team joined with our United We Serve initiative to hold a fitness clinic for kids from Stanton Elementary School right here in Washington, DC, teaching them about a few moves, but also how to live healthy and active lives.

So I just want to again thank the entire Lakers organization for your service, for the great joy that you have given the city of Los Angeles, but also the incredible competition that your organization has graced the basketball court with for decades now. If this season is anything like the last one—I know that you guys have your sights on the NBA finals—so we might see you here before long. But we are very grateful for your presence here today. Give them a big round of applause.

Now, one last thing, I was also told that Mr. Brown here intends to win the dunk contest—[*laughter*]—so we'll see how that goes.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:19 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Michael J. Jordan, former shooting guard, and John Paxson, former point guard, Chicago Bulls; and Jeanie Buss, executive vice president of business operations, Kobe Bryant, guard, Lamar Odom, forward, Derek Fisher, guard, Jordan Farmar, guard, Pau Gasol, forward-center, and Shannon Brown, guard, Los Angeles Lakers.

Statement on India's Republic Day
January 25, 2010

I send my warmest wishes on behalf of the American people to the people of India and to those here in America and around the world who are celebrating Republic Day. As the

world's largest democracies, the United States and India have a strong shared belief in the values of liberty, pluralism, and religious tolerance.

This Republic Day is particularly special because it marks India's Diamond Jubilee. In the 60 years since the Indian Constitution was adopted, we have built a strong and vibrant partnership. I was pleased that Prime Minister Singh was the honored guest for the first state dinner of my Presidency. It was a chance to celebrate the great and growing partnership between our two nations and the friendship between our peoples. Indeed, the more than 2 million Indian Americans in the United States enrich every corner of our great Nation, leading in government, science, industry, and the arts. And as our peoples continue to build upon that friendship, let our Governments continue to work together to advance peace, prosperity, and stability around the globe.

Videotaped Remarks Commemorating the 65th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp

January 27, 2010

Good morning, and thank you to everyone who worked to bring us to this day, especially the International Auschwitz Council and the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

To President Kacynski, Prime Minister Tusk, and to the people of Poland: Thank you for preserving a place of such great pain for the Polish people, but a place of remembrance and learning for the world.

Although I can't be with you in person, I am proud that the United States is represented there today by a delegation of distinguished Americans, including Ambassador Feinstein, my wife Michelle's chief of staff, Susan Sher, and my good friend and the son of Holocaust survivors, Julius Genachowski.

And let me commend you for recognizing a woman who has devoted her life to preserving the lessons of the Shoah for future generations, Sara Bloomfield of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

But most of all, I want to thank those of you who found the strength to come back again so many years later, despite the horror you saw here, the suffering you endured here, and the loved ones you lost here. Those of us who did not live through those dark days will never truly understand what it means to have hate literally etched into your arms. But we understand the message that you carry in your hearts.

For you know the truth that Elie Wiesel spoke when I stood with him at Buchenwald last spring. There, where his father and so many innocent souls left this Earth, Elie said, "Memory has become the sacred duty of all people of good will."

We have a sacred duty to remember the twisted thinking that led here, how a great society of culture and science succumbed to the worst instincts of man and rationalized mass murder and one of the most barbaric acts in history.

We have a sacred duty to remember the cruelty that occurred here, as told in the simple objects that speak to us even now: the suitcases that still bear their names; the wooden clogs they wore; the round bowls from which they ate; those brick buildings from which there was no escape, where so many Jews died with "Sh'ma Israel" on their lips; and the very earth at Auschwitz, which is still hallowed by their ashes, Jews and those who tried to save them, Polish and Hungarian, French and Dutch, Roma and Russian, straight and gay, and so many others.

But even as we recall man's capacity for evil, Auschwitz also tells another story, of man's capacity for good: the small acts of compassion, the sharing of some bread that kept a child alive, the great acts of resistance that blew up the crematorium and tried to stop the slaughter, the Polish rescuers and those who earned their place forever in the Righteous Among the Nations.

And you, the survivors: The perpetrators of that crime tried to annihilate the entire Jewish

people, but they failed. Because 65 years ago today, when the gates flew open, you were still standing. And every day that you have lived, every child and grandchild that your families have brought into the world with love, every day the Sun rises on the Jewish State of Israel, that is the ultimate rebuke to the ignorance and hatred of this place.

So to those of you who have come back today, I say, no, you are not former prisoners. You are living memorials, living memorials to the loved ones you left here and to the spirit we must strive to uphold in our time, not simply to bear witness, but to bear a burden: the burden of seeing our common humanity; of resisting anti-Semitism and ignorance in all its forms; of refusing to become bystanders to evil, whenever and wherever it rears its ugly face.

Let that be the true meaning of Auschwitz. Let that be the liberation we celebrate today, a liberation of the spirit that, if embraced, can lead us all, individuals and as nations, to be among the righteous.

May God bless you all, and may God bless the memory of all those who rest here.

NOTE: The President's remarks were videotaped at approximately 6 p.m. on January 21 in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast to the Third International Holocaust Forum "Let My People Live" in Krakow, Poland. In his remarks, he referred to President Lech Kaczynski and Prime Minister Donald Tusk of Poland; U.S. Ambassador to Poland Lee A. Feinstein; Federal Communications Commission Chairman Julius M. Genachowski; Sara J. Bloomfield, director, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum; and Nobel Prize winner, author, and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel.

Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union
January 27, 2010

Madam Speaker, Vice President Biden, Members of Congress, distinguished guests, and fellow Americans: Our Constitution declares that from time to time, the President shall give to Congress information about the state of our Union. For 220 years, our leaders have fulfilled this duty. They've done so during periods of prosperity and tranquility, and they've done so in the midst of war and depression, at moments of great strife and great struggle.

It's tempting to look back on these moments and assume that our progress was inevitable, that America was always destined to succeed. But when the Union was turned back at Bull Run and the Allies first landed at Omaha Beach, victory was very much in doubt. When the market crashed on Black Tuesday and marchers were beaten on Bloody Sunday, the future was anything but certain. These were the times that tested the courage of our convictions and the strength of our Union. And despite all our divisions and disagreements, our hesitations and our fears, America prevailed because we chose to move forward as one Nation, as one people. Again, we are tested. And again, we must answer history's call.

One year ago, I took office amid two wars, an economy rocked by a severe recession, a financial system on the verge of collapse, and a Government deeply in debt. Experts from across the political spectrum warned that if we did not act, we might face a second depression. So we acted, immediately and aggressively. And 1 year later, the worst of the storm has passed.

But the devastation remains. One in 10 Americans still cannot find work. Many businesses have shuttered. Home values have declined. Small towns and rural communities have been hit especially hard. And for those who'd already known poverty, life's become that much harder.

This recession has also compounded the burdens that America's families have been dealing with for decades: the burden of working harder and longer for less, of being unable to save enough to retire or help kids with college.

So I know the anxieties that are out there right now. They're not new. These struggles are the reason I ran for President. These struggles are what I've witnessed for years, in places like

Elkhart, Indiana; Galesburg, Illinois. I hear about them in the letters that I read each night. The toughest to read are those written by children asking why they have to move from their home, asking when their mom or dad will be able to go back to work.

For these Americans and so many others, change has not come fast enough. Some are frustrated, some are angry. They don't understand why it seems like bad behavior on Wall Street is rewarded, but hard work on Main Street isn't, or why Washington has been unable or unwilling to solve any of our problems. They're tired of the partisanship and the shouting and the pettiness. They know we can't afford it. Not now.

So we face big and difficult challenges. And what the American people hope, what they deserve, is for all of us, Democrats and Republicans, to work through our differences, to overcome the numbing weight of our politics. For while the people who sent us here have different backgrounds, different stories, different beliefs, the anxieties they face are the same. The aspirations they hold are shared: a job that pays the bills, a chance to get ahead, most of all, the ability to give their children a better life.

And you know what else they share? They share a stubborn resilience in the face of adversity. After one of the most difficult years in our history, they remain busy building cars and teaching kids, starting businesses and going back to school. They're coaching Little League and helping their neighbors. One woman wrote to me and said, "We are strained but hopeful, struggling but encouraged."

It's because of this spirit, this great decency and great strength, that I have never been more hopeful about America's future than I am tonight. Despite our hardships, our Union is strong. We do not give up. We do not quit. We do not allow fear or division to break our spirit. In this new decade, it's time the American people get a Government that matches their decency, that embodies their strength. And tonight I'd like to talk about how together we can deliver on that promise.

It begins with our economy. Our most urgent task upon taking office was to shore up the same banks that helped cause this crisis. It was not easy to do. And if there's one thing that has unified Democrats and Republicans and everybody in between, it's that we all hated the bank bailout. I hated it. I hated it; you hated it. It was about as popular as a root canal. [*Laughter*]

But when I ran for President, I promised I wouldn't just do what was popular; I would do what was necessary. And if we had allowed the meltdown of the financial system, unemployment might be double what it is today. More businesses would certainly have closed. More homes would have surely been lost.

So I supported the last administration's efforts to create the financial rescue program. And when we took that program over, we made it more transparent and more accountable. And as a result, the markets are now stabilized, and we've recovered most of the money we spent on the banks—most but not all.

To recover the rest, I've proposed a fee on the biggest banks. Now, I know Wall Street isn't keen on this idea. But if these firms can afford to hand out big bonuses again, they can afford a modest fee to pay back the taxpayers who rescued them in their time of need.

Now, as we stabilized the financial system, we also took steps to get our economy growing again, save as many jobs as possible, and help Americans who had become unemployed. That's why we extended or increased unemployment benefits for more than 18 million Americans, made health insurance 65 percent cheaper for families who get their coverage through COBRA, and passed 25 different tax cuts.

Now, let me repeat: We cut taxes. We cut taxes for 95 percent of working families. We cut taxes for small businesses. We cut taxes for first-time home buyers. We cut taxes for parents trying to care for their children. We cut taxes for 8 million Americans paying for college. [*Applause*] I thought I'd get some applause on that one. [*Laughter*]

As a result, millions of Americans had more to spend on gas and food and other necessities, all of which helped businesses keep more workers. And we haven't raised income taxes

by a single dime on a single person—not a single dime.

Now, because of the steps we took, there are about 2 million Americans working right now who would otherwise be unemployed. Two hundred thousand work in construction and clean energy. Three hundred thousand are teachers and other education workers. Tens of thousands are cops, firefighters, correctional officers, first-responders. And we're on track to add another 1½ million jobs to this total by the end of the year.

The plan that has made all of this possible, from the tax cuts to the jobs, is the Recovery Act. That's right, the Recovery Act, also known as the stimulus bill. Economists on the left and the right say this bill has helped save jobs and avert disaster. But you don't have to take their word for it. Talk to the small business in Phoenix that will triple its workforce because of the Recovery Act. Talk to the window manufacturer in Philadelphia who said he used to be skeptical about the Recovery Act, until he had to add two more work shifts just because of the business it created. Talk to the single teacher raising two kids who was told by her principal in the last week of school that because of the Recovery Act, she wouldn't be laid off after all.

There are stories like this all across America. And after 2 years of recession, the economy is growing again. Retirement funds have started to gain back some of their value. Businesses are beginning to invest again, and slowly some are starting to hire again.

But I realize that for every success story, there are other stories, of men and women who wake up with the anguish of not knowing where their next paycheck will come from, who send out resumes week after week and hear nothing in response. That is why jobs must be our number-one focus in 2010, and that's why I'm calling for a new jobs bill tonight.

Now, the true engine of job creation in this country will always be America's businesses. [*Applause*] I agree, absolutely. But Government can create the conditions necessary for businesses to expand and hire more workers. We should start where most new jobs do, in small businesses, companies that begin when an entrepreneur takes a chance on a dream or a worker decides it's time she became her own boss. Through sheer grit and determination, these companies have weathered the recession, and they're ready to grow. But when you talk to small-business owners in places like Allentown, Pennsylvania, or Elyria, Ohio, you find out that even though banks on Wall Street are lending again, they're mostly lending to bigger companies. Financing remains difficult for small-business owners across the country, even those that are making a profit.

So tonight I'm proposing that we take $30 billion of the money Wall Street banks have repaid and use it to help community banks give small businesses the credit they need to stay afloat. I'm also proposing a new small business tax credit, one that will go to over 1 million small businesses who hire new workers or raise wages. While we're at it, let's also eliminate all capital gains taxes on small-business investment and provide a tax incentive for all large businesses and all small businesses to invest in new plants and equipment.

Next, we can put Americans to work today building the infrastructure of tomorrow. From the first railroads to the Interstate Highway System, our Nation has always been built to compete. There's no reason Europe or China should have the fastest trains or the new factories that manufacture clean energy products. Tomorrow I'll visit Tampa, Florida, where workers will soon break ground on a new high-speed railroad funded by the Recovery Act. There are projects like that all across this country that will create jobs and help move our Nation's goods, services, and information.

We should put more Americans to work building clean energy facilities and give rebates to Americans who make their homes more energy efficient, which supports clean energy jobs. And to encourage these and other businesses to stay within our borders, it is time to finally slash the tax breaks for companies that ship our jobs overseas and give those tax breaks to companies that create jobs right here in the United States of America.

Now, the House has passed a jobs bill that includes some of these steps. As the first order of business this year, I urge the Senate to do the same, and I know they will. They will. People

are out of work. They're hurting. They need our help. And I want a jobs bill on my desk without delay.

But the truth is, these steps won't make up for the 7 million jobs that we've lost over the last 2 years. The only way to move to full employment is to lay a new foundation for long-term economic growth and finally address the problems that America's families have confronted for years.

We can't afford another so-called economic expansion like the one from the last decade, what some call the "lost decade," where jobs grew more slowly than during any prior expansion, where the income of the average American household declined while the cost of health care and tuition reached record highs, where prosperity was built on a housing bubble and financial speculation.

From the day I took office, I've been told that addressing our larger challenges is too ambitious; such an effort would be too contentious. I've been told that our political system is too gridlocked and that we should just put things on hold for a while. For those who make these claims, I have one simple question: How long should we wait? How long should America put its future on hold?

You see, Washington has been telling us to wait for decades, even as the problems have grown worse. Meanwhile, China's not waiting to revamp its economy. Germany's not waiting. India's not waiting. These nations are—they're not standing still. These nations aren't playing for second place. They're putting more emphasis on math and science. They're rebuilding their infrastructure. They're making serious investments in clean energy because they want those jobs. Well, I do not accept second place for the United States of America. As hard as it may be, as uncomfortable and contentious as the debates may become, it's time to get serious about fixing the problems that are hampering our growth.

Now, one place to start is serious financial reform. Look, I am not interested in punishing banks. I'm interested in protecting our economy. A strong, healthy financial market makes it possible for businesses to access credit and create new jobs. It channels the savings of families into investments that raise incomes. But that can only happen if we guard against the same recklessness that nearly brought down our entire economy.

We need to make sure consumers and middle class families have the information they need to make financial decisions. We can't allow financial institutions, including those that take your deposits, to take risks that threaten the whole economy.

Now, the House has already passed financial reform with many of these changes, and the lobbyists are trying to kill it. But we cannot let them win this fight. And if the bill that ends up on my desk does not meet the test of real reform, I will send it back until we get it right. We've got to get it right.

Next, we need to encourage American innovation. Last year, we made the largest investment in basic research funding in history, an investment that could lead to the world's cheapest solar cells or treatment that kills cancer cells, but leaves healthy ones untouched. And no area is more ripe for such innovation than energy. You can see the results of last year's investments in clean energy in the North Carolina company that will create 1,200 jobs nationwide helping to make advanced batteries or in the California business that will put a thousand people to work making solar panels.

But to create more of these clean energy jobs, we need more production, more efficiency, more incentives. And that means building a new generation of safe, clean nuclear power plants in this country. It means making tough decisions about opening new offshore areas for oil and gas development. It means continued investment in advanced biofuels and clean coal technologies. And yes, it means passing a comprehensive energy and climate bill with incentives that will finally make clean energy the profitable kind of energy in America. Now, I am grateful to the House for passing such a bill last year. And this year, I'm eager to help advance the bipartisan effort in the Senate.

I know there have been questions about whether we can afford such changes in a tough economy. I know that there are those who dis-

agree with the overwhelming scientific evidence on climate change. But here's the thing: Even if you doubt the evidence, providing incentives for energy efficiency and clean energy are the right thing to do for our future, because the nation that leads the clean energy economy will be the nation that leads the global economy. And America must be that nation.

Third, we need to export more of our goods, because the more products we make and sell to other countries, the more jobs we support right here in America. So tonight we set a new goal: We will double our exports over the next 5 years, an increase that will support 2 million jobs in America. To help meet this goal, we're launching a National Export Initiative that will help farmers and small businesses increase their exports and reform export controls consistent with national security.

We have to seek new markets aggressively, just as our competitors are. If America sits on the sidelines while other nations sign trade deals, we will lose the chance to create jobs on our shores. But realizing those benefits also means enforcing those agreements so our trading partners play by the rules. And that's why we'll continue to shape a Doha trade agreement that opens global markets and why we will strengthen our trade relations in Asia and with key partners like South Korea and Panama and Colombia.

Fourth, we need to invest in the skills and education of our people. Now, this year, we've broken through the stalemate between left and right by launching a national competition to improve our schools. And the idea here is simple: Instead of rewarding failure, we only reward success. Instead of funding the status quo, we only invest in reform, reform that raises student achievement, inspires students to excel in math and science, and turns around failing schools that steal the future of too many young Americans, from rural communities to the inner city. In the 21st century, the best antipoverty program around is a world-class education. And in this country, the success of our children cannot depend more on where they live than on their potential. When we renew the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, we will work with Congress to expand these reforms to all 50 States.

Still, in this economy, a high school diploma no longer guarantees a good job. That's why I urge the Senate to follow the House and pass a bill that will revitalize our community colleges, which are a career pathway to the children of so many working families.

To make college more affordable, this bill will finally end the unwarranted taxpayer subsidies that go to banks for student loans. Instead, let's take that money and give families a $10,000 tax credit for 4 years of college and increase Pell grants. And let's tell another 1 million students that when they graduate, they will be required to pay only 10 percent of their income on student loans and all of their debt will be forgiven after 20 years and forgiven after 10 years if they choose a career in public service, because in the United States of America, no one should go broke because they chose to go to college. And by the way, it's time for colleges and universities to get serious about cutting their own costs, because they too have a responsibility to help solve this problem.

Now, the price of college tuition is just one of the burdens facing the middle class. That's why last year, I asked Vice President Biden to chair a task force on middle class families. That's why we're nearly doubling the childcare tax credit and making it easier to save for retirement by giving access to every worker a retirement account and expanding the tax credit for those who start a nest egg. That's why we're working to lift the value of a family's single largest investment, their home. The steps we took last year to shore up the housing market have allowed millions of Americans to take out new loans and save an average of $1,500 on mortgage payments. This year, we will step up refinancing so that homeowners can move into more affordable mortgages.

And it is precisely to relieve the burden on middle class families that we still need health insurance reform. Yes, we do.

Now, let's clear a few things up. I didn't choose to tackle this issue to get some legislative victory under my belt. And by now it should be fairly obvious that I didn't take on health care because it was good politics. [*Laughter*] I

took on health care because of the stories I've heard from Americans with preexisting conditions whose lives depend on getting coverage, patients who've been denied coverage, families, even those with insurance, who are just one illness away from financial ruin.

After nearly a century of trying—Democratic administrations, Republican administrations—we are closer than ever to bringing more security to the lives of so many Americans. The approach we've taken would protect every American from the worst practices of the insurance industry. It would give small businesses and uninsured Americans a chance to choose an affordable health care plan in a competitive market. It would require every insurance plan to cover preventive care.

And by the way, I want to acknowledge our First Lady, Michelle Obama, who this year is creating a national movement to tackle the epidemic of childhood obesity and make kids healthier. [*Applause*] Thank you, honey. She gets embarrassed. [*Laughter*]

Our approach would preserve the right of Americans who have insurance to keep their doctor and their plan. It would reduce costs and premiums for millions of families and businesses. And according to the Congressional Budget Office, the independent organization that both parties have cited as the official scorekeeper for Congress, our approach would bring down the deficit by as much as $1 trillion over the next two decades.

Still, this is a complex issue, and the longer it was debated, the more skeptical people became. I take my share of the blame for not explaining it more clearly to the American people. And I know that with all the lobbying and horse-trading, the process left most Americans wondering, "What's in it for me?"

But I also know this problem is not going away. By the time I'm finished speaking tonight, more Americans will have lost their health insurance. Millions will lose it this year. Our deficit will grow. Premiums will go up. Patients will be denied the care they need. Small-business owners will continue to drop coverage altogether. I will not walk away from these Americans, and neither should the people in this Chamber.

So as temperatures cool, I want everyone to take another look at the plan we've proposed. There's a reason why many doctors, nurses, and health care experts who know our system best consider this approach a vast improvement over the status quo. But if anyone from either party has a better approach that will bring down premiums, bring down the deficit, cover the uninsured, strengthen Medicare for seniors, and stop insurance company abuses, let me know. Let me know. Let me know. I'm eager to see it.

Here's what I ask Congress, though: Don't walk away from reform. Not now. Not when we are so close. Let us find a way to come together and finish the job for the American people. Let's get it done. Let's get it done.

Now, even as health care reform would reduce our deficit, it's not enough to dig us out of a massive fiscal hole in which we find ourselves. It's a challenge that makes all others that much harder to solve and one that's been subject to a lot of political posturing. So let me start the discussion of Government spending by setting the record straight.

At the beginning of the last decade, the year 2000, America had a budget surplus of over $200 billion. By the time I took office, we had a 1-year deficit of over $1 trillion and projected deficits of $8 trillion over the next decade. Most of this was the result of not paying for two wars, two tax cuts, and an expensive prescription drug program. On top of that, the effects of the recession put a $3 trillion hole in our budget. All this was before I walked in the door. [*Laughter*]

Now—[*applause*]—just stating the facts. Now, if we had taken office in ordinary times, I would have liked nothing more than to start bringing down the deficit. But we took office amid a crisis. And our efforts to prevent a second depression have added another $1 trillion to our national debt. That too is a fact.

I'm absolutely convinced that was the right thing to do. But families across the country are tightening their belts and making tough decisions. The Federal Government should do the same. So tonight I'm proposing specific steps to pay for the trillion dollars that it took to rescue the economy last year.

Starting in 2011, we are prepared to freeze Government spending for 3 years. Spending related to our national security, Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security will not be affected. But all other discretionary Government programs will. Like any cash-strapped family, we will work within a budget to invest in what we need and sacrifice what we don't. And if I have to enforce this discipline by veto, I will.

We will continue to go through the budget, line by line, page by page, to eliminate programs that we can't afford and don't work. We've already identified $20 billion in savings for next year. To help working families, we'll extend our middle class tax cuts. But at a time of record deficits, we will not continue tax cuts for oil companies, for investment fund managers, and for those making over $250,000 a year. We just can't afford it.

Now, even after paying for what we spent on my watch, we'll still face the massive deficit we had when I took office. More importantly, the cost of Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security will continue to skyrocket. That's why I've called for a bipartisan fiscal commission, modeled on a proposal by Republican Judd Gregg and Democrat Kent Conrad. This can't be one of those Washington gimmicks that lets us pretend we solve a problem. The commission will have to provide a specific set of solutions by a certain deadline.

Now, yesterday the Senate blocked a bill that would have created this commission, so I'll issue an Executive order that will allow us to go forward, because I refuse to pass this problem on to another generation of Americans. And when the vote comes tomorrow, the Senate should restore the pay-as-you-go law that was a big reason for why we had record surpluses in the 1990s.

Now, I know that some in my own party will argue that we can't address the deficit or freeze Government spending when so many are still hurting. And I agree, which is why this freeze won't take effect until next year, when the economy is stronger. That's how budgeting works. [*Laughter*] But understand, if we don't take meaningful steps to rein in our debt, it could damage our markets, increase the cost of borrowing, and jeopardize our recovery, all of which would have an even worse effect on our job growth and family incomes.

From some on the right, I expect we'll hear a different argument, that if we just make fewer investments in our people, extend tax cuts, including those for the wealthier Americans, eliminate more regulations, maintain the status quo on health care, our deficits will go away. The problem is, that's what we did for 8 years. That's what helped us into this crisis. It's what helped lead to these deficits. We can't do it again.

Rather than fight the same tired battles that have dominated Washington for decades, it's time to try something new. Let's invest in our people without leaving them a mountain of debt. Let's meet our responsibility to the citizens who sent us here. Let's try common sense—[*laughter*]—a novel concept.

Now, to do that, we have to recognize that we face more than a deficit of dollars right now. We face a deficit of trust, deep and corrosive doubts about how Washington works that have been growing for years. To close that credibility gap, we have to take action on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue to end the outsized influence of lobbyists, to do our work openly, to give our people the Government they deserve.

Now, that's what I came to Washington to do. That's why, for the first time in history, my administration posts on—our White House visitors online. That's why we've excluded lobbyists from policymaking jobs or seats on Federal boards and commissions. But we can't stop there. It's time to require lobbyists to disclose each contact they make on behalf of a client, with my administration or with Congress. It's time to put strict limits on the contributions that lobbyists give to candidates for Federal office.

With all due deference to separation of powers, last week, the Supreme Court reversed a century of law that I believe will open the floodgates for special interests, including foreign corporations, to spend without limit in our elections. I don't think American elections should be bankrolled by America's most powerful interests, or worse, by foreign entities. They should be decided by the American people. And I'd urge Democrats and Republicans to

pass a bill that helps correct some of these problems.

I'm also calling on Congress to continue down the path of earmark reform, Democrats and Republicans—Democrats and Republicans. Look, you've trimmed some of this spending, you've embraced some meaningful change, but restoring the public trust demands more. For example, some Members of Congress post some earmark requests online. Tonight I'm calling on Congress to publish all earmark requests on a single web site before there's a vote so that the American people can see how their money is being spent.

Of course, none of these reforms will even happen if we don't also reform how we work with one another. Now, I'm not naive. I never thought that the mere fact of my election would usher in peace and harmony and—[*laughter*]—some postpartisan era. I knew that both parties have fed divisions that are deeply entrenched. And on some issues, there are simply philosophical differences that will always cause us to part ways. These disagreements, about the role of government in our lives, about our national priorities and our national security, they've been taking place for over 200 years. They're the very essence of our democracy.

But what frustrates the American people is a Washington where every day is election day. We can't wage a perpetual campaign where the only goal is to see who can get the most embarrassing headlines about the other side, a belief that if you lose, I win. Neither party should delay or obstruct every single bill just because they can. The confirmation of—I'm speaking to both parties now—the confirmation of well-qualified public servants shouldn't be held hostage to the pet projects or grudges of a few individual Senators.

Washington may think that saying anything about the other side, no matter how false, no matter how malicious, is just part of the game. But it's precisely such politics that has stopped either party from helping the American people. Worse yet, it's sowing further division among our citizens, further distrust in our Government. So no, I will not give up on trying to change the tone of our politics. I know it's an election year. And after last week, it's clear that campaign fever has come even earlier than usual. But we still need to govern.

To Democrats, I would remind you that we still have the largest majority in decades and the people expect us to solve problems, not run for the hills. And if the Republican leadership is going to insist that 60 votes in the Senate are required to do any business at all in this town—a supermajority—then the responsibility to govern is now yours as well. Just saying no to everything may be good short-term politics, but it's not leadership. We were sent here to serve our citizens, not our ambitions. So let's show the American people that we can do it together.

This week, I'll be addressing a meeting of the House Republicans. I'd like to begin monthly meetings with both Democratic and Republican leadership. I know you can't wait. [*Laughter*]

Now, throughout our history, no issue has united this country more than our security. Sadly, some of the unity we felt after 9/11 has dissipated. And we can argue all we want about who's to blame for this, but I'm not interested in relitigating the past. I know that all of us love this country. All of us are committed to its defense. So let's put aside the schoolyard taunts about who's tough. Let's reject the false choice between protecting our people and upholding our values. Let's leave behind the fear and division and do what it takes to defend our Nation and forge a more hopeful future for America and for the world.

That's the work we began last year. Since the day I took office, we've renewed our focus on the terrorists who threaten our Nation. We've made substantial investments in our homeland security and disrupted plots that threatened to take American lives. We are filling unacceptable gaps revealed by the failed Christmas attack, with better airline security and swifter action on our intelligence. We've prohibited torture and strengthened partnerships from the Pacific to South Asia to the Arabian Peninsula. And in the last year, hundreds of Al Qaida's fighters and affiliates, including many senior leaders, have been captured or killed, far more than in 2008.

And in Afghanistan, we're increasing our troops and training Afghan security forces so they can begin to take the lead in July of 2011 and our troops can begin to come home. We will reward good governance, work to reduce corruption, and support the rights of all Afghans, men and women alike. We're joined by allies and partners who have increased their own commitments and who will come together tomorrow in London to reaffirm our common purpose. There will be difficult days ahead, but I am absolutely confident we will succeed.

As we take the fight to Al Qaida, we are responsibly leaving Iraq to its people. As a candidate, I promised that I would end this war, and that is what I am doing as President. We will have all of our combat troops out of Iraq by the end of this August. We will support the Iraqi Government as they hold elections, and we will continue to partner with the Iraqi people to promote regional peace and prosperity. But make no mistake: This war is ending, and all of our troops are coming home.

Tonight all of our men and women in uniform, in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and around the world, they have to know that we—that they have our respect, our gratitude, our full support. And just as they must have the resources they need in war, we all have a responsibility to support them when they come home. That's why we made the largest increase in investments for veterans in decades last year. That's why we're building a 21st-century VA. And that's why Michelle has joined with Jill Biden to forge a national commitment to support military families.

Now, even as we prosecute two wars, we're also confronting perhaps the greatest danger to the American people, the threat of nuclear weapons. I've embraced the vision of John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan through a strategy that reverses the spread of these weapons and seeks a world without them. To reduce our stockpiles and launchers, while ensuring our deterrent, the United States and Russia are completing negotiations on the farthest reaching arms control treaty in nearly two decades. And at April's Nuclear Security Summit, we will bring 44 nations together here in Washington, DC, behind a clear goal: securing all vulnerable nuclear materials around the world in 4 years so that they never fall into the hands of terrorists.

Now, these diplomatic efforts have also strengthened our hand in dealing with those nations that insist on violating international agreements in pursuit of nuclear weapons. That's why North Korea now faces increased isolation and stronger sanctions, sanctions that are being vigorously enforced. That's why the international community is more united and the Islamic Republic of Iran is more isolated. And as Iran's leaders continue to ignore their obligations, there should be no doubt: They too will face growing consequences. That is a promise.

That's the leadership we are providing: engagement that advances the common security and prosperity of all people. We're working through the G–20 to sustain a lasting global recovery. We're working with Muslim communities around the world to promote science and education and innovation. We have gone from a bystander to a leader in the fight against climate change. We're helping developing countries to feed themselves and continuing the fight against HIV/AIDS. And we are launching a new initiative that will give us the capacity to respond faster and more effectively to bioterrorism or an infectious disease, a plan that will counter threats at home and strengthen public health abroad.

As we have for over 60 years, America takes these actions because our destiny is connected to those beyond our shores. But we also do it because it is right. That's why, as we meet here tonight, over 10,000 Americans are working with many nations to help the people of Haiti recover and rebuild. That's why we stand with the girl who yearns to go to school in Afghanistan, why we support the human rights of the women marching through the streets of Iran, why we advocate for the young man denied a job by corruption in Guinea. For America must always stand on the side of freedom and human dignity—always.

Abroad, America's greatest source of strength has always been our ideals. The same is true at home. We find unity in our incredible diversity, drawing on the promise enshrined in our Constitution: The notion that we're all created equal; that no matter who you are or what

you look like, if you abide by the law, you should be protected by it; if you adhere to our common values, you should be treated no different than anyone else.

We must continually renew this promise. My administration has a Division that is once again prosecuting violations and employment discrimination. We finally strengthened our laws to protect against crimes driven by hate. This year, I will work with Congress and our military to finally repeal the law that denies gay Americans the right to serve the country they love because of who they are. It's the right thing to do.

We're going to crack down on violations of equal pay laws so that women get equal pay for an equal day's work. And we should continue the work of fixing our broken immigration system, to secure our borders and enforce our laws and ensure that everyone who plays by the rules can contribute to our economy and enrich our Nation.

In the end, it's our ideals, our values that built America, values that allowed us to forge a nation made up of immigrants from every corner of the globe, values that drive our citizens still. Every day, Americans meet their responsibilities to their families and their employers. Time and again, they lend a hand to their neighbors and give back to their country. They take pride in their labor and are generous in spirit. These aren't Republican values or Democratic values that they're living by, business values or labor values, they're American values.

Unfortunately, too many of our citizens have lost faith that our biggest institutions—our corporations, our media, and, yes, our Government—still reflect these same values. Each of these institutions are full of honorable men and women doing important work that helps our country prosper. But each time a CEO rewards himself for failure or a banker puts the rest of us at risk for his own selfish gain, people's doubts grow. Each time lobbyists game the system or politicians tear each other down instead of lifting this country up, we lose faith. The more that TV pundits reduce serious debates to silly arguments, big issues into sound bites, our citizens turn away. No wonder there's so much cynicism out there. No wonder there's so much disappointment.

I campaigned on the promise of change. Change we can believe in, the slogan went. And right now I know there are many Americans who aren't sure if they still believe we can change or that I can deliver it.

But remember this: I never suggested that change would be easy or that I could do it alone. Democracy in a nation of 300 million people can be noisy and messy and complicated. And when you try to do big things and make big changes, it stirs passions and controversy. That's just how it is.

Those of us in public office can respond to this reality by playing it safe and avoid telling hard truths and pointing fingers. We can do what's necessary to keep our poll numbers high and get through the next election, instead of doing what's best for the next generation.

But I also know this: If people had made that decision 50 years ago or 100 years ago or 200 years ago, we wouldn't be here tonight. The only reason we are here is because generations of Americans were unafraid to do what was hard, to do what was needed even when success was uncertain, to do what it took to keep the dream of this Nation alive for their children and their grandchildren.

Now, our administration has had some political setbacks this year, and some of them were deserved. But I wake up every day knowing that they are nothing compared to the setbacks that families all across this country have faced this year. And what keeps me going, what keeps me fighting, is that despite all these setbacks, that spirit of determination and optimism, that fundamental decency that has always been at the core of the American people, that lives on.

It lives on in the struggling small-business owner who wrote to me of his company, "None of us," he said, ". . . are willing to consider, even slightly, that we might fail." It lives on in the woman who said that even though she and her neighbors have felt the pain of recession, "We are strong. We are resilient. We are American." It lives on in the 8-year-old boy in Louisiana who just sent me his allowance

and asked if I would give it to the people of Haiti. And it lives on in all the Americans who've dropped everything to go someplace they've never been and pull people they've never known from the rubble, prompting chants of "U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!" when another life was saved.

The spirit that has sustained this Nation for more than two centuries lives on in you, its people. We have finished a difficult year. We have come through a difficult decade. But a new year has come. A new decade stretches before us. We don't quit. I don't quit. Let's seize this moment to start anew, to carry the dream forward, and to strengthen our Union once more.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:11 p.m. in the House Chamber of the U.S. Capitol. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Tampa, Florida

January 28, 2010

The President. Thank you, everybody. Hello, Tampa! Thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. It's great to see you. All right, everybody just make yourselves comfortable. We're going to be here for a little bit. We—thank you.

We've got some special guests that I want to make sure we acknowledge: Florida CFO Alex Sink is in the house; Representative Kathy Castor, your Representative; Representative Alan Grayson; Representative Kendrick Meek; Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz; your own mayor, Pam Iorio; the mayor of Orlando, Buddy Dyer; the president of University of Tampa, Ronald Vaughn.

And two very special guests: Brian C. Smithey and Roger J. Picard. I want you guys to know who these folks are. They are members of the FEMA Florida Task Force team 2 canine search specialists. They went down to Haiti and worked 26-hour-long shifts, staying with victims until they were rescued. The Florida Task Force team saved seven lives. Brian worked at a school where his dog Powder found a young adult female buried in the rubble 3 to 4 days. So these are the kinds of heroes that make America proud, and I want everybody to give them a big round of applause. Stand up, stand up. Great job, buddy. Great job. Proud of you. Thank you.

Now—and I haven't spotted him in the crowd yet, but I've got to do this, even though I know you all are upset that he took all that success to the Colts—[*applause*]—he made his name here in Tampa. And he's not just a great coach, but he's just a model individual and leader; we're very proud to have him in the house, Coach Tony Dungy. Any of you want some analysis about the upcoming Super Bowl—[*laughter*]—Coach is free to give—no—[*laughter*]—it's good to see you, Coach.

All right, now, first of all, let me say, it's good to be back in the Sunshine State. It is especially good to be back in January. [*Laughter*] And it's always nice to get out of Washington—[*laughter*]—it is—and spend a little time with the people who sent me to Washington.

Now, last night I spoke with you about where we've been over the past year and where I believe we need to go. And I said what all of you know from your own lives: These are difficult times; these are challenging times for our country.

In the last 2 years, we've gone through the deepest recession since the Great Depression. Think about that. A big chunk of the people here—certainly the younger people here—have never even seen a recession; they don't even—it doesn't register on their minds. This is by far the toughest thing that the country's gone through economically since the 1930s.

And, Tampa, like so many communities across our country, has felt the lash of shuttered businesses and lost jobs and home foreclosures and vanished or dwindling savings. And this storm came at the end of what some call a "lost decade," because what happened between 2000 and now, it was a decade in which paychecks

shrank and jobs barely grew and the costs of everything from health care to college education went up. Irresponsibility from Wall Street to Washington left good, responsible Americans who did everything right still struggling in ways they never imagined.

Joe and I took office in the middle of this raging storm. We ran for office, the highest office, because we had been hearing stories like this day in, day out, for years, even before the financial crisis hit. So we're not going to rest until we've rebuilt an economy in which hard work and responsibility are rewarded and businesses are hiring again and wages are growing again and the middle class can get its legs underneath it again. We will not rest until we build an economy that's ready for America's future.

Now, to do that, the first thing we had to do was break the back of this recession. And that required some tough, in some cases unpopular, but unnecessary—all—which were necessary steps. I mean, I mentioned this last night; none of us wanted to have to stabilize the banking sector, particularly since they helped create this mess. But as I explained last night, if we hadn't, the financial system literally could have melted down, and that would have taken our entire economy and millions more families and businesses with it.

But because of the steps we've taken, now the markets have stabilized. The economy is growing again. The worst of the storm has passed. But I think all of you understand the devastation remains. One in 10 Americans still can't find work; that's why creating jobs has to be our number-one priority in 2010.

The true engines of job creation here in America are America's businesses. And there are several steps we can take to help them expand and hire new workers. Last night I proposed taking $30 billion of the money that went to Wall Street banks but have now been repaid and use it to help community banks give small businesses the credit they need to stay afloat. That will help. I also proposed a new tax credit for more than 1 million small businesses that hire new workers or raise wages. And while we're at it, I believe that we should eliminate all capital gains taxes on small-business investment and provide a tax incentive for all businesses to invest in new plants and equipment.

As Joe mentioned, we're going to put more Americans to work rebuilding our infrastructure and building our infrastructure of the future. I mean, it's important to repave our roads; it's important to repair our bridges so that they're safe. But we want to start looking deep into the 21st century, and we want to say to ourselves, there is no reason why other countries can build high-speed rail lines and we can't. And that's what's about to happen right here in Tampa. We are going to start building a new high-speed rail line right here in Tampa, building for the future, putting people to work. I'm excited. I'm going to come back down here and ride it. [*Laughter*] Joe and I—you all have a date. When that thing is all set up, we'll come down here and check it out. [*Laughter*] And by the way, this high-speed rail line is being funded by the Recovery Act.

And one other thing we can start doing for jobs here in America that I mentioned last night—I talked about it—this all through the campaign. We put this proposal in our budget; we keep on getting resistance, but we are going to keep on pushing to end tax breaks for companies that ship our jobs overseas and give those tax breaks to companies that create jobs right here in the United States of America. It's the right thing to do. It's the right thing to do. It's the right thing to do.

Now, I have to say this: The steps that I just mentioned will help accelerate job growth in an economy that is already beginning to grow, but the steps we take alone won't make up for the 7 million jobs we lost over the last 2 years. I mean, keep in mind, when we were sworn into office, that December we had lost 650,000 jobs; January, as we were being sworn in, we lost 700,000 jobs; February, 650,000 jobs. So before we could even put in place the Recovery Act, you had already seen millions of jobs lost. That's a deep hole that we're going to have to fill. And the only way to do that is to lay a new foundation for long-term economic growth and finally address the struggles that

middle class families have been grappling with for years.

Now, Florida, that's why Joe and I asked for the chance to serve as your President and Vice President, because look—[*applause*]—no, look, we didn't seek this office to push our problems off or take the easy road through the next election. We ran to solve problems, problems that had been nagging at America for decades. We want to solve them for the next generation. We ran to get the tough stuff done. So as I mentioned last night, I make no apology for trying to fix stuff that's hard, because I'll be honest with you, Joe and I are both pretty smart politicians; we've been at this a while. [*Laughter*] The easiest way to keep your poll numbers high is to say nothing and to do nothing that offends anybody. [*Laughter*] That's true. No, no, no, you know, you just wave and smile and—[*laughter*]—no, that's how you do it.

The minute you actually start doing something, somebody's going to disagree with you. But that's what I promised. Some of you remember the campaign. I said I wasn't just going to tell you what you want to hear; I was going to tell you what you need to hear. So none of this is new. There's nothing that we have talked about since we entered the White House that we didn't talk about during the campaign. And so long as we have the privilege of serving you, we will not stop fighting for your future, no matter how many lumps we've got to take to get it done.

I do also have to just mention—I'm going to mention—you know, I love you in the media, but I will mention this little aspect of our media, our friends with the pads and the pencils. Last week, I went to Ohio, and I started saying what I'm saying now, which is, I'm going to fight for your future. And they got all worked up. They got worked up last week. They said, "Is he trying to change his message? Is he trying to get more populist? Is this a strategy that he's pursuing to boost his—this, that, and the other?" [*Laughter*] "Is this something new?"

Now, I just have to do a little rewind here of how we ran our grassroots campaign, because I've got some news. I've got some news of my own here. I've been fighting for working folks my entire adult life. That's why I entered public service, to fight for folks in Chicago. That's why I ran for the State senate. That's why I ran for the U.S. Senate. That's why I ran for President, to fight for people here in Tampa and people here in Florida and to fight for people all across the United States of America.

I seem to remember coming to Tampa 2 weeks before the election, and you know what I said? This is a quote; people can check—I'm sure it was reported in the newspapers. I said, "Change never comes without a fight." That was true then; it's true now. Change never comes without a fight, Florida. So I won't stop fighting; I know you won't either.

We're not going to stop fighting to give our kids a world-class education, to make college more affordable, to make sure that by 2020, we have the highest rate of college attendance of any country in the world. So we've proposed that graduates should only pay 10 percent of their income to pay back their student loans. And—[*applause*]—students like that. And what I've said is we'll forgive student loan debt after 20 years, but after 10 if you choose a career in public service. Because if you decide you want to be a teacher, if you decide you want to be a cop, if you're not making huge amounts of money, we don't want to discourage you from that because of the cost of college. And by the way, I've been there, and Michelle's been there. It took us 10 full years to pay off Michelle's student loans, 15 to pay mine off. [*Laughter*] So I've been there. And our belief, and I think your belief, is in the United States of America nobody should go broke because they chose to go to college. We want everybody to go to college, and we don't want them going broke doing it.

We won't stop fighting to spark innovation and ignite a clean energy economy where America's workers are building solar panels and wind towers and cutting-edge batteries for automobiles, because the nation that leads the clean energy revolution will be the nation that leads the global economy. And as I said last night, other countries aren't waiting. They want those jobs. China wants those jobs. Germany wants those jobs. They are going after them hard, making the investments required.

We're not going to stop fighting to give every American a fair shake. The first bill I signed in-

to law was making sure that there was equal pay for equal work for women, the Lilly Ledbetter Act, because I think you should be paid the same for doing the same work. That's just fair. And by the way, men, you should have been standing up clapping for that, because most families today are depending on two paychecks, not one, to get by.

We're not going to stop fighting to protect the American consumer. That's why I signed a credit card bill of rights into law to protect you from surprise charges and retroactive rate hikes and other unfair rules. That's why I'm fighting for a tough consumer financial protection agency to protect you against things like hidden fees that can make an ATM withdrawal cost 30 bucks.

I just want to be clear here, for the benefit of my friends in the back. [*Laughter*] We need a strong financial sector. Without it, businesses can't get capital to grow and create jobs, families can't finance a home loan or education. So we want a healthy financial sector. And there are folks all across the country working in banks who are doing great service to their community. But we also need some rules of the road for Wall Street so that reckless decisions made by a few don't take our economy over the side. That's common sense. There's nothing radical about that. In fact, the banks should want it, because it would create greater stability in the system.

And yes, we will not stop fighting for a health care system that works for the American people, not just for the insurance industry. We won't stop. We want a system where you can't be denied care if you have a preexisting condition, you can't get thrown off your insurance right at the time when you get seriously ill.

We want a system where small businesses can get insurance at a price they can afford. Nobody pays more than small businesses and individuals who are self-employed, in the insurance market, because they've got no leverage. We want to change that by allowing them to be able to set up a pool. We want to make sure that people who don't have coverage can find an affordable choice in a competitive marketplace.

We want a system in which seniors don't have these huge gaps in their Medicare prescription drug coverage and where Medicare itself is on a sounder financial footing. Those are the things that we're fighting for.

And I'm not going to stop on that, because it's the right thing to do. And by the way, if you are serious about reducing our deficit and debt, you cannot accomplish it without reforming our health care system, because that's what's gobbling up more Federal dollars than anything else. I don't understand folks who say they don't want to see Government spending out of control, and then are fighting reforms that the Congressional Budget Office says would cut a trillion dollars off our deficit over the next two decades. Those aren't my numbers.

Now, we're never going to stop fighting to cut waste and abuse in Washington. We do have to rein in deficits that have been accumulating for too long. Families across the country are tightening their belts and making tough decisions. It's time for the Federal Government to do the same. And that's why I proposed specific steps last night to bring the deficit down. And I'm grateful that the Senate just passed, as we were flying down here to Florida, a rule called pay as you go, or PAYGO, that was a big reason we had record surpluses in the 1990s instead of the record deficits that were handed to me when I ran—walked into office.

Look, it's a very simple concept, this PAYGO. It basically just says you got to pay as you go. [*Laughter*] It's sort of how you live—at least after you cut up those credit cards. [*Laughter*] It basically says, you want to start a new program? Start a new program. But you've got to end an old one that pays for it. If you want to cut taxes, great, cut taxes. But you got to figure out how to fill the revenue that results when you lose that tax revenue. So the idea is just honest accounting. That's what's needed.

And let me say one more word about health care. I just got to—I'm gnawing on this bone a little bit. [*Laughter*] I know that the longer the process worked through on a complicated issue like this, the uglier it looked. You know,

there's—and it doesn't help when you've got the insurance industry spending several hundred million dollars advertising against it, but—so, but after a while, people didn't know what to think. And they—you started asking yourselves, "What's in it for me?"

And as I said last night, I take my share of the blame for not explaining our approach more clearly. But this problem's not going to go away. The tough stories I read in letters at night, they're not stopping. I'm not going to walk away from these efforts. And I won't walk away from you. And I don't think Congress should walk away either. We are going to keep working to get this done. And I hope we can get some Republicans to join Democrats in understanding the urgency of the problem.

On every one of these issues, my door remains open to good ideas from both parties. I want the Republicans off the sidelines. I want them working with us to solve problems facing working families, not to score points. I want a partnership. What we can't do, though—here's what I'm not open to: I don't want gridlock on issue after issue after issue when there's so many urgent problems to solve. And I don't want an attitude, "If Obama loses, then we win." I mean, that can't be a platform. Even if you disagree with me on some specific issues, all of us should be rooting for each other. All of us should be rooting for America moving forward and solving problems.

So that, you know, "you lose, I win" mentality, that mindset may be good for short-term politics, but it's not a mindset that's equal to these times. It's not worthy of you. What you deserve is for all of us, Democrats and Republicans, to work through our differences, overcome our politics, do what is hard, do what is necessary to advance the American Dream and keep it alive for our time and for all time.

We have come through a tough year and a tough decade. But a new year is here, and a new decade is stretching before us. Opportunities are there for the taking: every business owner working on the innovation of tomorrow, every student reaching for a better future, everyone ready to roll up their sleeves and play their part in rebuilding America.

Audience member. Yes we can.

The President. Yes we can. We don't back down. We don't quit. We are Americans. And today, here with all of you, I have never been more hopeful about our future than I am right now. I am confident that we can make this happen and move this country forward.

Thank you very much, Tampa. I love you guys. Thank you.

All right, I've got—everybody relax again. Everybody relax. [*Laughter*] I've got time for a few questions. I'm going to take off my jacket here, just because—[*applause*]. Joe, are you going to hold my coat? You know, I——

Vice President Joe Biden. You answer all the tough questions, I'll hold the coat. [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes, I know there may be some tough questions here, so—all right, here's what—here are the only rules to this. I'm going to try to get in about five, six questions. I will—so I'm not going to be able to get to everybody. I apologize in advance. To make sure that it's fair, we're going to go girl, boy, girl, boy. [*Laughter*] All right? So I'm going to call on a young lady first, and then I'm going to call on a gentleman, and we're just going to keep on going down the line, and we'll get through as many as we can.

All right, everybody's pointing in this—this young woman in the red here, so we'll start with you. And if you don't mind, introduce yourself. Wait for the microphone. A microphone will be coming up and—all right.

U.S. Foreign Policy/Middle East Peace Process

Q. Hello, Mr. President. My name is Laila Abdelaziz. I'm a student at the University of South Florida.

The President. Hey, Laila.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Uh-oh. Come on, we can all get along here. [*Laughter*] Tampa, behave yourselves. All right.

Q. First of all, I'd like to say that I did work on your campaign. I think it's great what you did for the community, because you involved us, as the youth, to understand the grassroots movement and what impact it can make.

The President. That's great. Thank you.

Q. My question is, last night in your State of the Union Address, you spoke of America's sup-

port for human rights. Then why have we not condemned Israel and Egypt's human rights violations against the occupied Palestinian people, and yet we continue to support financially with billions of dollars coming from our tax dollars?

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Okay, now, everybody's got to be courteous, everybody's answering the question.

The—let's—let me just talk about the Middle East generally. Look, all right, everybody, come on, come on, hold on. Hold on one second, I've got to answer my question first, sir. Okay, I know you got—what, you got some beads on—are those New Orleans beads? Okay.

Look, look, look, the Middle East is obviously an issue that has plagued the region for centuries. And it's an issue that elicits a lot of passions, as you heard.

Here's my view: Israel is one of our strongest allies. It has—[*applause*]. Hold—let me just—let me play this out. It is a vibrant democracy. It shares links with us in all sorts of ways. It is critical for us, and I will never waver from ensuring Israel's security and helping them secure themselves in what is a very hostile region. So I make no apologies for that.

What is also true is that the plight of the Palestinians is something that we have to pay attention to, because it is not good for our security and it is not good for Israel's security if you've got millions of individuals who feel hopeless, who don't have an opportunity to get an education or get a job or what have you.

Now, the history of there is long, and I don't have time to go through the grievances of both sides in the issue. What I have said and what we did from the beginning when I came into office is to say we are seeking a two-state solution in which Israel and the Palestinians can live side by side in peace and security. In order to do that, both sides are going to have to make compromises.

As a interim—as a first step, the Palestinians have to unequivocally renounce violence and recognize Israel, and Israel has to acknowledge legitimate grievances and interests of the Palestinians. We know what a solution could look like in the region, but here's the problem that we're confronting right now, is that both in Israel and within the Palestinian Territories, the politics are difficult; they're divided. The Israeli Government came in based on the support of a lot of folks who don't want to make a lot of concessions. I think Prime Minister Netanyahu is actually making some effort to try to move a little bit further than his coalition wants him to go. On the other hand, President Abbas of the Palestinian Authority, who I think genuinely wants peace, has to deal with Hamas, an organization that has not recognized Israel and has not disavowed violence.

And so we are working to try to strengthen the ability of both parties to sit down across the table and to begin serious negotiations. And I think that it's important, when we're talking about this issue, to make sure that we don't just knee-jerk, use language that is inflammatory or in some fashion discourages the possibility of negotiation. We've got to recognize that both the Palestinian people and Israelis have legitimate aspirations, and they can be best served if the United States is helping them understand each other, as opposed to demonizing each other.

All right? Okay. All right, it's a gentleman's turn. It's a gentleman's turn. This gentleman here—I'm going to go on the other side of the room—this gentleman in the yellow tie.

Improving Infrastructure

Q. Bill Segal, Orange County commissioner. Welcome, Mr. President. What's the decision matrix going to look like for high-speed rail? How are we going to decide who gets what? And when is the announcement going to be made?

The President. Well, I probably should have Mr. Biden talk about this because he has been working diligently overseeing the Recovery Act. Let me make a general point about high-speed rail, as well as the way the infrastructure is being moved through the Recovery Act.

General point number one is that making an investment in infrastructure is a twofer, because it creates jobs immediately, and it lays the foundation for a vibrant economy in the future. So it's one of our best investments. But

it's expensive. We've got a couple of trillion dollars' worth of infrastructure repairs just on our old infrastructure, our existing infrastructure, our roads, our bridges. People remember what happened to the bridge up in Minneapolis that just buckled and collapsed. Well, unfortunately, we've got a lot of aging infrastructure. Some of it's not as visible as bridges; some of it's water systems, pipes underground that essentially were built back in the 1930s, in some cases even older than that. So we're going to have to make a commitment to our long-term infrastructure.

And one of the things that we're hoping to do is, as we make more investments in infrastructure under my administration, that we start figuring out ways that we can take some of the politics out of infrastructure. And what I mean by that is right now a lot of decisions are made about projects based on who's got the most powerful Congressman or Senator. And what we're hoping to do is at least some of the decisionmaking based a little bit more on what are the engineering plans that determine this is the best project to go forward.

And one way of doing that is to create what's called an infrastructure bank where at least a certain amount of infrastructure money, particularly for new projects, would be guided by some clear criteria, a lot of transparency, engineers and urban planners and city planners involved in the process so that we can also get some regional planning. Because part of what happens when politics is involved in transportation is that the commissioner over here may not have the same ideas, the mayor over here may not have the same idea as the Senator over there, except they all represent a similar region. And so you get a whole bunch of traffic systems that don't work and aren't efficient and don't serve commuters very well at all. So that's the kind of general direction that we'd like to move to.

The second point I would make is that if we're going to be making investments in infrastructure anyway, we can't just look backwards; we've got to look forward. I mean, how many people here have been on one of these high-speed trains—when you were traveling outside the country, unfortunately, for the most part. I mean, those things are fast; they are smooth. You don't have to take off your shoes—[*laughter*]—right? Check to see if you're wearing the socks with no holes in them. [*Laughter*]

Why is it we don't have those? Now, part of it is we're a very big country; we're not as densely populated as some countries in Europe and Asia. And let's face it, we just love our cars. We love our cars. We don't love gas prices, but we love our cars.

Oil Production/Alternative Energy Sources/Improving Infrastructure

Q. What about gas prices?

The President. But, well—[*inaudible*]—say, what about gas prices, right? [*Laughter*] I'll talk about that in a second, but—well, no, you know what? I'll talk about it now.

Even if—and I mentioned last night we have to increase production on oil, we have to increase production on natural gas, because we're not going to be able to get all our clean energy up and running quickly enough to meet all of our economic growth needs. But even if we are increasing production, we've got to get started now decreasing our use and making our economy more efficient.

And so that's why we need to invest in infrastructure like high-speed rail that will allow us to choose the option of taking the train. And if more and more facilities like that are available, that's going to be good, as I said, for the economy of the region, and it's going to be good for individual lifestyles because people aren't going to be stuck in traffic for 2 hours. It'll increase productivity. People will get on—to work on time a lot faster. They'll be less aggravated, right?

Now, Joe, in terms of the high-speed rail here, do you have something specific to say?

[*At this point, Vice President Biden made brief remarks.*]

The President. Good. Let me just say, by the way—give a compliment to Vice President Biden. He and his team have overseen the Recovery Act. You have not seen scandal break out on a huge endeavor. You know, people complain a lot about how Government works and wastes money, et cetera. The truth is, is that if

you look at what—how the recovery dollars have been spent, they have been spent the way they were promised. And there's complete transparency, so you guys can go on the White House web site and look at every single project that has been awarded a Recovery Act grant, every single one, and scrutinize them. And you know who the contractors are; you know who's doing the work; you know when it's supposed to be finished. So you can check out all this stuff, and you will be able to monitor how the high-speed rail project here is operating just by going to our web site.

All right, it's a young lady's turn. All right. Let me—it's a woman's turn, so—all right, how about—all right, this—she's jumping up and down right here.

[*An audience member blew a whistle.*]

The President. There we go.

Education/Work Programs for Former Felons

Q. Wow.

The President. All right, sir, but you can't blow your whistle, though.

Audience member. All right.

The President. All right? [*Laughter*]

Q. President Obama, my name is Rashonda Williams. I'm from Kissimmee, Florida. I don't know if Ms. Tchen has given you the poem that I wrote you.

The President. Not yet.

Q. Ask Ms. Tchen. She came to the Center for Drug-Free Living over in Orlando.

The President. Okay.

Q. And I wrote a poem for you winning the Presidency; I printed it up and put it on a nice background. But my question is—and I told her to give it to you.

The President. Okay, I'll be looking for it.

Q. So you ask Miss Tina for that. My question is, my brothers are in and out of jail, with the drugs, the selling of the drugs. And a lot of them can't get jobs coming out. So the only thing they know is to go back to what they—what they're used to, because of their felonies. My brother is 27; he has 33 felonies, drug felonies, mind you. So what I'm saying is, is there anything that could be put into motion that can get these guys coming from prison get in a system where they can get hired and get their self-esteem built back up so that they don't have to go back out to the street to sell drugs? Because if they don't hire them, all they're going to do is continue to sell the drugs. So we need some kind of company that can teach these gentlemen coming out some kind of trade that will keep them from going back out and selling these drugs.

The President. Okay, well, first of all, I look forward to reading your poem.

Look, we've got a great challenge in, particularly, our inner-city communities. But actually, if you go to rural communities in the Midwest right now, they may be selling different drugs, but you're seeing some of the same patterns.

Joe and I were campaigning in Iowa, and you'd go into small towns where you wouldn't think there'd ever be a problem with the drug trade, and the methamphetamine trade was identical to the crack trade in the big cities, same patterns of young people getting drawn in.

So a couple of things have to happen to deal with this problem. Number one, the single most important thing we can do is to make sure that our very young children are getting a healthy start in life and that their parents or parent or caregiver have the support that's necessary so that they can stay on a straight path of success in school, because if young people—if their minds are active and they're doing well in school, they are less likely to fall prey to either using drugs or deciding to deal in drugs.

And that's why I mentioned yesterday, the single best antipoverty program around is a world-class education. And that's why we're going to invest in early childhood education. That's why we are reforming and pushing States and communities to reform how education works.

And by the way, we've gotten into trouble sometimes not just from conservatives, but sometimes from liberals because we're trying to shake up low-performing schools. People say, "Well, why don't you just give them more money?" And my attitude is, you know what,

we can give more money to schools—that's important—smaller class sizes, better classrooms, all those things I care deeply about—but that money will not make a dime's bit of difference if we're not also reforming how kids are learning, making sure that our teachers know their subject matter and that they know the best ways to teach; making sure that parents are staying on top of kids and instilling a sense of excellence and performance in those youths.

So that—I want to make that point first, because, frankly, it would be so much easier to work with your brother, if he hadn't gone to jail in the first place, to get a job. Thirty-three felonies is a lot. I mean, that's a long rap sheet, which means that it's very—I'm just being realistic. If I'm a business owner, and I'm saying to myself, right now the unemployment rate is 10 percent, so there are a whole lot of folks who've never been to jail who are looking for a job, it's hard for me to say, I'll choose the guy who went to jail instead of the person who never went to jail and has been laid off.

Now, having said that, what is also true—what you say is exactly right, that if we can't break the cycle, then all we're doing is just churning folks in a revolving door through the jail system, back on the streets, back to dealing drugs, back to—and this is part of my faith, my religious faith, but you don't have to be religious to, I think, believe in the idea of redemption, that people can get a second chance, that people can change.

So one of the things that we've done is—actually, Vice President Biden, myself, some Republicans—Sam Brownback, for example, of Kansas—have worked together to promote what we call the Second Chance Act, which links ex-offenders with programs that can provide them with skills, that can provide them with opportunities to get some work experience, and then can essentially certify that they are ready for the workplace, and then trying to encourage private sector companies to hire some of these ex-offenders.

The program is not as well funded as I would like. We'd like to see if we can do more with it. It has to be done in a partnership with State and local communities. But I do think it's something that ends up being, actually, wise for taxpayers, because every prisoner is costing us about 16, 18, $20,000, and every one of us are paying for it. So if we can find programs that work, breaking that cycle, ultimately that can be a good investment for taxpayers all across the country.

All right. All right, it's a man's turn. I'm going to call on that big guy right there with the little hair. [*Laughter*] Since the microphone is right next to him.

Small Business Administration Loans/Small Businesses/Bank Lending

Q. Thank you. My name is Steve Gordon. I'm from Clearwater. And I manufacture—I own a small company, environmental company. I manufacture the INSTANT-OFF water-saving device that fits on any faucet worldwide. I'm frustrated because I can create 500 jobs; I've gone to the banks, I can't get a loan. And I speak for all businesses in the United States. We are tired of dealing with banks. And I don't understand—and this is my question for you, is that I know you care, I know you're trying, but to—and I appreciate the pledge of $30 billion to small businesses. But lending it to the banks to lend to us is not the answer. It's just not.

What I suggest—and the question is, why can't you use the SBA just like you lent directly to Wall Street, you lent directly to the automakers, you lent directly to the banks—why can't the Government make small businesses available directly to us?

The President. Well, this is a good question. Look, first of all, you should be aware that we have increased SBA loans during the course of this year by 70 percent in some cases. So some of the key programs for businesses like yours, we have massively increased their lending. And by the way, we've waived some of the fees and redtape that are associated with you getting a loan from the SBA.

Now, it's not enough. Just—I know you're shaking your head here. I understand it's not enough because you still want a loan. So—but you need to—I just want you to know, it's not like we haven't thought of why don't we use the SBA. We have. The challenge that we've got is, is that even SBA loans are generally run not by the SBA. The SBA, essentially, works with local

banks, community banks, neighborhood banks, to process the loan. And essentially, the SBA underwrites the loan.

And so the SBA does not have the infrastructure to go all across the country, in every region, and process loans to small businesses directly, because they don't have enough people. Somebody yelled, "Why not?" The SBA doesn't have the staff to do it.

Keep in mind, a small-business loan of any sort, or a large-business loan of any sort requires some sense of, all right, what's the business plan, what are your projected earnings, et cetera, et cetera. And somebody has got to do that. Now, if the SBA were to suddenly take over that entire function, we'd have to stand up a massive bureaucracy, a huge one. And we'd have to train all those people, and it would take too long, and you'd be frustrated: "Why is it that this big Government agency can't seem to run anything?"

So what we've decided to do instead is to take $30 billion that was repaid by the banks and make that available under criteria that will encourage small banks to give those loans to you. And if we do that effectively, we can potentially get that money out the door more quickly.

But I am absolutely sympathetic to what you're saying, because I'm hearing it everywhere I go, and I—that's why I mentioned it last night in my speech. You've got a lot of small-business owners who are ready to grow, ready to hire, but they just can't get financing. So we're going to use the SBA as one tool; this $30 billion is going to help. Ultimately, though, the vast majority of small businesses, their loans are going to come from the private sector. And we've got to get the private sector to think differently.

What happened here was that everybody was making loans without thinking of the risk at all. They were just sending out money out the door; everybody—that's how a lot of overdevelopment happened here in Florida, it happened in Nevada, it happened in California, because people were just saying, "You know what, we're making money; we're not going to ask a lot of questions." Suddenly, the bottom falls out. And the pendulum has shifted too far in the other direction so that even if you've got a good business plan, you've got a good model and you're making profits and a good product, now banks are reluctant to lend at all.

And what we're trying to do is to encourage them to get that happy medium where they're not taking such exorbitant risks that they threaten the entire system, but they are also open to enough risk that America's dynamic free enterprise system is actually able to work.

One role—one aspect of this is also getting regulators who oversee the banks—which aren't under my supervision; these are independent bank regulators—getting them to at least take a closer look at their policies, because a lot of bankers will tell you they want to loan you the money, but they're worried about—they suffered all these losses because of some of the mortgage stuff going belly up. So what they'll tell you is, "I've got a bank regulator breathing down my neck making sure that I'm keeping my capital levels high enough." And we're going to have to make some adjustments there. But that's not something the administration can do directly. We can just encourage these independent regulators to take a closer look at it.

I'm confident you're going to succeed, though. And you can give, maybe, Reggie Love here your business card so we can find out about your terrific business.

All right, I've got time only for—I've only got time for two more questions. This young lady right here, she's been standing here a very long time.

Retirement Funds/Taxes

Q. First, my 15-year-old son, Zach Cartwright, wanted me to tell you that he is a big supporter of yours.

The President. Well, tell Zach thank you so much.

Q. Many families are having to withdraw money from their 401(k)s. Once this occurs, in addition to taxes, there's a 10-percent penalty assessed. Since the withdrawals are taking place due to hardship, families don't always have the money to pay the 10 percent and the penalties. The interest then accrues until the

day full payment is made. The IRS recently made headlines after giving tax breaks to Citigroup. Several months ago people with offshore accounts were given amnesty. My question is, why is the IRS coming after the middle class, creating more stress for us? And what is your plan to help resolve this? And if Congress is unable to deal with the issue directly impacting the middle class, I'm happy to contribute my ideas.

The President. Well, this is something that, actually, I personally experienced. This was several years ago. Michelle and I had some family emergencies—this was when I was still working in a law firm. I had a small retirement account set up and I ended up having to withdraw it and pay that 10-percent penalty, and it was no fun. But it was what we had to do. And fortunately, we were young enough where we could absorb that hit. A lot of families aren't in that position, if they've got a nest egg, to suddenly have to—it's bad enough having to draw it down, but then also to have to pay taxes on top of it is really tough.

Now, the reason that policy is in place, obviously, is because you're getting that money tax free, the idea being that you're going to actually use it for retirement. And then if you're spending it early, before retirement, then you can imagine that a lot of people could potentially game the system by using these accounts to avoid taxes. So I just want to show a little sympathy here for those who are trying to enforce the law. They're not mean spirited, they're just trying to—they're working with the system that was set up.

I think you are raising a legitimate point, though. And if I'm not mistaken, we actually started looking at this, Joe, in our administration—was to take a look at are there circumstances—and the specific thing that we were thinking about was medical emergencies—where people should not be penalized for it. And I think that issuing blanket amnesties in all circumstances may not be possible. But taking a look at certain narrow categories of emergencies in which these penalties could be waived is something that we have discussed and I think we could explore. All right?

Okay. All right, I got one more—okay, everybody is pointing at this young man, so I'm going to call on this guy right here. I think that's all his sisters were all pointing at him. [*Laughter*] They're all like, "Oh, call on my brother." [*Laughter*]

Equal Rights for Same-Sex Couples

Q. All right, I'm Hector, and I'm a student at UT. And my question is, last night you talked about repealing "don't ask, don't tell," and my question is, what are you doing now to put in motion so that same-sex couples and homosexuals are treated as equal citizens of the United States, i.e., same-sex marriages and the thousand-plus benefits that heterosexual couples enjoy after marriage?

The President. Well, the—look, as I said last night, my belief is, is that a basic principle in our Constitution is that if you're obeying the law, if you're following the rules, that you should be treated the same, regardless of who you are. I think that principle applies to gays and lesbian couples. So at the Federal level, one of the things that we're trying to do is to make sure that partnerships are recognized for purposes of benefits so that hospital visitation, for example, is something that is permitted, that Social Security benefits or pension benefits or others, that same-sex couples are recognized in all those circumstances.

I think that we've got to—we actually have an opportunity of passing a law that's been introduced in Congress right now—and my hope is this year we can get it done—just for Federal employees and Federal workers. A lot of companies on their own, some of the best run companies, have adopted these same practices. I think it's the right thing to do, and it makes sense for us to take a leadership role in ensuring that people are treated the same.

Look, if you are—regardless of your personal opinions, the notion that somebody who's working really hard for 30 years can't take their death benefits and transfer them to the person that they love the most in the world and who has supported them all their lives, that just doesn't seem fair. It doesn't seem right. And I think it's the right thing to do.

Okay, look, guys—listen, everybody. I've got to take off.

Audience members. No!

The President. Wait, wait. But I warned you guys I couldn't answer every question. Let me just say in closing—let me just say this in closing. Let me say this in closing——

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. Hold on a second, hold on a second, hold on, hold on a second. I want to say this. Look, we've gone through a very difficult year, but I have great optimism that we have begun to dig ourselves out of this hole. In order for us to do it successfully, we're going to have to work together, we're going to have to listen to each other, we're going to have to be respectful of each other.

So I want to end on mentioning something that I talked about last night. You know, our political dialogue in this country has always been noisy and messy, because we come from different places; we've got different ideas, different beliefs. I understand all that. But we're all Americans. We all should anticipate that the other person, even if they disagree with us, has the best of intentions. We don't have to call them names. We don't have to demonize them. And that's true whether you are a Democrat or a Republican, whether you are a conservative or a liberal or an independent, being respectful and listening to other people's point of views, and understanding that most of these issues are complicated.

Look, let me take the example of health care. Part of the reason why it's so easy to scare people about health care, even if they don't like it the way it is now, is because you've got doctors, you've got nurses, you've got hospitals, you've got insurance systems, you've got Medicaid, you've got Medicare, you've got the VA system, all these systems constitute several trillion dollars, one-sixth of our economy. Even if you come up with a great plan that lowers premiums and creates greater competition and ensures freedom for you to choose your doctor and is bringing down the deficit—all the things that I've claimed—and prevents insurance companies from abusing customers, even if we do all that, there's going to be somebody out there in a $2 trillion system who's unhappy with something, right?

So they'll complain, "Well, you know, I'm a medical device manufacturer, and if you reform the system, that might force me to change how I sell my products." Or there's going to be a doctor who says, "Well, you know what, right now I get charged this way, and if you change how Medicare reimburses, then I might have to change my billing system, and that's going to cost me a few thousand dollars, and I don't like that."

The reason I'm pointing this out is, if we're going to do big things on energy or health care or infrastructure, then we're going to have some differences. We've got to work them through. Nothing that human beings do will be perfect. But we shouldn't, sort of, assume that the other side is either heartless and doesn't care about sick people, or is some socialist communist who's trying to take over the health care system, or, you know, we start getting into these caricatures of each other that are so damaging. And frankly, the political parties and the media haven't been helping; they've been making it worse.

I want to dial some of that back. Let's start thinking of each other as Americans first, figuring out how we can help one another, figuring out how we can move this country forward. I'm confident we'll do great.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:14 p.m. in the Bob Martinez Sports Center at the University of Tampa. In his remarks, he referred to Anthony K. Dungy, former head coach, National Football League's Indianapolis Colts and Tampa Bay Buccaneers; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; and Personal Aide to the President Reginald L. Love. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Ben S. Bernanke as Chairman of the Federal Reserve

January 28, 2010

I am gratified by the Senate's broad bipartisan vote to confirm Ben Bernanke for another term as chairman of the Federal Reserve. As the Nation continues to face the consequences of the worst recession in a generation, Ben Bernanke has provided wisdom and steady leadership in the midst of the financial and economic crisis. While the worst of the storm has passed, its devastation remains, and we have a lot of work to do to rebuild our economy.

I congratulate him on his confirmation and look forward to working with him in the days ahead.

Remarks Following a Tour of Chesapeake Machine Company in Baltimore, Maryland

January 29, 2010

Thank you, everybody. Thank you so much. I've got a couple of introductions that I want to make very quickly.

First, I want to thank Terry and his family for greeting me here today. And I want to thank Terry and Joe for giving us a tour of Chesapeake Machine Company. In addition we've got Secretary Ray LaHood, Secretary of Transportation—where is he? Ray, way in the back—he's waving. We've got your Governor, Martin O'Malley, in the house. We've got, I believe, your outstanding Senator, Barbara Mikulski; a couple of great Members of Congress, Congressman John Sarbanes and Congressman Elijah Cummings. And we've got Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, your next mayor of Baltimore.

Now, I was thrilled to get the tour. First of all, I just like getting out of the White House, and then I like tooling around companies that are actually making stuff. And I want to tell you all I'm very impressed with the work that you do. And you know, I have to say that when you get out of Washington and you come here it's nice to see a functioning, well-oiled machine. Now, that's a nice change of pace from what we see sometimes up in Washington.

As we stand here today, our country is still reeling from a recession that's as tough, as deep, and as dire as anything that we've known for generations. And I don't need to tell you a lot of families are hurting out there, businesses are struggling, 1 in 10 Americans can't find work. And so I know that during these tough times, folks at this company feel relatively lucky to be working, even when the work is hard and the days are long, because everybody knows that there's somebody out there who's not as fortunate, a friend or a neighbor, maybe even a husband or a wife.

But even in the face of these challenges, we have reason to remain hopeful. As I was listening to Terry and Joe talk about some of the business opportunities that are out there for solar panel construction and high-speed rail construction, the great work that they're doing on behalf of our troops as part of a contract, all those things are going to be making a difference. And it points to the possibilities of sustainable growth.

And the fact is, we're standing in a very different place than we were just a year ago. Just last year, businesses were cutting 700,000 jobs per month. The markets were plummeting. Many people feared another great depression. Today, we've stopped the flood of job losses, we've stabilized the financial system, and we can safely say that we've avoided that looming depression.

This morning we received a report that affirms our progress and the swift and aggressive actions that made it possible. We learned that the economy grew over the past 3 months at a rate of 5.7 percent. Now, just to give you a sense of perspective there, that's the fastest economic growth in 6 years, and it's a stark im-

provement over the rapid and terrible decline that we were experiencing 1 year ago.

Earlier this week, I spoke to Congress and the American people about the steps that we took to pull us out of this nosedive. Through the Recovery Act, we cut taxes for 95 percent of working families. You guys may not have noticed it in your paychecks, but they're—each month it's a little bit bigger because of those tax cuts that we put in. Two million families just in this State of Maryland have benefited.

We cut taxes for college students and first-time home buyers and small businesses. We made health insurance cheaper through COBRA. So some of you know friends or family members who've lost their jobs but they kept their health insurance because COBRA was 65 cheaper—percent cheaper than it would have otherwise been. And we extended unemployment insurance for folks who have lost their jobs, including more than 200,000 people here in Maryland. We've created and saved 2 million jobs. That's 2 million teachers and firefighters, police officers, builders, manufacturing workers, and others who are on the job today because of some of the steps that we took.

Now, I've got to admit, not all the steps we took were great politics. You know, I talked about this a little bit at my State of the Union. If you were going to list the hundred most popular things that I have done as President, being married to Michelle Obama is number one. Bailing out banks and rescuing failing auto companies doesn't make the list. Those things weren't popular. But I didn't run for President just to do what was popular. I ran for President to do what was right for the country.

In the midst of a really bad recession and the possibility of financial meltdown, preventing the collapse of our banks, and with it the access to lending and credit, and preventing hundreds of thousands of job losses that would have followed the collapse of two of our major automakers, that was the right thing to do. It was the right thing to do; it was the necessary thing to do. It might have not been popular, and I sure didn't like doing it, but it was the right thing to do. And as bad as the damage has been in this recession, without those actions the damage could have been far more extensive.

Now, even though the storms of the past 2 years are starting to lessen, the wreckage that's been left behind remains. While the Recovery Act has created and saved 2 million jobs, this recession has cost us 7 million jobs. So there's still a big gap, still a big hole that we have to fill. And it represents a terrible human tragedy, as families are thrown into hardship and uncertainty. But the good news is, today's report means that we're increasing GDP, we're increasing economic growth. That means businesses are going to start to see more customers, and hopefully even here at Chesapeake you might start seeing enough orders that you start needing to hire that extra shift. That could make a big difference.

Now, in the meantime, though, there are a lot of folks who are still out of work and what they're saying is, when am I going to get some help, when am I going to get some relief? For these folks, a good job is the only good news that matters.

And that's why, when I spoke to the Nation earlier this week, I called on Congress to pass a jobs bill without delay. And this jobs bill should start where most new jobs do, in America's small businesses, companies like this one.

Today I'm proposing what I believe is the best way to cut taxes while promoting hiring by small businesses, through a tax credit for companies that add workers or increase salaries this year. Now is the perfect time for this kind of incentive because the economy is growing, but businesses are still hesitant to start hiring again. The economy is growing, but job growth is lagging. Companies are recovering, but not yet taking that next step and taking on somebody full time. And while businesses will always be the engines of job creation in this country, Government can create the conditions for those businesses to expand and hire more workers.

So here's how the tax credit would work. Employers, like Terry, would get a tax credit of up to $5,000 for each and every employee that they add in 2010, and you would get a tax break for increases in salaries as well. So if you raise wages for employees making under

$100,000, we'd refund your payroll taxes for every dollar that you increase those wages faster than inflation.

So this is a simple, easy to understand mechanism that will cut taxes for more than 1 million small businesses. It'll give them an incentive to hire more people and a little bit of extra money to pay higher wages, to expand work hours, or invest in their company. And in order to get this incentive working quickly, employers would actually be able to receive this money every quarter, as opposed to waiting a whole year to see it benefit their taxes. So the Chesapeake Machine Company is a perfect example. I understand, Terry, that you may be thinking about hiring a couple of new workers this year. Well, this tax credit could help you do it, and it would mean $5,000 per worker that you hire.

Now, it's true that in some instances this tax credit will go to businesses that were going to hire folks anyway. But then, it simply becomes a tax cut for small businesses that will spur investment and expansion. And that's a good thing too. And that's why this type of tax cut is considered by economists—who rarely agree on anything—to be one of the most cost-effective ways of accelerating job growth, especially because we will include provisions to prevent people from gaming the system. So, for example, you won't get a tax credit for doubling your workforce while cutting the hours of each worker in half. We're not going to let you game the system to take advantage of the tax credit, unless you're doing right by your workers.

Now, finally, this is only one part of the jobs package that I've proposed. I'm also calling for additional investments in infrastructure. We were just talking, Terry and I were—and Joe—we were just talking about the fact that part of their business right now has to do with rail lines and doing some work for Amtrak. We were just talking about the fact that part of it has to do with solar companies. Well, we want to increase our investment in clean energy.

All of this is going to create jobs in the short term, while helping our economy in the long run. And I've proposed taking some of the money that went to the big banks on Wall Street to help bolster the financial system and give it to smaller community banks that lend to small businesses like Chesapeake, because too many companies that I'm seeing out there still can't find affordable credit.

The House of Representatives has passed a jobs bill that includes some of these proposals. I expect the Senate to do the same. I'm open to any good ideas from Democrats or Republicans. In fact, several Members of Congress have proposed tax breaks for businesses similar to what I've proposed, and I'm looking forward to working with them. The key thing is it's time to put America back to work.

We've had two very tough years. And while these proposals will create jobs all across America, we've got a long way to go to make up for the millions of jobs that we lost in this recession. And I don't have to tell folks in Baltimore that even before this recession hit, the middle class was facing real hardships: stagnant incomes, rising costs, growing economic security. So rebuilding this economy and rebuilding it stronger than before will take time, and it's going to take hard work and vigilance.

But I know we can do it. You don't need to look any further than the folks here at this company. In one form or another, people have been working and building right here for nearly a century, starting back when Terry's grandfather was calling the shots.

In good times and bad, through storms and still waters, men like you have gotten up and women like you have gotten up and gone to work and put in long days and headed home. You're a little tired, but you're glad for the opportunity to make a living, while helping this country become the most productive, innovative economy in the world. Small businesses have powered our economy in the past. They are fostering our recovery today. I have no doubt if we support you that small businesses like this one will lead us to more prosperous days ahead.

So thanks for all the great work you do. Thanks for hosting me. I know you guys probably had to fuss a little bit to get ready for us. But I can tell you, from my perspective at least, it was a great visit. I appreciate everything you do. Good luck. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:21 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Terry Sims, owner, and Joe Sedlak, operations manager, Chesapeake Machine Co.; and Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, president, Baltimore City Council.

Remarks to the House Republican Conference and a Question-and-Answer Session in Baltimore
January 29, 2010

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you. Please, everybody, be seated. Thank you, John, for the gracious introduction. To Mike and Eric, thank you for hosting me. Thank you to all of you for receiving me. It is wonderful to be here. I want to also acknowledge Mark Strand, president of the Congressional Institute. To all the family members who are here and who have to put up with us for an elective office each and every day, thank you, because I know that's tough.

I very much am appreciative of not only the tone of your introduction, John, but also the invitation that you extended to me. You know what they say, keep your friends close, but visit the Republican caucus every few months. [*Laughter*]

Now, part of the reason I accepted your invitation to come here was because I wanted to speak with all of you, and not just to all of you. So I'm looking forward to taking your questions and having a real conversation in a few moments. And I hope that the conversation we begin here doesn't end here, that we can continue our dialogue in the days ahead. It's important to me that we do so. It's important to you, I think, that we do so. But most importantly, it's important to the American people that we do so.

I've said this before, but I'm a big believer not just in the value of a loyal opposition, but in its necessity. Having differences of opinion, having a real debate about matters of domestic policy and national security, now, that's not something that's only good for our country, it's absolutely essential. It's only through the process of disagreement and debate that bad ideas get tossed out and good ideas get refined and made better. And that kind of vigorous back and forth, that imperfect but well-founded process, messy as it often is, is at the heart of our democracy. It's what makes us the greatest nation in the world.

So yes, I want you to challenge my ideas, and I guarantee you that after reading this I may challenge a few of yours. [*Laughter*] I want you to stand up for your beliefs, and knowing this caucus, I have no doubt that you will. I want us to have a constructive debate. The only thing I don't want—and here I am listening to the American people, and I think they don't want either—is for Washington to continue being so Washington-like. I know folks, when we're in town there, spend a lot of time reading the polls and looking at focus groups and interpreting which party has the upper hand in November and in 2012 and so on and so on and so on. That's their obsession.

And I'm not a pundit; I'm just a President, so take it for what it's worth. But I don't believe that the American people want us to focus on our job security. They want us to focus on their job security. I don't think they want more gridlock. I don't think they want more partisanship. I don't think they want more obstruction. They didn't send us to Washington to fight each other in some sort of political steel cage match to see who comes out alive. That's not what they want. They sent us to Washington to work together, to get things done, and to solve the problems that they're grappling with every single day.

And I think your constituents would want to know that despite the fact it doesn't get a lot of attention, you and I have actually worked together on a number of occasions. There have been times where we've acted in a bipartisan fashion. And I want to thank you and your Democratic colleagues for reaching across the aisle. There has been, for example, broad support for putting in the troops necessary in Afghanistan to deny Al Qaida safe haven, to

break the Taliban's momentum, and to train Afghan security forces. There's been broad support for disrupting, dismantling, and defeating Al Qaida. And I know that we're all united in our admiration of our troops.

So it may be useful for the international audience right now to understand—and certainly for our enemies to have no doubt—whatever divisions and differences may exist in Washington, the United States of America stands as one to defend our country. [*Applause*] Absolutely.

It's that same spirit of bipartisanship that made it possible for me to sign a defense contracting reform bill that was cosponsored by Senator McCain and Members of Congress here today. We've stood together on behalf of our Nation's veterans. Together, we passed the largest increase in the VA's budget in more than 30 years and supported essential veterans' health care reforms to provide better access and medical care for those who serve in uniform.

Some of you also joined Democrats in supporting a credit card bill of rights and in extending unemployment compensation to Americans who are out of work. Some of you joined us in stopping tobacco companies from targeting kids, expanding opportunities for young people to serve our country, and helping responsible homeowners stay in their homes.

So we have a track record of working together. It is possible. But as, John, you mentioned, on some very big things, we've seen party line votes that, I'm just going to be honest, were disappointing. Let's start with our efforts to jump-start the economy last winter, when we were losing 700,000 jobs a month. Our financial system teetered on the brink of collapse, and the threat of a second great depression loomed large. I didn't understand then, and I still don't understand, why we got opposition in this caucus for almost $300 billion in badly needed tax cuts for the American people, or COBRA coverage to help Americans who've lost jobs in this recession to keep the health insurance that they desperately needed, or opposition to putting Americans to work laying broadband and rebuilding roads and bridges and breaking ground on new construction projects.

There was an interesting headline in CNN today: "Americans disapprove of stimulus, but like every policy in it." And there was a poll that showed that if you broke it down into its component parts, 80 percent approved of the tax cuts, 80 percent approved of the infrastructure, 80 percent approved of the assistance to the unemployed.

Well, that's what the Recovery Act was. And let's face it: Some of you have been at the ribbon cuttings for some of these important projects in your communities. Now, I understand some of you had some philosophical differences, perhaps, on just the concept of Government spending, but as I recall, opposition was declared before we had a chance to actually meet and exchange ideas. And I saw that as a missed opportunity.

Now, I am happy to report this morning that we saw another sign that our economy is moving in the right direction. The latest GDP numbers show that our economy is growing by almost 6 percent; that's the most since 2003. To put that in perspective, this time last year, we weren't seeing positive job growth; we were seeing the economy shrink by about 6 percent. So you've seen a 12-percent reversal during the course of this year. This turnaround is the biggest in nearly three decades. And it didn't happen by accident, it happened—as economists, conservative and liberal, will attest—because of some of the steps that we took.

And by the way, you mentioned a web site out here, John—if you want to look at what's going on in the Recovery Act, you can look on recovery.gov, a web site, by the way, that was Eric Cantor's idea.

Now, here's the point: These are serious times, and what's required by all of us, Democrats and Republicans, is to do what's right for our country, even if it's not always what's best for our politics. I know it may be heresy to say this, but there are things more important than good poll numbers. And on this, no one can accuse me of not living by my principles. [*Laughter*] A middle class that's back on its feet, an economy that lifts everybody up, an America that's ascendant in the world, that's more important than winning an election. Our future shouldn't be shaped by what's best for our politics, our politics should be shaped by what's best for our future.

But no matter what's happened in the past, the important thing for all of us is to move forward together. Now, we have some issues right in front of us on which I believe we should agree, because as successful as we've been in spurring new economic growth, everybody understands that job growth has been lagging. Some of that's predictable. Every economist will say jobs are a lagging indicator, but that's no consolation for the folks who are out there suffering right now. And since 7 million Americans have lost their jobs in this recession, we've got to do everything we can to accelerate it.

So today, in line with what I stated at the State of the Union, I've proposed a new jobs tax credit for small business. And here's how it would work. Employers would get a tax credit of up to $5,000 for every employee they add in 2010. They'd get a tax break for increases in wages as well. So if you raise wages for employees making under $100,000, we'd refund part of your payroll tax for every dollar you increase those wages faster than inflation. It's a simple concept. It's easy to understand. It would cut taxes for more than 1 million small businesses. So I hope you join me. Let's get this done.

I want to eliminate the capital gains tax for small-business investment and take some of the bailout money the Wall Street banks have returned and use it to help community banks start lending to small businesses again. So join me. I am confident that we can do this together for the American people. And there's nothing in that proposal that runs contrary to the ideological predispositions of this caucus. The question is, what's going to keep us from getting this done?

Now, I've proposed a modest fee on the Nation's largest banks and financial institutions to fully recover for taxpayers' money that they provided to the financial sector when it was teetering on the brink of collapse. And it's designed to discourage them from taking reckless risks in the future. If you listen to the American people, John, they'll tell you they want their money back. Let's do this together, Republicans and Democrats.

I've proposed that we close tax loopholes that reward companies for shipping American jobs overseas, and instead give companies greater incentive to create jobs right here at home. Surely, that's something that we can do together, Republicans and Democrats.

We know that we've got a major fiscal challenge in reining in deficits that have been growing for a decade and threaten our future. That's why I've proposed a 3-year freeze in discretionary spending, other than what we need for national security. That's something we should do together; that's consistent with a lot of the talk both in Democratic caucuses and Republican caucuses. We can't blink when it's time to actually do the job.

At this point, we know that the budget surpluses of the nineties occurred in part because of the pay-as-you-go law, which said that, well, you should pay as you go and live within our means, just like families do every day. Twenty-four of you voted for that, and I appreciate it. And we were able to pass it in the Senate yesterday.

But the idea of a bipartisan fiscal commission to confront the deficits in the long term died in the Senate the other day. So I'm going to establish such a commission by Executive order, and I hope that you participate fully and genuinely in that effort, because if we're going to actually deal with our deficit and debt, everybody here knows that we're going to have to do it together, Republican and Democrat. No single party is going to make the tough choices involved on its own. It's going to require all of us doing what's right for the American people.

And as I said in the State of the Union speech, there's not just a deficit of dollars in Washington, there is a deficit of trust. So I hope you'll support my proposal to make all congressional earmarks public before they come to a vote. And let's require lobbyists who exercise such influence to publicly disclose all their contacts on behalf of their clients, whether they are contacts with my administration or contacts with Congress. Let's do the people's business in the bright light of day, together, Republicans and Democrats.

I know how bitter and contentious the issue of health insurance reform has become, and I will eagerly look at the ideas and better solutions on the health care front. If anyone here truly believes our health insurance system is working well for people, I respect your right to say so, but I just don't agree. And neither would millions of Americans with preexisting conditions who can't get coverage today or find out that they lose their insurance just as they're getting seriously ill. That's exactly when you need insurance. And for too many people, they're not getting it. I don't think a system is working when small businesses are gouged and 15,000 Americans are losing coverage every single day, when premiums have doubled and out-of-pocket costs have exploded and they're poised to do so ago—do so again. I mean, to be fair, the status quo is working for the insurance industry, but it's not working for the American people. It's not working for our Federal budget. It needs to change.

This is a big problem, and all of us are called on to solve it. And that's why, from the start, I sought out and supported ideas from Republicans. I even talked about an issue that has been a holy grail for a lot of you, which was tort reform, and said that I'd be willing to work together as part of a comprehensive package to deal with it. I just didn't get a lot of nibbles.

Creating a high-risk pool for uninsured folks with preexisting conditions, that wasn't my idea; it was Senator McCain's. And I supported it, and it got incorporated into our approach. Allowing insurance companies to sell coverage across State lines to add choice and competition and bring down costs for businesses and consumers, that's an idea that some of you, I suspect, included in this "Better Solutions"; that's an idea that was incorporated into our package. And I support it, provided that we do it hand in hand with broader reforms that protect benefits and protect patients and protect the American people.

A number of you have suggested creating pools where self-employed and small businesses could buy insurance. That was a good idea. I embraced it. Some of you supported efforts to provide insurance to children and let kids remain covered on their parents' insurance until they're 25 or 26. I supported that. That's part of our package. I supported a number of other ideas, from incentivizing wellness to creating an affordable catastrophic insurance option for young people, that came from Republicans like Mike Enzi and Olympia Snowe in the Senate, and I'm sure from some of you as well. So when you say I ought to be willing to accept Republican ideas on health care, let's be clear: I have.

Bipartisanship, not for its own sake but to solve problems, that's what our constituents, the American people, need from us right now. All of us then have a choice to make. Now, we have to choose whether we're going to be politicians first or partners for progress, whether we're going to put success at the polls ahead of the lasting success we can achieve together for America. Just think about it for a while. We don't have to put it up for a vote today.

Let me close by saying this. I was not elected by Democrats or Republicans, but by the American people. That's especially true because the fastest growing group of Americans are independents. That should tell us both something. I'm ready and eager to work with anyone who is willing to proceed in a spirit of good will. But understand, if we can't break free from partisan gridlock, if we can't move past a politics of "no," if resistance supplants constructive debate, I still have to meet my responsibilities as President. I've got to act for the greater good, because that too is a commitment that I have made. And that too is what the American people sent me to Washington to do.

So I am optimistic. I know many of you individually. And the irony, I think, of our political climate right now is that, compared to other countries, the differences between the two major parties on most issues is not as big as it's represented. But we've gotten caught up in the political game in a way that's just not healthy. It's dividing our country in ways that are preventing us from meeting the challenges of the 21st century. I'm hopeful that the conversation we have today can help reverse that.

So thank you very much. Thank you, John. Now I'd like to open it up for questions.

Jobs/National Economy/American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

Representative Michael R. Pence. The President has agreed to take questions, and Members would be encouraged to raise your hand while you remain in your seat. [*Laughter*] The Chair will take the prerogative to make the first remarks.

Mr. President, welcome back to the House Republican Conference.

The President. Thank you.

Rep. Pence. We are pleased to have you return. [*Inaudible*]—a year ago, House Republicans said then we would make you two promises. Number one, that most of the people in this room and their families would pray for you and your beautiful family just about every day for the next 4 years. And I want to assure you we're keeping that promise.

The President. I appreciate that.

Rep. Pence. Number two, our pledge to you, Mr. President, was that door is always open. And we hope the—[*inaudible*]—of our invitation that we—[*inaudible*].

Mr. President, several of us in this conference yesterday on the way into Baltimore stopped by the Salvation Army homeless facility here in Baltimore. I met a little boy, an African American boy, in the eighth grade, named David Carter, Jr. When he heard that I would be seeing you today, his eyes lit up like I had never seen. And I told him that if he wrote you a letter I'd give it to you, and I have.

But I had a conversation with little David, Jr., and David, Sr. His family has been struggling with the economy. His dad said words to me, Mr. President, that I'll never forget. About my age and he said, "Congressman, it's not like it was when we were coming up." He said, "There's just no jobs."

[*At this point, Rep. Pence made further remarks, concluding as follows*.]

Now, we know you've come to Baltimore today and you've raised this tax credit, which was last promoted by President Jimmy Carter. But the first question I would pose to you, very respectfully, Mr. President, is would you be willing to consider embracing—in the name of little David Carter, Jr., and his dad, in the name of every struggling family in this country—the kind of across-the-board tax relief that Republicans have advocated, that President Kennedy advocated, that President Reagan advocated, and that has always been the means of stimulating broad-based economic growth?

The President. Well, there was a lot packed into that question there, Mike. [*Laughter*] First of all, let me say, I already promised that I'll be writing back to that young man and his family.

Rep. Pence. Thank you.

The President. And I appreciate you passing on the letter.

But let's talk about just the jobs environment generally. You're absolutely right that when I was sworn in, the hope was that unemployment would remain around 8 or in the 8 percent range. That was just based on the estimates made by both conservative and liberal economists, because at that point, not all the data had trickled in.

We had lost 650,000 jobs in December. I'm assuming you're not faulting my policies for that. We had lost, it turns out, 700,000 jobs in January, the month I was sworn in. I'm assuming it wasn't my administration's policies that accounted for that. We lost another 650,000 jobs the subsequent month, before any of my policies had gone into effect. So I'm assuming that wasn't as a consequence of our policies; that doesn't reflect the failures of the Recovery Act. The point being that what ended up happening was that the job losses from this recession proved to be much more severe in the first quarter of last year going into the second quarter of last year than anybody anticipated.

So I mean, I think we can score political points on the basis of the fact that we underestimated how severe the job losses were going to be. But those job losses took place before any stimulus, whether it was the ones that you guys have proposed or the ones that we proposed, could have ever taken into effect. Now, that's just the fact, Mike, and I don't think anybody would dispute that. You could not find an economist who would dispute that.

Now, at the same time, as I mentioned, most economists—Republican and Democrat, liberal and conservative—would say that had it not been for the stimulus package that we passed, things would be much worse. Now, they didn't fill a 7 million hole in the number of people who are unemployed. They probably account for about 2 million, which means we still have 5 million folks in there that we've still got to deal with. That's a lot of people.

The package that we put together at the beginning of the year, the truth is, should have reflected—and I believe reflected—what most of you would say are commonsense things. This notion that this was a radical package is just not true. A third of them were tax cuts, and they weren't—when you say they were "boutique" tax cuts, Mike, 95 percent of working Americans got tax cuts, small businesses got tax cuts, large businesses got help in terms of their depreciation schedules. I mean, it was a pretty conventional list of tax cuts.

A third of it was stabilizing State budgets. There is not a single person in here who, had it not been for what was in the stimulus package, wouldn't be going home to more teachers laid off, more firefighters laid off, more cops laid off. A big chunk of it was unemployment insurance and COBRA, just making sure that people had some floor beneath them, and by the way, making sure that there was enough money in their pockets that businesses had some customers.

You take those two things out, that accounts for the majority of the stimulus package. Are there people in this room who think that was a bad idea? A portion of it was dealing with the AMT, right, the Alternative Minimum Tax—not a proposal of mine; that's not a consequence of my policies that we have a tax system where we keep on putting off a potential tax hike that is embedded in the budget that we have to fix each year. That cost about 70 billion.

And then the last portion of it was infrastructure, which, as I said, a lot of you have gone to appear at ribbon cuttings for the same projects that you voted against.

Now, I say all this not to relitigate the past, but it's simply to state that the component parts of the Recovery Act are consistent with what many of you say are important things to do: rebuilding our infrastructure, tax cuts for families and businesses, and making sure that we were providing States and individuals some support when the roof was caving in.

And the notion that I would somehow resist doing something that cost half as much but would produce twice as many jobs, why would I resist that? I wouldn't. I mean, that's my point, is that I am not an ideologue. I'm not. It doesn't make sense if somebody could tell me, you could do this cheaper and get increased results, that I wouldn't say, great. The problem is, I couldn't find credible economists who would back up the claims that you just made.

Now, we can—here's what I know going forward, though. All right, I mean, we're talking—we were talking about the past. We can talk about this going forward. I have looked at every idea out there in terms of accelerating job growth to match the economic growth that's already taken place. The jobs credit that I'm discussing right now is one that a lot of people think would be the most cost-effective way for encouraging people to pick up their hiring.

There may be other ideas that you guys have; I am happy to look at them, and I'm happy to embrace them. I suspect I will embrace some of them. Some of them I've already embraced.

But the question, I think, we're going to have to ask ourselves is, as we move forward, are we going to be examining each of these issues based on what's good for the country, what the evidence tells us, or are we going to be trying to position ourselves so that come November, we're able to say, "The other party, it's their fault"? If we take the latter approach, then we're probably not going to get much agreement. If we take the former, I suspect there's going to be a lot of overlap. All right?

Taxes

Rep. Pence. Thank you, Mr. President. Will you consider supporting across-the-board tax relief, as President Kennedy did?

The President. This guy. Here's what I'm going to do, Mike. What I'm going to do is I'm going to take a look at what you guys are proposing. And the reason I say this, before you say, "Okay"—[*laughter*]—I think this is important

to know—what you may consider across-the-board tax cuts could be, for example, greater tax cuts for people who are making a billion dollars. I may not agree to a tax cut for Warren Buffett. You may be calling for a across-the-board tax cut for the banking industry right now. I may not agree to that.

So I think that we've got to look at what specific proposals you're putting forward, and—this is the last point I'll make—if you're calling for just across-the-board tax cuts, and then on the other hand saying that we're somehow going to balance our budget, I'm going to want to take a look at your math and see how that works, because the issue of deficit and debt is another area where there has been a tendency for some inconsistent statements. How's that? All right?

Rep. Pence. Thank you, Mr. President. Paul Ryan from Wisconsin.

National Economy/Line-Item Veto/Earmark Reform

Representative Paul D. Ryan. Thank you. Mr. President, first off, thanks for agreeing to accept our invitation here. It is a real pleasure and honor to have you with us here today.

The President. Good to see you. Is this your crew right here, by the way?

Rep. Ryan. Yes, it is. This is my daughter Liza, my son Charlie and Sam, and this is my wife Janna.

The President. Hey, guys. How are you?

Rep. Ryan. Say hi, everybody. [*Laughter*] I serve as a ranking member of the Budget Committee, so I'm going to talk a little budget if you don't mind. The spending bills that you've signed into law—the domestic discretionary spending has been increased by 84 percent. You now want to freeze spending at this elevated level beginning next year. This means that total spending in your budget would grow at three one-hundredths of 1 percent less than otherwise. I would simply submit that we could do more and start now.

You've also said that you want to take a scalpel to the budget and go through it line by line. We want to give you that scalpel. I have a proposal with my homestate Senator, Russ Feingold, bipartisan proposal, to create a constitutional version of the line-item veto. Problem is, we can't even get a vote on the proposal.

So my question is, why not start freezing spending now, and would you support a line-item veto in helping us get a vote on it in the House?

The President. Let me respond to the two specific questions, but I want to just push back a little bit on the underlying premise about us increasing spending by 84 percent.

Now, look, I talked to Peter Orszag right before I came here, because I suspected I'd be hearing this argument. The fact of the matter is, is that most of the increases in this year's budget, this past year's budget, were not as a consequence of policies that we initiated but instead were built in as a consequence of the automatic stabilizers that kick in because of this enormous recession.

So the increase in the budget for this past year was actually predicted before I was even sworn into office and had initiated any policies. Whoever was in there, Paul—and I don't think you'll dispute that——

Rep. Ryan. No.

The President. ——whoever was in there would have seen those same increases because of, on the one hand, huge drops in revenue, but at the same time, people were hurting and needed help. And a lot of these things happened automatically.

Now, the reason that I'm not proposing the discretionary freeze take into effect this year retroactive—we prepared a budget for 2010; it's now going forward—is, again, I am just listening to the consensus among people who know the economy best. And what they will say is that if you either increase taxes or significantly lowered spending when the economy remains somewhat fragile, that that would have a destimulative effect, and potentially, you'd see a lot of folks losing business, more folks potentially losing jobs. That would be a mistake when the economy has not fully taken off. That's why I've proposed to do it for the next fiscal year. So that's point number two.

With respect to the line-item veto, I actually—I think there's not a President out there that wouldn't love to have it. And I think that this is an area where we can have a serious

conversation. I know it is a bipartisan proposal by you and Russ Feingold. I don't like being held up with big bills that have stuff in them that are wasteful but I've got to sign because it's a defense authorization bill and I've got to make sure that our troops are getting the funding that they need.

I will tell you, I would love for Congress itself to show discipline on both sides of the aisle. I think one thing that you have to acknowledge, Paul, because you study this stuff and take it pretty seriously, that the earmarks problem is not unique to one party, and you end up getting a lot of pushback when you start going after specific projects of any one of you in your districts, because wasteful spending is usually spent somehow outside of your district. Have you noticed that? The spending in your district tends to seem pretty sensible.

So I would love to see more restraint within Congress. I'd like to work on the earmarks reforms that I mentioned in terms of putting earmarks online, because I think sunshine is the best disinfectant. But I am willing to have a serious conversation on the line-item veto issue.

Rep. Ryan. Okay. I'd like to walk you through that, because we have a version we think is constitutional and bipartisan.

The President. Let me take a look at it.

Rep. Ryan. I would simply say that automatic stabilizer spending is mandatory spending. The discretionary spending, the bills that Congress signs that you sign into law, that has increased 84 percent.

The President. All right, we'll have a longer debate on the budget numbers there.

Rep. Ryan. All right.

The President. All right?

Rep. Pence. Thank you, Paul. Shelley Moore Capito, West Virginia.

Alternative Energy Sources

Representative Shelley Moore Capito. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President——

The President. Thank you.

Rep. Capito. ——for joining us here today. As you said in the State of the Union Address on Wednesday, jobs and the economy are number one. And I think everyone in this room, certainly I, agree with you on that.

I represent the State of West Virginia. We're resource rich; we have a lot of coal and a lot of natural gas. But our—my miners and the folks who are working and those who are unemployed are very concerned about some of your policies in these areas: cap and trade, an aggressive EPA, and the looming prospect of higher taxes. In our minds, these are job-killing policies. So I'm asking you if you would be willing to relook at some of these policies, with a high unemployment and the unsure economy that we have now, to assure West Virginians that you're listening.

The President. Look, I listen all the time, including to your Governor, who's somebody who I enjoyed working with a lot before the campaign and now that I'm President. And I know that West Virginia struggles with unemployment, and I know how important coal is to West Virginia and a lot of the natural resources there. That's part of the reason why I've said that we need a comprehensive energy policy that sets us up for a long-term future.

For example, nobody has been a bigger promoter of clean coal technology than I am. Testament to that, I ended up being in a whole bunch of advertisements that you guys saw all the time about investing in ways for us to burn coal more cleanly.

I've said that I'm a promoter of nuclear energy, something that I think over the last three decades has been subject to a lot of partisan wrangling and ideological wrangling. I don't think it makes sense. I think that that has to be part of our energy mix. I've said that I am supportive, and I said this two nights ago at the State of the Union, that I am in favor of increased production. So if you look at the ideas that this caucus has, again, with respect to energy, I'm for a lot of what you said you are for.

The one thing that I've also said, though—and here we have a serious disagreement, and my hope is we can work through this agreement—these disagreements—there's going to be an effort on the Senate side to do so on a bipartisan basis—is that we have to plan for the future. And the future is that clean energy—cleaner forms of energy are going to be increasingly important, because even if folks are still skeptical in some cases about climate

change in our politics and in Congress, the world is not skeptical about it. If we're going to be after some of these big markets, they're going to be looking to see, is the United States the one that's developing clean coal technology? Is the United States developing our natural gas resources in the most effective way? Is the United States the one that is going to lead in electric cars? Because if we're not leading, those other countries are going to be leading.

So what I want to do is work with West Virginia to figure out how we can seize that future. But to do that, that means there's going to have to be some transition. We can't operate the coal industry in the United States as if we're still in the 1920s or the 1930s or the 1950s. We've got to be thinking what does that industry look like in the next 100 years. And it's going to be different. And that means there's going to be some transition. And that's where I think a well-thought-through policy of incentivizing the new while recognizing that there's going to be a transition process and we're not just suddenly putting the old out of business right away, that has to be something that both Republicans and Democrats should be able to embrace.

Rep. Pence. Jason Chaffetz, Utah. Right behind you, Jason.

Health Care Reform/Legislative Earmarks/ Former Lobbyists in Government Service

Representative Jason E. Chaffetz. Thank you, Mr. President. It's truly an honor.

The President. It's great to be here, Jason.

Rep. Chaffetz. And I appreciate you being here.

I'm one of 22 House freshmen. Well, we didn't create this mess, but we are here to help clean it up. And you talked a lot about this deficit of trust. There's some things that have happened that I would appreciate your perspective on, because I can look you in the eye and tell you we have not been obstructionists. The Democrats have the House and Senate and the Presidency.

And when you stood up before the American people multiple times and said you would broadcast the health care debates on C–SPAN, you didn't. And I was disappointed, and I think a lot of Americans were disappointed.

You said you weren't going to allow lobbyists in the senior-most positions within your administration, and yet you did. I applauded you when you said it and disappointed when you didn't.

You said you'd go line by line through the health care debate—or through the health care bill. And there were six of us, including Dr. Phil Roe, who sent you a letter and said, "We would like to take you up on that offer; we'd like to come." We never heard a letter; we never got a call. We were never involved in any of those discussions.

And when you said in the House of Representatives that you were going to tackle earmarks—in fact, you didn't want to have any earmarks in any of your bills—I jumped up out of my seat and applauded you. But it didn't happen.

More importantly, I want to talk about moving forward, but if we could address——

The President. Well, how about——

Rep. Chaffetz. ——that, I would certainly appreciate it.

The President. That was a long list, so the—[*laughter*]—let me respond.

Look, the truth of the matter is that if you look at the health care process, just over the course of the year, overwhelmingly, the majority of it actually was on C–SPAN, because it was taking place in congressional hearings in which you guys were participating. I mean, the—there—how many committees were there that helped to shape this bill? Countless hearings took place.

Now, I kicked it off, by the way, with a meeting with many of you, including your key leadership. What is true, there's no doubt about it, is that once it got through the committee process and there were now a series of meetings taking place all over the Capitol trying to figure out how to get the thing together, that was a messy process. And I take responsibility for not having structured it in a way where it was all taking place in one place that could be filmed. How to do that logistically would not have been as easy as it sounds, because you're shuttling back and forth between

the House, the Senate, different offices, et cetera, different legislators. But I think it's a legitimate criticism. So on that one, I take responsibility.

With respect to earmarks, we didn't have earmarks in the Recovery Act. We didn't get a lot of credit for it, but there were no earmarks in that. I was confronted at the beginning of my term with an omnibus package that did have a lot of earmarks from Republicans and Democrats and a lot of people in this Chamber. And the question was whether I was going to have a big budget fight at a time when I was still trying to figure out whether or not the financial system was melting down and we had to make a whole bunch of emergency decisions about the economy. So what I said was, let's keep them to a minimum, but I couldn't excise them all.

Now, the challenge, I guess, I would have for you as a freshman is what are you doing inside your caucus to make sure that I'm not the only guy who is responsible for this stuff, so that we're working together, because this is going to be a process.

When we talk about earmarks, I think all of us are willing to acknowledge that some of them are perfectly defensible, good projects; it's just they haven't gone through the regular appropriations process in the full light of day. So one place to start is to make sure that they are at least transparent, that everybody knows what's there before we move forward.

In terms of lobbyists, I can stand here unequivocally and say that there has not been an administration who was tougher on making sure that lobbyists weren't participating in the administration than any administration that's come before us. Now, what we did was, if there were lobbyists who were on boards and commissions that were carryovers and their term hadn't completed, we didn't kick them off. We simply said that moving forward, any time a new slot opens, they're being replaced.

So we've actually been very consistent in making sure that we are eliminating the impact of lobbyists, day in, day out, on how this administration operates. There have been a handful of waivers where somebody is highly skilled, for example, a doctor who ran Tobacco-Free Kids technically is a registered lobbyist; on the other hand, has more expertise than anybody in figuring out how kids don't get hooked on cigarettes.

So there have been a couple of instances like that, but generally, we've been very consistent on that front. Okay?

Rep. Pence. Thank you. Marsha Blackburn, Tennessee.

Health Care Reform

The President. Hey.

Representative Marsha Blackburn. Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you for acknowledging that we have ideas on health care because, indeed, we do have ideas, we have plans, we have over 50 bills, we have lots of amendments that would bring health care ideas to the forefront. We would—we've got plans to lower cost, to change purchasing models, address medical liability, insurance accountability, chronic and preexisting conditions, and access to affordable care for those with those conditions, insurance portability, expanded access, but not doing it with creating more Government, more bureaucracy, and more cost for the American taxpayer.

And we look forward to sharing those ideas with you. We want to work with you on health reform and making certain that we do it in an affordable, cost-effective way that is going to reduce bureaucracy, reduce Government interference, and reduce costs to individuals and to taxpayers. And if those good ideas aren't making it to you, maybe it's the House Democrat leadership——

The President. No——

Rep. Blackburn. ——that is an impediment——

The President. No——

Rep. Blackburn. ——instead of a conduit.

[*Rep. Blackburn made further remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So my question to you is, when will we look forward to starting anew and sitting down with you to put all of these ideas on the table, to look at these lessons learned, to benefit from that experience, and to produce a product that is going to reduce Government interference, reduce cost, and be fair to the American taxpayer?

The President. Actually, I've gotten many of your ideas. I've taken a look at them, even before I was handed this. Some of the ideas we have embraced and are in our package. Some of them are embraced with caveats. So let me give you an example.

I think one of the proposals that has been focused on by the Republicans as a way to reduce costs is allowing insurance companies to sell across State lines. We actually include that as part of our approach. But the caveat is, we've got to do so with some minimum standards, because otherwise, what happens is that you could have insurance companies circumvent a whole bunch of State regulations about basic benefits or what have you, making sure that a woman is able to get mammograms as part of preventive care, for example. Part of what could happen is insurance companies could go into States and cherry-pick and just get those who are healthiest and leave behind those who are least healthy, which would raise everybody's premiums who weren't healthy, right? So it's not that many of these ideas aren't workable, but we have to refine them to make sure that they don't just end up worsening the situation for folks rather than making it better.

Now, what I said at the State of the Union is what I still believe: If you can show me—and if I get confirmation from health care experts, people who know the system and how it works, including doctors and nurses—ways of reducing people's premiums, covering those who do not have insurance, making it more affordable for small businesses, having insurance reforms that ensure people have insurance even when they've got preexisting conditions, that their coverage is not dropped just because they're sick, that young people right out of college or as they're entering in the workforce can still get health insurance, if those component parts are things that you care about and want to do, I'm game.

Rep. Blackburn. [*Inaudible*]

The President. And I've got a lot of these ideas.

But the last thing I will say, though—let me say this about health care and the health care debate, because I think it also bears on a whole lot of other issues. If you look at the package that we've presented—and there's some stray cats and dogs that got in there that we were eliminating, we were in the process of eliminating. For example, we said from the start that it was going to be important for us to be consistent in saying to people if you can have your—if you want to keep the health insurance you got, you can keep it, that you're not going to have anybody getting in between you and your doctor in your decisionmaking. And I think that some of the provisions that got snuck in might have violated that pledge.

And so we were in the process of scrubbing this and making sure that it's tight. But at its core, if you look at the basic proposal that we've put forward, it has an exchange so that businesses and the self-employed can buy into a pool and can get bargaining power the same way big companies do, the insurance reforms that I've already discussed, making sure that there's choice and competition for those who don't have health insurance. The component parts of this thing are pretty similar to what Howard Baker, Bob Dole, and Tom Daschle proposed at the beginning of this debate last year.

Now, you may not agree with Bob Dole and Howard Baker and Tom—certainly, you don't agree with Tom Daschle on much—[*laughter*]—but that's not a radical bunch. But if you were to listen to the debate and, frankly, how some of you went after this bill, you'd think that this thing was some Bolshevik plot. No, I mean, that's how you guys presented it.

And so I'm thinking to myself, well, how is it that a plan that is pretty centrist—no, look, I mean, I'm just saying—I know you guys disagree, but if you look at the facts of this bill, most independent observers would say this is actually what many Republicans—it is similar to what many Republicans proposed to Bill Clinton when he was doing his debate on health care.

So all I'm saying is, we've got to close the gap a little bit between the rhetoric and the reality. I'm not suggesting that we're going to agree on everything, whether it's on health care or energy or what have you, but if the way these issues are being presented by the Re-

publicans is that this is some wild-eyed plot to impose huge Government in every aspect of our lives, what happens is you guys then don't have a lot of room to negotiate with me.

I mean, the fact of the matter is, is that many of you, if you voted with the administration on something, are politically vulnerable in your own base, in your own party. You've given yourselves very little room to work in a bipartisan fashion, because what you've been telling your constituents is, "This guy is doing all kinds of crazy stuff that's going to destroy America."

And I would just say that we have to think about tone. It's not just on your side, by the way, it's on our side as well. This is part of what's happened in our politics, where we demonize the other side so much that when it comes to actually getting things done, it becomes tough to do.

Mike.

Rep. Pence. Dr. Tom Price from Georgia, and then we'll have one more after that if your time permits, Mr. President.

The President. You know, I'm having fun. [*Laughter*]

Rep. Pence. Okay.

The President. This is great.

Rep. Pence. So are we.

Tom Price, Georgia.

Health Care Reform

Representative Thomas E. Price. Mr. President, thank you. I want to stick on the general topic of health care, but ask a very specific question. You have repeatedly said, most recently at the State of the Union, that Republicans have offered no ideas and no solutions, in spite of the fact——

The President. I don't think I said that. What I said was, within the context of health care—I remember that speech pretty well, it was only 2 days ago—[*laughter*]—I said I welcome ideas that you might provide. I didn't say that you haven't provided ideas. I said I welcome those ideas that you'll provide.

Rep. Price. Mr. President, multiple times, from your administration, there have come statements that Republicans have no ideas and no solutions, in spite of the fact that we've offered, as demonstrated today, positive solutions to all of the challenges we face, including energy and the economy and health care. Specifically in the area of health care, this bill, H.R. 3400, that has more cosponsors than any health care bill in the House, is a bill that would provide health coverage for all Americans, would correct the significant insurance challenges of portability and preexisting, would solve the lawsuit abuse issue, which isn't addressed significantly in the other proposals that went through the House and the Senate, would write into law that medical decisions are made between patients and families and doctors, and does all of that without raising taxes by a penny.

But my specific question is, what should we tell our constituents who know that Republicans have offered positive solutions to the challenges that Americans face and yet continue to hear out of the administration that we've offered nothing?

The President. Tom, look, I have to say that on the—let's just take the health care debate. And it's probably not constructive for us to try to debate a particular bill; this isn't the venue to do it. But if you say, "We can offer coverage for all Americans, and it won't cost a penny," that's just not true. You can't structure a bill where suddenly 30 million people have coverage, and it costs nothing. If——

Rep. Price. Mr. President, can I—and I understand that we're not interested in debating this bill, but what should we tell our constituents——

The President. Sir.

Rep. Price. ——who know that we've offered these solutions and yet hear from the administration that we have offered nothing.

The President. Let me—I'm using this as a specific example, so let me answer your question. You asked a question; I want to answer it.

It's not enough if you say, for example, that we've offered a health care plan, and I look up—this is just under the section that you've just provided me—or the book that you just provided me—summary of GOP health care reform bill: "The GOP plan will lower health care premiums for American families and small businesses, addressing America's number-one priority for health reform." I mean, that's an idea that we all embrace. But specifically, it's got to

work. I mean, there's got to be a mechanism in these plans that I can go to an independent health care expert and say, is this something that will actually work, or is it boilerplate?

If I'm told, for example, that the solution to dealing with health care costs is tort reform, something that I've said I am willing to work with you on, but the CBO or other experts say to me, at best, this could reduce health care costs relative to where they're growing by a couple of percentage points, or save $5 billion a year, that's what we can score it at, and it will not bend the cost curve long term or reduce premiums significantly, then you can't make the claim that that's the only thing that we have to do. If we're going to do multi-State insurance so that people can go across State lines, I've got to be able to go to an independent health care expert, Republican or Democrat, who can tell me that this won't result in cherry-picking of the healthiest going to some and the least healthy being worse off.

So I am absolutely committed to working with you on these issues, but it can't just be political assertions that aren't substantiated when it comes to the actual details of policy. Because otherwise, we're going to be selling the American people a bill of goods. I mean, the easiest thing for me to do on the health care debate would have been to tell people that what you're going to get is guaranteed health insurance, lower your costs, all the insurance reforms, we're going to lower the costs of Medicare and Medicaid, and it won't cost anybody anything. That's great politics; it's just not true.

So there's got to be some test of realism in any of these proposals, mine included. I've got to hold myself accountable, and I guarantee the American people will hold themselves—will hold me accountable if what I'm selling doesn't actually deliver.

Rep. Pence. Mr. President, a point of clarification. What's in the "Better Solutions" book are all the legislative proposals that were offered——

The President. No, I understand that. I've actually read your bills.

Rep. Pence. ——throughout 2009.

The President. I understand.

Rep. Pence. And so rest assured the summary document you received is backed up by precisely the kind of detailed legislation that Speaker Pelosi and your administration have been busy ignoring for 12 months.

The President. Well, Mike, wait, hold on, hold on a second. No, no, no, no. Hold on a second, guys.

You know, Mike, I've read your legislation. I mean, I take a look at this stuff, and the good ideas we take. But here's the thing that, I guess, that all of us have to be mindful of: It can't be all or nothing, one way or the other, right? And what I mean by that is this: If we put together a stimulus package in which a third of it are tax cuts—that normally you guys would support—and support for States and the unemployed and helping people stay on COBRA—that your Governors certainly would support, Democrat or a Republican—and then you've got some infrastructure, and maybe there's some things in there that you don't like in terms of infrastructure, or you think the bill should have been 500 billion instead of 700 billion, or there's this provision or that provision that you don't like. If there's uniform opposition because the Republican caucus doesn't get 100 percent or 80 percent of what you want, then it's going to be hard to get a deal done. That's because that's not how democracy works.

So my hope would be that we can look at some of these component parts of what we're doing, and maybe we break some of them up on different policy issues. So if the good Congressman from Utah has a particular issue on lobbying reform that he wants to work with us on, we may not able to agree on a comprehensive package on everything, but there may be some component parts that we can work on.

You may not support our overall jobs package, but if you look at the tax credit that we're proposing for small businesses right now, it is consistent with a lot of what you guys have said in the past. And just the fact that it's my administration that's proposing it shouldn't prevent you from supporting it. That's my point.

Rep. Pence. Thank you, Mr. President. Peter Roskam from the great State of Illinois.

The President. Oh, Peter is an old friend of mine.

Bipartisanship in Congress/Trade

Representative Peter J. Roskam. Hey, Mr. President.

The President. Peter and I have had many debates. [*Laughter*]

Rep. Roskam. Well, this won't be one. Mr. President, I heard echoes today of the State senator that I served with in Springfield, and there was an attribute and a characteristic that you had that I think served you well there. You took on some very controversial subjects: death penalty reform—you and I——

The President. Sure. We worked on it together.

Rep. Roskam. ——negotiated on.

The President. Yes.

Rep. Roskam. You took on ethics reform. You took on some big things. One of the keys was, you rolled your sleeves up, you worked with the other party, and ultimately, you were able to make the deal. Now, here's an observation: Over the past year, in my view, that attribute hasn't been in full bloom. And by that I mean, you've gotten this subtext of House Republicans that sincerely want to come and be a part of this national conversation toward solutions, but they've really been stiff-armed by Speaker Pelosi. Now, I know you're not in charge of that Chamber, but there really is this dynamic of, frankly, being shut out. When John Boehner and Eric Cantor presented last February to you some substantive job creation—our stimulus alternative, the attack machine began to marginalize Eric—and we can all look at the articles—as "Mr. No," and there was this pretty dark story ultimately that wasn't productive and wasn't within this sort of framework that you're articulating today.

So here's the question. Moving forward, I think all of us want to hit the reset button on 2009. How do we move forward?

And on the job creation piece in particular, you mentioned Colombia, you mentioned Panama, you mentioned South Korea. Are you willing to work with us, for example, to make sure those FTAs get called? That's no-cost job creation, and ultimately, as you're interacting with world leaders, that's got to put more arrows in your quiver, and that's a very, very powerful tool for us.

But the obstacle is frankly the politics within the Democratic Caucus.

The President. Well, first of all, Peter and I did work together effectively on a whole host of issues. One of our former colleagues is right now running for Governor, on the Republican side, in Illinois. In the Republican primary, of course, they're running ads of him saying nice things about me—[*laughter*]—poor guy. [*Laughter*]

Although, that's one of the points that I made earlier, I mean, we've got to be careful about what we say about each other sometimes, because it boxes us in, in ways that makes it difficult for us to work together, because our constituents start believing us. They don't know sometimes this is just politics, what you guys or folks on my side do sometimes.

So just a tone of civility instead of slash-and-burn would be helpful. The problem we have sometimes is a media that responds only to slash-and-burn-style politics. You don't get a lot of credit if I say, "You know, I think Paul Ryan is a pretty sincere guy and has a beautiful family." Nobody is going to run that in the newspapers. Right?

Q. They probably will now. [*Laughter*]

The President. And by the way, in case he's going to get a Republican challenge, I didn't mean it. [*Laughter*] Don't want to hurt you, man. [*Laughter*]

But on the specifics, I think both sides can take some blame for a sour climate on Capitol Hill. What I can do maybe to help is to try to bring Republican and Democratic leadership together on a more regular basis with me. That's, I think, a failure on my part, is to try to foster better communications even if there's disagreement. And I will try to see if we can do more of that this year. That's on the sort of the general issue.

On the specific issue of trade, you're right; there are conflicts within and fissures within the Democratic Party. I suspect there are probably going to be some fissures within the Republican Party as well. I mean, you know, if you went to some of your constituencies, they'd be pretty

suspicious about it, new trade agreements, because the suspicion is somehow they're all one way.

So part of what we've been trying to do is to make sure that we're getting the enforcement side of this tight, make sure that if we've got a trade agreement with China or other countries, that they are abiding with it, they're not stealing our intellectual property, or making sure that their nontariff barriers are lowered even as ours are opened up. And my hope is, is that we can move forward with some of these trade agreements, having built some confidence, not just among particular constituency groups, but among the American people, that trade is going to be reciprocal, that it's not just going to be a one-way street.

You are absolutely right, though, Peter, when you say, for example, South Korea is a great ally of ours. I mean, when I visited there, there is no country that is more committed to friendship on a whole range of fronts than South Korea. What is also true is that the European Union is about to sign a trade agreement with South Korea, which means right at the moment when they start opening up their markets, the Europeans might get in there before we do.

So we've got to make sure that we seize these opportunities. I will be talking more about trade this year. It's going to have to be trade that combines opening their markets with an enforcement mechanism, as well as just opening up our markets. I think that's something that all of us would agree on. Let's see if we can execute it over the next several years. All right?

Is that it?

Rep. Pence. Jeb Hensarling, Texas. And that will be it, Mr. President.

The President. Jim is going to wrap things up?

Rep. Pence. Yes, sir.

The President. All right.

National Economy/Health Care Reform

Representative T. Jeb Hensarling. Jeb, Mr. President.

The President. How are you?

Rep. Hensarling. I'm doing well. Mr. President, a year ago, I had an opportunity to speak to you about the national debt. And something that you and I have in common is we both have small children.

The President. Absolutely.

[*Rep. Hensarling made brief remarks.*]

The President. Jim, I know there's a question in there somewhere, because you're making a whole bunch of assertions, half of which I disagree with, and I'm having to sit here listening to them. At some point I know you're going to let me answer. All right.

Rep. Hensarling. That's the question. You are soon to submit a new budget, Mr. President. Will that new budget, like your old budget, triple the national debt and continue to take us down the path of increasing the cost of Government to almost 25 percent of our economy? That's the question, Mr. President.

The President. All right. Jim, with all due respect, I've just got to take this last question as an example of how it's very hard to have the kind of bipartisan work that we're going to do, because the whole question was structured as a talking point for running a campaign.

Now, look, let's talk about the budget once again, because I'll go through it with you line by line. The fact of the matter is, is that when we came into office, the deficit was $1.3 trillion—1.3. So when you say that suddenly, I've got a monthly budget that is higher than the—a monthly deficit that's higher than the annual deficit left by the Republicans, that's factually just not true, and you know it's not true.

And what is true is that we came in already with a $1.3 trillion deficit before I had passed any law. What is true is we came in with $8 trillion worth of debt over the next decade, had nothing to do with anything that we had done. It had to do with the fact that in 2000, when there was a budget surplus of 200 billion, you had a Republican administration and a Republican Congress, and we had two tax cuts that weren't paid for. You had a prescription drug plan—the biggest entitlement plan, by the way, in several decades—that was passed without it being paid for. You had two

wars that were done through supplementals. And then you had $3 trillion projected because of the lost revenue of this recession. That's $8 trillion.

Now, we increased it by a trillion dollars because of the spending that we had to make on the stimulus. I am happy to have any independent fact-checker out there take a look at your presentation versus mine in terms of the accuracy of what I just said.

Rep. Hensarling. As am I, Mr. President.

The President. Now, going forward, here's the deal. I think, Paul, for example, head of the Budget Committee, has looked at the budget and has made a serious proposal. I've read it. I can tell you what's in it. And there are some ideas in there that I would agree with, but there are some ideas that we should have a healthy debate about because I don't agree with them.

The major driver of our long-term liabilities, everybody here knows, is Medicare and Medicaid and our health care spending. Nothing comes close. Social Security we could probably fix the same way Tip O'Neill and Ronald Reagan sat down together and they could figure something out. That is manageable. Medicare and Medicaid: massive problem down the road. That's where—that's going to be what our children have to worry about.

Now, Paul's approach, and I want to be careful not simplifying this, because I know you've got a lot of detail in your plan, but if I understand it correctly, it would say, we're going to provide vouchers of some sort for current Medicare recipients at the current level——

Rep. Ryan. No.

The President. No?

Rep. Ryan. People 55 and above——

The President. Fifty-five and—well, no, I understand. I mean, there's a grandfathering in, but just for future beneficiaries, right? That's why I said I didn't want to—I want to make sure that I'm not being unfair to your proposal, but I just want to point out that I've read it. And the basic idea would be that at some point, we hold Medicare cost per recipient constant as a way of making sure that that doesn't go way out of whack, and I'm sure there are some details that——

Rep. Ryan. We drew it as a blend of inflation and health inflation, the point of our plan is—because Medicare, as you know, is a $38 trillion unfunded liability.

The President. Right

Rep. Ryan. It has to be reformed for younger generations because it won't exist because it's going bankrupt. And the premise of our idea is, look, why not give people the same kind of health care plan we here have in Congress? That's the kind of reform we're proposing for Medicare.

The President. No, I understand. Right, right, so—well, look, as I said before, this is an entirely legitimate proposal. The problem is twofold: One is that depending on how it's structured, if recipients are suddenly getting a plan that has their reimbursement rates going like this, but health care costs are still going up like that, then over time, the way we're saving money is essentially by capping what they're getting relative to their costs.

Now, I just want to point out, and this brings me to the second problem, when we made a very modest proposal as part of our package, our health care reform package, to eliminate the subsidies going to insurance companies for Medicare Advantage, we were attacked across the board, by many on your aisle, for slashing Medicare. You remember? We're going to start cutting benefits for seniors. That was the story that was perpetrated out there, scared the dickens out of a lot of seniors.

No, no, but here's my point. If the main question is going to be, what do we do about Medicare costs, any proposal that Paul makes will be painted, factually, from the perspective of those who disagree with it, as cutting benefits over the long term. Paul, I don't think you disagree with that, that there is a political vulnerability to doing anything that tinkers with Medicare. And that's probably the biggest savings that are obtained through Paul's plan.

And I raise that not because we shouldn't have a serious discussion about it. I raise that because we're not going to be able to do anything about any of these entitlements if what we do is characterized—whatever proposals are put out there—as, well, you know, that's—the other party is being irresponsible; the other par-

ty is trying to hurt our senior citizens; that the other party is doing X, Y, Z.

That's why I say if we're going to frame these debates in ways that allow us to solve them, then we can't start off by figuring out, A, who's to blame, B, how can we make the American people afraid of the other side. And unfortunately, that's how our politics works right now. And that's how a lot of our discussion works. That's how we start off. Every time somebody speaks in Congress, the first thing they do, they stand up and all the talking points—I see Frank Luntz up here sitting in the front. He's already polled it, and he said, you know, the way you're really going to—I've done a focus group, and the way we're going to really box in Obama on this one, or make Pelosi look bad on that one—I know—I like Frank, we've had conversations between Frank and I. But that's how we operate. It's all tactics, and it's not solving problems.

And so the question is, at what point can we have a serious conversation about Medicare and its long-term liability, or a serious question about—a serious conversation about Social Security, or a serious conversation about budget and debt in which we're not simply trying to position ourselves politically? That's what I'm committed to doing. We won't agree all the time in getting it done, but I'm committed to doing it.

Q. Mr. President, can you take one more?

The President. You know, I've already gone over time.

Rep. Pence. He's gone way over, gentlemen——

The President. But I'll be happy to take your question, Congressman, offline.

Rep. Pence. Yes.

The President. You can give me a call.

Q. I will.

The President. All right, thank you, everybody. God bless you.

Rep. Pence. Thank you, the President of the United States.

The President. God bless the United States of America. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:10 p.m. at the Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc; Gov. Joseph Manchin III of West Virginia; Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services William Corr, former executive director, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids; former Sens. Robert J. Dole, Howard H. Baker, Jr., and Thomas A. Daschle; State Sen. William E. Brady, Illinois gubernatorial candidate; and Frank I. Luntz, chairman emeritus, Luntz, Maslansky Strategic Research.

Statement on Earned Income Tax Credit Awareness Day

January 29, 2010

During these difficult economic times, America's working families are struggling to make ends meet and they deserve relief, especially during tax season. The earned-income tax credit gives millions of working families the break they need, and thanks to the Recovery Act, more Americans will qualify for an even larger credit than ever before. The Recovery Act expanded the earned-income tax credit for larger families struggling to get by and cut the marriage penalty that millions of families face. But too many Americans are not aware that they qualify for the credit, so I urge people to visit www.irs.gov, where you can also learn more about other tax breaks available for working Americans this year.

Message on the Observance of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Day of Remembrance
January 29, 2010

For more than a half century, NASA has explored our final frontier and transformed humankind's understanding of our planet and its place in the universe. These extraordinary achievements have required great sacrifice.

On this day of remembrance, we pause to reflect on the Apollo 1, *Challenger*, and *Columbia* crews, as well as others who lost their lives supporting NASA's mission of exploration and study of the Earth, the planets, and the stars. All of humanity has benefited from their courage and devotion.

We mourn their loss while celebrating their spirit of discovery. May their sacrifice be an inspiration as we continue our Nation's work to explore our universe.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this message. An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

The President's Weekly Address
January 30, 2010

At this time last year, amidst headlines about banks on the verge of collapse and job losses of 700,000 a month, we received another troubling piece of news about our economy. Our economy was shrinking at an alarming rate, the largest 6-month decline in 50 years. Our factories and farms were producing less, our businesses were selling less, and more job losses were on the horizon.

One year later, according to numbers released this past week, this trend has reversed itself. For the past 6 months, our economy has been growing again. And last quarter, it grew more quickly than at any time in the past 6 years.

This is a sign of progress. And it's an affirmation of the difficult decisions we made last year to pull our financial system back from the brink and get our economy moving again.

But when so many people are still struggling, when 1 in 10 Americans still can't find work and millions more are working harder and longer for less, our mission isn't just to grow the economy. It's to grow jobs for folks who want them and ensure wages that are rising for those who have them. It's not just about improvements we see in quarterly statistics, but ones people feel in their daily lives: a bigger paycheck, more security, the ability to give your kids a decent shot in life and still have enough to retire one day.

That's why job creation will be our number-one focus in 2010. We'll put more Americans back to work rebuilding our infrastructure all across the country. And since the true engines of job creation are America's businesses, I've proposed tax credits to help them hire new workers, raise wages, and invest in new plants and equipment. I also want to eliminate all capital gains taxes on small-business investment and help small businesses to get the loans they need to open their doors and expand their operations.

But as we work to create jobs, it is critical that we rein in the budget deficits we've been accumulating for far too long, deficits that won't just burden our children and grandchildren, but could damage our markets, drive up our interest rates, and jeopardize our recovery right now.

There are certain core principles our families and businesses follow when they sit down to do their own budgets. They accept that they can't get everything they want, and they focus on what they really need. They make tough decisions and sacrifice for their kids. They don't spend what they don't have, and they make do with what they've got.

It's time their Government did the same. That's why I'm pleased that the Senate has just restored the pay-as-you-go law that was in place back in the 1990s. It's no coincidence that we

ended that decade with a $236 billion surplus. But then we did away with PAYGO, and we ended the next decade with a $1.3 trillion deficit. Reinstating this law will help us get back on track, ensuring that every time we spend, we find somewhere else to cut.

I've also proposed a spending freeze so that as we increase investments in things we need, like job creation and middle class tax cuts, we cut spending on those we don't, like tax cuts for oil companies and investment fund managers and programs that are redundant, obsolete, or simply ineffective. Spending related to Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security will not be affected, and neither will national security, but all other discretionary Government programs will.

Finally, I've called for a bipartisan fiscal commission, a panel of Democrats and Republicans who would sit down and hammer out concrete deficit reduction proposals by a certain deadline. Because we've heard plenty of talk and a lot of yelling on TV about deficits, and it's now time to come together and make the painful choices we need to eliminate those deficits.

This past week, 53 Democrats and Republicans voted for this commission in the Senate. But it failed when seven Republicans who had cosponsored this idea in the first place suddenly decided to vote against it.

Now, it's one thing to have an honest difference of opinion about something. I will always respect those who take a principled stand for what they believe, even if I disagree with them. But what I won't accept is changing positions because it's good politics. What I won't accept is opposition for opposition's sake.

We can't have a serious discussion and take meaningful action to create jobs and control our deficit if politicians just do what's necessary to win the next election instead of what's best for the next generation. I'm eager and ready to work with anyone who's serious about solving the real problems facing our people and our country. I welcome anyone who comes to the table in good faith to help get our economy moving again and fulfill this country's promise. That's why we were elected in the first place. That's what the American people expect and deserve. And that's what we must deliver.

Thanks so much.

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

Remarks on the Federal Budget
February 1, 2010

Good morning, everybody. This morning I sent a budget to Congress for the coming year. It's a budget that reflects the serious challenges facing the country: We're at war, our economy's lost 7 million jobs over the last 2 years, and our Government is deeply in debt after what can only be described as a decade of profligacy.

Now, the fact is, 10 years ago, we had a budget surplus of more than $200 billion, with projected surpluses stretching out toward the horizon. Yet over the course of the past 10 years, the previous administration and previous Congresses created an expensive new drug program, passed massive tax cuts for the wealthy, and funded two wars without paying for any of it, all of which was compounded by recession and by rising health care costs. As a result, when I first walked through the door, the deficit stood at $1.3 trillion, with projected deficits of 8 trillion over the next decade.

Now, if we had taken office during ordinary times, we would have started bringing down these deficits immediately. But 1 year ago, our country was in crisis: We were losing nearly 700,000 jobs each month, the economy was in a free fall, and the financial system was near collapse. Many feared another great depres-

sion. So we initiated a rescue, and that rescue was not without significant costs; it added to the deficit as well.

One year later, because of the steps we've taken, we're in a very different place. But we can't simply move beyond this crisis; we have to address the irresponsibility that led to it. And that includes the failure to rein in spending, as well as a reliance on borrowing—from Wall Street to Washington to Main Street—to fuel our growth. That's what we have to change. We have to do what families across America are doing: save where we can so that we can afford what we need.

Now, I think it's very important to understand we won't be able to bring down this deficit overnight, given that the recovery is still taking hold and families across the country still need help. We will continue, for example, to do what it takes to create jobs. That's reflected in my budget; it's essential. The budget includes new tax cuts for people who invest in small businesses, tax credits for small businesses that hire new workers, investments that will create jobs repairing roads and bridges, and tax breaks for retrofitting homes to save energy.

We also continue to lay a new foundation for lasting growth, which is essential as well. Just as it would be a terrible mistake to borrow against our children's future to pay our way today, it would be equally wrong to neglect their future by failing to invest in areas that will determine our economic success in this new century.

That's why we build on the largest investment in clean energy in history, as well as increase investment in scientific research, so that we are fostering the industries and jobs of the future right here in America.

That's why I've proposed a more than 6-percent increase in funding for the Education Department. And this funding is tied to reforms that raise student achievement, inspire students to excel in math and science, and turn around failing schools which consign too many young people to a lesser future, because in the 21st century, there is no better antipoverty program than a world-class education.

And that's why we eliminate a wasteful subsidy to banks that lend to college students, and use that money to revitalize community colleges and make college more affordable. This will help us reach the goal I've set for America: By 2020, we will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.

These are the investments we must make to create jobs and opportunity now and in the future. And in a departure from the way business has been done in Washington, we actually show how we pay for these investments while putting our country on a more fiscally sustainable path.

I've proposed a freeze in Government spending for 3 years. This won't apply to the benefits folks get through Social Security, Medicaid, or Medicare. And it won't apply to our national security, including benefits for veterans. But it will apply to all other discretionary Government programs. And we're not simply photocopying last year's budget; freezing spending does not mean we won't cut what doesn't work to pay for what does.

We have gone through every department's spending, line by line, item by item, looking for inefficiency, duplication, and programs that have outlived their usefulness. That's how we freeze discretionary spending. Last year, we found $17 billion in cuts. This year, we've already found 20 billion.

Now, some of these cuts are just common sense. For example, we cut $115 million from a program that pays States to clean up mines that have already been cleaned up. We're also cutting a Forest Service economic development program that strayed so far from any mission that it funded a music festival. And we're saving $20 million by stopping the refurbishment of a Department of Energy science center that the Department of Energy does not want to refurbish.

Other cuts, though, are more painful because the goals of the underlying programs are worthy. We eliminate one program that provides grants to do environmental cleanup of abandoned buildings. That's a mission I support, but there are other sources of private and public funds to achieve it. We also eliminated a $120 million program that allows folks to get their earned-income tax credit in advance. I am a big supporter of the earned-income tax credit. The problem is, 80 percent of people who got this

advance didn't comply with one or more of the program's requirements.

So I'm willing to reduce waste in programs I care about, and I'm asking Members of Congress to do the same. I'm asking Republicans and Democrats alike to take a fresh look at programs they've supported in the past to see what's working and what's not and trim back accordingly.

Like any business, we're also looking for ways to get more bang for our buck by promoting innovation and cutting redtape. For example, we consolidate 38 separate education programs into 11. And last fall, we launched the SAVE Awards to solicit ideas from Federal employees about how to make Government more efficient and more effective. And I'm proud to say that a number of these ideas, like allowing Social Security appointments to be made online, made it into our budget.

I also want to note even though the Department of Defense is exempt from the budget freeze, it's not exempt from budget common sense. It's not exempt from looking for savings. We save money by eliminating unnecessary defense programs that do nothing to keep us safe. One example is the $2.5 billion that we're spending to build C–17 transport aircraft. Four years ago, the Defense Department decided to cease production because it had acquired the number requested, 180. Yet every year since, Congress has provided unrequested money for more C–17s that the Pentagon doesn't want or need. It's waste, pure and simple.

And there are other steps we're taking to rein in deficits. I've proposed a fee on big banks to pay back taxpayers for the bailout. We're reforming the way contracts are awarded to save taxpayers billions of dollars. And while we extend middle class tax cuts in this budget, we will not continue costly tax cuts for oil companies, investment fund managers, and those making over $250,000 a year. We just can't afford it.

Finally, changing spending as usual depends on changing politics as usual. And that's why I've proposed a bipartisan fiscal commission, a panel of Democrats and Republicans who would hammer out concrete deficit reduction proposals over the medium and long term, but would come up with those answers by a certain deadline. I should point out, by the way, that is an idea that had strong bipartisan support, was originally introduced by Senators Gregg on the Republican side and Conrad on the Democratic side, had a lot of Republican cosponsors to the idea. I hope that, despite the fact that it got voted down in the Senate, that both the Republican leader, Mitch McConnell, and the Republican leader in the House, John Boehner, go ahead and fully embrace what has been a bipartisan idea to get our arms around this budget.

That's also why we're restoring pay as yo go, a simple rule that says Congress can't spend a dime without cutting a dime elsewhere. This rule helped lead to the budget surpluses of the 1990s, and it's one of the most important steps we can take to restore fiscal discipline in Washington.

Now, you can read more about the budget at budget.gov—very easy to remember—budget.gov. But the bottom line is this: We simply cannot continue to spend as if deficits don't have consequences, as if waste doesn't matter, as if the hard-earned tax dollars of the American people can be treated like Monopoly money, as if we can ignore this challenge for another generation. We can't.

In order to meet this challenge, I welcome any idea, from Democrats and Republicans. What I will not welcome—what I reject—is the same old grandstanding when the cameras are on and the same irresponsible budget policies when the cameras are off. It's time to hold Washington to the same standards families and businesses hold themselves. It's time to save what we can, spend what we must, and live within our means once again.

Thanks very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:40 a.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House.

Question-and-Answer Session With YouTube Participants
February 1, 2010

Steve Grove. Hello, everyone. We're here at the White House today for a very unique event: an exclusive interview with President Obama in which the questions come from American people who've submitted them and chosen them online. My name is Steve Grove, and I'm the head of news and politics at YouTube.

Mr. President, thank you for taking time to answer these questions today.

The President. It's my pleasure. Thank you, Steve. Thanks for having me, and thanks to YouTube for doing this. We had a chance to do this before I was elected and had a great time, so I'm glad we can do it again.

Mr. Grove. Great. Well, let's tell people a little bit about how this works. Five days ago, as you were delivering your State of the Union Address, we opened up our moderator platform on YouTube, where thousands of people have been submitting and voting on both video and text questions. Some of them, as you'll see, were hard-hitting; others were emotional; some were even funny. But all of the questions you'll see here today were voted into the top tier of the thousands of questions we received. And none of them have been chosen by the White House or seen by the President. So this should be a lot of fun.

Health Care Reform

Mr. President, let's let Layman Marcus from Silver Spring, Maryland, kick us off. He submitted this video to remind us of where things were a year ago.

[*At this point, a video was shown.*]

Mr. Marcus writes: "Mr. President, I know there have been political setbacks to getting health care reform done. The 40 million people who have no insurance can't wait. Will they be able to get insurance this year?"

The President. It is my greatest hope that we can get this done not just a year from now, but soon. We came extremely close. We now have a bill that's come out from the House, come out from the Senate. That's unprecedented. And if you look at the core components of that legislation, what you have is 30 million people who get coverage, insurance reform so that people who have health insurance are going to be able to be protected from not being able to get it because of preexisting conditions or suddenly losing their health care because the insurance company has some fine print that they didn't read. It makes sure that we actually start bending the cost curve, controlling the rise in premiums by instituting better practices in terms of how we reimburse doctors and how we ask hospitals to work together. We've already invested in electronic IT, electronic medical records, things that can help make the system more efficient.

So we had this enormous opportunity, but the way the rules work in the United States Senate, you've got to have 60 votes for everything. After the special election in Massachusetts, we now only have 59. We are calling on our Republican colleagues to get behind a serious health reform bill, one that actually provides not only the insurance reforms for people who do have health insurance, but also the coverage for folks who don't.

My hope is, is that they accept that invitation and that they work with us together over the next several weeks to get it done.

Transparency in Government

Mr. Grove. A lot of people that submitted questions were sort of frustrated by the process of all of health care, and the number-one question we got in health care came from Mr. Anderson in Texas, who asked, "Why are the health care meetings and procedures not on C–SPAN as promised?"

And then one of the top questions in the Government reform category was Warren Hunter in Brooklyn, who said, "How do you expect people in this country to trust you when you've repeatedly broken promises that were made on the campaign trail, most recently the promise to have a transparent health care debate?"

The President. Well, I guess, first of all, I would say that we have been certified by independent groups as the most transparent White House in history. It's important to understand, we've—are the first White House since the founding of the Republic to list every visitor that comes into the White House online so that you can look it up. People know more about the inner workings of this White House, the meetings we have. We've excluded lobbyists from boards and commissions, but we also report on any lobbyist who meets with anybody who's part of our administration.

So we've actually followed through on a lot of the commitments that we've made. And so Warren's mistaken in terms of how he characterized it.

What is fair to say is that as the health care process went forward, not every single aspect of it was on C–SPAN. Now, keep in mind, most of the action was in Congress, so every committee hearing that was taking place, both in the House and the Senate, those were all widely televised. The only ones that were not were meetings that I had with some of the legislative leadership, trying to get a sense from them in terms of what it was that they were trying to do.

I think it is a fair criticism. I've acknowledged that. And that's why as we move forward, making sure that in this last leg, these last 5 yards before we get to the goal line, that everybody understands exactly what's going on in the health care bill, that there are no surprises, no secrets. That's going to be an imperative. It's going to be one of my highest priorities.

Small Businesses

Mr. Grove. Well, the central focus of your State of the Union was obviously jobs. And a lot of people wrote in asking for some clarity around some of your plans for small businesses. I'm going to play you two video questions in a row.

Q. Good evening, President Obama. One year ago today, my wife and I were both let go from our jobs in corporate America within 48 hours of each other. We've since started a small business, and we employ a couple people around us. What is being done to free up funding and encourage the growth of other small businesses that have such a tremendous impact on our economy? Thank you.

Q. Colin Callahan, Costa Mesa, California. Mr. President, how exactly are you planning on helping small businesses grow and prosper, besides simply providing tax breaks?

The President. Well, let me start with some specific issues that confront every small business all across the country, and it's absolutely true that if we can get small businesses back on their feet, then that's going to go a long way towards bringing the unemployment rate down, because that's the fastest generator of jobs across the country.

Number one, small businesses really are still struggling with financing. You hear stories everywhere you go that even profitable, successful businesses are having trouble getting financing because banks, frankly, just don't want to take the risk. After having taken way too many risks before, now they're taking no risk. And small businesses are punished for that.

So we've expanded the SBA loan—the Small Business Administration loan portfolio by about 70 percent. We've been waiving guarantees and fees, trying to streamline the process, just to get more capital into the hands of small businesses. That's point number one.

Point number two, then, are the tax breaks that were alluded to. It is important to see if we can give more incentives to small business. So, for example, we're just eliminating capital gains for small businesses, which is particularly important if you've got a startup. Ten years from now, you may end up being successful with your small business, but suddenly, you've got to pay taxes on it. If you can take that money and, instead of paying Uncle Sam, reinvest it in your business, you can grow it further. So we think that that's the kind of strategy that makes a lot of sense.

We want to also make sure that we're providing tax credits for hiring of small business—small businesses that are hiring new employees. And so we've got a whole range of proposals there.

Now, in addition to the tax credits, in addition to the financing, one of the other things that, frankly, small businesses need is just a economic environment that is growing. And one of the things we're very proud of is the fact that we had a 6-percent contraction of the economy at the beginning of last year; this past quarter, we had a 6-percent increase in the growth of the economy. That 12-percent swing offers greater opportunities for small businesses to prosper and thrive.

Last point I'd make: One of the biggest burdens on small businesses is health care costs. And probably nobody benefits more from our health care proposals than small businesses, because what we're doing is we're saying that not only will you get tax credits to buy health insurance, but we're also going to let you pool—buy into a big exchange so that you have the same purchasing power as a big company like Ford or—Google is able to negotiate with insurance companies and get a good deal; well, now small businesses, by pooling together in this exchange, are going to have that same leverage. That will help lower their costs.

And for a lot of small businesses, it's not just a matter of giving health insurance to your employees; it's also just being able to buy health insurance for yourself. That will cut down on small businesses' costs, and they'll be able to, again, invest more in their business.

Mr. Grove. A lot of Americans saw what happened on Wall Street this past year, and they wrote in saying, when are we going to get our bailout?

The President. Right.

Mr. Grove. Here is Frederick from Florida, who submitted the number-one video question in the financial reform category.

Home Loan Modification

Q. Mr. President, my name is Frederick from south Florida. I have a question about your HAMP program and why the banks are reluctant to modify loans for homeowners who can afford to stay in their homes. Now, the taxpayers bailed them out. They refuse to help us out. And I would like to know, what say you, Mr. President?

The President. Well, look, this is something that we've been dealing with since the beginning of this financial crisis. We set up a program for loan modification that, so far, about 4 million people have taken advantage of across the country. You've got about 800,000 people who've gotten loan modifications that are saving them an average of $550. And so these are not insignificant savings. We've been able to get that done.

The problem is, is the number of people whose mortgages are underwater, where they actually have a home value that's now less than their mortgage, is a lot bigger than that. And you saw declining values all across the country.

So the amount of money that we've been able to get into this program has not met the entire need. We're now pushing the banks as hard as we can to make sure that not only do they do the most with the resources that we've been giving them, but that they also do a much better job of customer service with people who are coming to them. I get letters all the time of people who've gone through all kinds of hoops, filled out forms; the bank doesn't call them back, or after they've gone through a trial period, the bank says, well, we now think we shouldn't give you a home modification.

What we're trying to do is to increase transparency and force all the banks to tell us exactly what are you doing with your customers who want to stay in their homes, can afford to pay a mortgage, but need something a little bit more limited.

And I'm hopeful that we're going to continue to see more and more people take advantage of it. But I want to be honest, given the magnitude of the housing problem out there, that there are still going to be pockets of areas where the housing values have dropped so much that it is still going to be tough for a lot of people, and we're just going to have to work our way through this as the economy improves.

Privatization of Government Agencies

Mr. Grove. Mr. President, let's lighten things up for a minute. We got a lot of people just submitting their ideas to you, ideas for how to make the country better. They wanted to hear what you thought about them.

Let's play sort of a faster round of a thing we'll call "Good idea, bad idea."

The President. Okay.

Mr. Grove. I'll show you an idea.

The President. All right.

Mr. Grove. You say whether you think it's good or bad and maybe just a few sentences about why you think that.

The President. All right.

Mr. Grove. Okay, first one comes from Aloha Tony, your home State of Hawaii.

The President. There you go.

Mr. Grove. He says: "Mr. President, our deficit is higher than ever at $12 trillion. Will you consider allowing the private sector to buy and take over the most troubled Government-run agencies, such as the U.S. Postal Service?"

The President. Bad idea most of the time. There are examples where privatization makes sense, where people can do things much more efficiently. But oftentimes what you see is companies want to buy those parts of a Government-run operation that are profitable, and they don't want to do anything else.

So, for example, the U.S. Postal Service: Everybody would love to have that high-end part of the business that FedEx and UPS are already in, business to business. You make a lot of money. But do they want to deliver that postcard to a remote area somewhere in rural America that is a money loser? Well, the U.S. Post Office provides universal service. Those companies would not want to provide universal service. So you've got to make sure that you look carefully at what privatization proposals are out there.

Mr. Grove. So bad idea most of the time?

The President. Most of the time.

Mr. Grove. Most of the time. Next idea, rather, is a video.

Health Care Incentives

Q. My car insurance company will allow me to take driver's ed classes to reduce my monthly premiums. Could we do the same thing for health insurance: take classes in cooking, nutrition, stress management, communication, parenting, stopping smoking, maybe even exercise classes, and get a reduction on our monthly premiums?

The President. Well, I think the idea is a good one, and that is that if people are being healthy, that they should be able to get some incentives for that. And a lot of companies are starting to do that. We probably don't want the insurance companies, though, making those decisions, because insurance companies have every incentive to take the youngest, healthiest people and insure them, since they're less likely to have to pay out, and then leave older, sicker individuals out of their insurance pools. So it's important in any health care program to make sure that the young and the healthy and the older and the sicker are in a single pool.

But what we should encourage are individual companies who provide incentives for wellness programs, smoking cessation programs; they're going to get a workout once in a while—those things are something that we should encourage. And the First Lady, Michelle Obama, she's really focusing right now on childhood wellness, healthy eating, getting exercise. That's a campaign that she's going to be pushing all year long.

Energy

Mr. Grove. Let's get one more idea in here. This next one comes from J. Levers in Dover, Delaware, who writes, "Do you think it would be worth looking at placing solar panels in all Federal, State, and school buildings as a way to cut energy costs and put that budget money to better use?"

The President. Good idea. And we want to do everything we can to encourage clean energy. And I have instructed the Department of Energy to make sure that our Federal operations are employing the best possible clean energy technology, alternative energy technology. And what we're seeing is more and more companies realize this is a win-win for them. Not only is what they're doing environmentally sound, but it also, over the long term, saves money for them.

Internet Neutrality

Mr. Grove. Great. Well, let's move back to the questions. And I got to tell you, the number-one question that came in, in the jobs and

economy category, had to do with the Internet. And it came from James Earlywine in Indianapolis. He said: "An open Internet is a powerful engine for economic growth and new jobs. Letting large companies block and fill their online content services would stifle needed growth. What is your commitment to keeping the Internet open and neutral in America?"

The President. Well, I'm a big believer in net neutrality. I campaigned on this. I continue to be a strong supporter of it. My FCC chairman, Julius Genachowski, has indicated that he shares the view that we've got to keep the Internet open; that we don't want to create a bunch of gateways that prevent somebody who doesn't have a lot of money but has a good idea from being able to start their next YouTube or their next Google on the Internet. So this is something we're committed to.

We're getting pushback, obviously, from some of the bigger carriers who would like to be able to charge more fees and extract more money from wealthier customers. But we think that runs counter to the whole spirit of openness that has made the Internet such a powerful engine for not only economic growth, but also for the generation of ideas and creativity.

Higher Education

Mr. Grove. Well, to get good jobs, I think many Americans realize they need a higher education, but college tuition costs are so high. Here is a video question from Saginaw, Michigan.

Q. Dear President Obama: As a college student who has 14 credits and 3 part-time jobs, I just was wondering, what are your plans for—plans to lower college tuition costs? I know we're in a struggling economy right now, but any little bit that you can help would be appreciative. Thank you. God bless. Bye.

The President. Well, John's right that college tuition costs are just crushing on a lot of folks. And this is something I remember from my own experience, because Michelle and I, we had college loans we kept on paying off for a decade after we had graduated from law school.

We've already done a huge amount to increase Pell grants, to help increase the accessibility of college loans and grants at the college level. But we want to do more. And so we've put forward an initiative that is being debated in Congress—and we hope to get passed this year—where if you have student loans, that you will not have to pay more than 10 percent of your income on those loans; that after 20 years, they'll be forgiven; and if you've gone into public service, they'll be forgiven after 10 years. That would provide a huge amount of relief for people.

We still need to expand more the Pell grant program and make it both accessible to more people and raise the amount of tuition.

In order to pay for this—the best part of this is we can actually figure out how to pay for it, because right now you've got a lot of banks and financial service companies who are still middlemen in the federally guaranteed loan programs. And if we can cut those middlemen out, then you've got several billion dollars that you can invest in the programs that I just described.

This is something that I've made a top priority. I want us to once again have the highest college graduation rates of any country in the world by 2020. We can get that done. But this is legislation that needs to pass.

And the last point I would make: Colleges and universities also, though, have to figure out how can they cut their costs, because even if we're putting more and more loans in—more and more money for loans, if the inflation in higher education keeps on skyrocketing, over time it's still going to gobble up all that extra money, and we'll be right back where we started. So we've got to show more restraint at the college and university level in terms of ever-escalating costs.

Mr. Grove. Well, let's back up a bit just from the specifics of education policy and ask a more fundamental question, which comes from Sean in Ohio.

Importance of Education

Q. Mr. President, what do you want public education to help students become? Should they be good workers? Innovative thinkers? Something else? As a math teacher, I want to know what you think it means to be an educated person.

The President. Well, I think obviously there's a huge economic component to being well educated. We know that if you've got a college education, you are going to make multiples of what you would make as a high school graduate, much less a high school dropout, over the course of a lifetime. But it's absolutely true that a high-quality education is not just a matter of being a good worker; it's also a matter of being a good citizen. It's also a matter of being able to think critically, evaluate the world around you, make sure that you can process all the information that's coming at us in a way that helps you make decisions about your own life, but also helps you participate in the life of the country.

And I'm a big believer that the most important thing that a kid can learn in school is how to learn and how to think. If Malia and Sasha, my two daughters, are asking questions, know how to poke holes in an argument, know how to make an argument themselves, know to—how to evaluate a complicated bunch of data, then I figure that they're going to be okay regardless of the career path that they're in. And I think that that requires more than just rote learning, although it certainly requires good habits and discipline in school; it also requires that in the classroom, they're getting the kind of creative teaching that's so important.

And that's why our administration's initiated something called Race to the Top, where my Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, has helped to design a competition among States so that they can foster the kinds of excellence in learning everywhere, not just in some schools, not just in some States, but in every school in every State. If States want money, we're going to reward excellence, and if—and we will show them what has been proven to work in terms of encouraging the kind of critical thinking that all of our children need.

Terrorism

Mr. Grove. Mr. President, the number-two category after jobs and economy that people submitted to was national security and foreign policy. And the number-one question came from Concerned Conservative in Georgia, who asked about your plans for the war on terror. And then Sean from Pennsylvania followed it up with: "Dear President Obama: If we remove our troops from the war on terror, how will you continue to combat the threat of terrorism?"

The President. Well, first of all, I think it's important to understand that we are at war against a very specific group: Al Qaida and its extremist allies that have metastasized around the globe, that would attack us, attack our allies, attack bases and Embassies around the world, and most sadly, attack innocent people regardless of their backgrounds, regardless of their religions. Al Qaida is probably the biggest killer of innocent Muslims of any entity out there.

And so that is our target, and that is our focus. Now, they employ terrorist tactics, but we need to be clear about who our target is.

And we have to fight them on all fronts. We have to fight them in very concrete ways in Afghanistan and along the border regions of Pakistan, where they are still holed up. They have spread to places like Yemen and Somalia, and we are working internationally with partners to try to limit their scope of operations and dismantle them in those regions.

But we also have to battle them with ideas. We have to help work with the overwhelming majority of Muslims who reject senseless violence of this sort and to work to provide different pathways and different alternatives for people expressing whatever policy differences that they may have. And I think we haven't done as good of a job on that front.

We have to project economically, working in countries like a Yemen—that is extraordinarily poor—to make sure that young people there have opportunity. The same is true in a place like Pakistan.

So we want to use all of our national power to deal with the problem of these extremist organizations. But part of that does involve applications of military power. And that's why, although it is the hardest decision that a Commander in Chief can make, to send our troops into battle, I thought it was very important to make sure that we had an additional 30,000 troops in Afghanistan to help train Afghan

forces so that they can start providing more effective security for their own country in dealing with the Taliban and ultimately allow us to remove our troops but still have a secure partner there that's not going to be able to use that region as a platform to attack the United States.

Situation in Darfur

Mr. Grove. Well, another central issue in the war on terror now is Guantanamo, and a lot of users wrote in about this. Oh, actually, you know what, I think we're going to—well, how about I come later—I think that question is actually about Sudan, which you didn't actually address in your State of the Union, but it was actually the number-one-voted question, and it's a video from the Enough Project here in DC.

Q. President Obama, more than 3 million Darfuris fear returning home because of instability. Many fear that Sudan may be on the brink of war. What will you do to galvanize the international community to ensure that widespread violence does not occur in Sudan this year?

The President. Well, the situation in Sudan has been heartbreaking, but also extremely difficult, and it's something that we started working on the day that I came into office. Our first task was, at that time, making sure that people who were in refugee camps in Darfur had access to basic water, food, other necessities of life. And this was after the Sudanese Government in Khartoum had kicked out a whole bunch of nongovernmental organizations that were providing assistance there. We were able to get that assistance back in to help, at least initially, stabilize the situation.

The next step in the challenge is to broker a lasting peace agreement between rebels who are still in the Darfur region and this Government. And I've got a special envoy who has been very active in trying to bring together the international community to get that deal brokered.

Part of what makes it complicated is you also have a conflict historically between northern Sudan and southern Sudan. They finally reached a agreement after a lot of work. But the Sudanese now—the southern Sudanese now have an option where they may be seeking to secede from all of Sudan. That's another potential conflict that could create additional millions of refugees.

And so what we are doing is trying to work with not only the regional powers but the United Nations and other countries that have shown a great interest in this to see if we can broker a series of agreements that would stabilize the country and then allow the refugees who are in Darfur to start moving back to their historic lands.

Sadly, because of the genocide that took place earlier, a lot of those villages are now destroyed. And so thinking about how to resettle these populations in places that are viable economically, that have the resources to support populations, is a long-term development challenge that the international community is going to have to support.

We continue to put pressure on the Sudanese Government. If they are not cooperative in these efforts, then it is going to be appropriate for us to conclude that engagement doesn't work, and we're going to have to apply additional pressure on Sudan in order to achieve our objectives. But my hope is, is that we can broker agreements with all the parties involved to deal with what has been an enormous human tragedy in that region.

Guantanamo Bay Naval Base

Mr. Grove. The question we missed from the deck, but it was about Guantanamo, and essentially, he was just saying, why is it taking so long to close down Guantanamo?

The President. Right. Well, it's pretty straightforward. Number one, you've got a whole bunch of individuals in Guantanamo, some of whom are very dangerous, some of whom were low-level fighters, some of whom the courts have determined should never have been put there in the first place. We've had to evaluate each of those cases, hundreds of cases, one by one, to determine what these various categories are, and do it in a way that stands up to our standards of due process and legal scrutiny.

Then we've got to figure out, if we're closing Guantanamo, where are we going to put them?

And we have proposed that there are a number of options on the continental United States where you could hold these people as trials either in military commissions or in Article 3 courts are pending. But unfortunately, there has been a lot of political resistance, and frankly, some of it just politically motivated; some of it people being legitimately scared about, well, if we've got somebody who we've been told is a terrorist in our backyard, will that make us a target?

One of the things that we've had to try to communicate to the country at large is that historically, we've tried a lot of terrorists in our courts. We have them in our Federal prisons. They've never escaped. And these folks are no different. But it's been one of those things that's been subject to a lot of, in some cases, pretty rank politics.

And we've got to work through that process, because Congress ultimately controls the purse strings in creating new facilities. If Congress makes a decision that they are going to try to block the opening of a new facility, it potentially constrains what our administration can do. And so this is something that we've got to work through in—both in Congress, but also with public opinion so that people understand that ultimately, this is the right thing to do. By closing Guantanamo, we can regain the moral high ground in the battle against these terrorist organizations.

There's been no bigger propaganda weapon for many of these extremists than pointing to Guantanamo and saying that we don't live up to our own ideals. And that's something that I strongly believe we have to resist, even if it has some costs to it and even if it's not always the most politically popular thing to do.

Energy

Mr. Grove. Mr. President, we don't have much time left, but I want to make sure we get to the issue of energy, the environment. One of the rare moments where you were able to get applause from your friends on the Republican side of the aisle in Congress the other night was when you mentioned nuclear energy. And just today your budget announced tripling the loan guarantees for nuclear reactors. A lot of people had questions about just how this would work and why you did that.

Q. President Obama, record numbers of young people elected you in support of a clean energy future. If money is tight, why do you propose wasting billions in expensive nuclear, dirty coal, and offshore drilling? We need to ramp up efficiency, wind, and solar, that are all economically sustainable and create clean and safe jobs for our generation.

The President. Well, you're not going to get any argument from me about the need to create clean energy jobs. I think this is going to be the driver of our economy over the long term. And that's why we put in record amounts of money for solar and wind and biodiesel and all the other alternative clean energy sources that are out there.

In the meantime, though, unfortunately, no matter how fast we ramp up those energy sources, we're still going to have enormous energy needs that will be unmet by alternative energy. And the question then is, where will that come from?

Nuclear energy has the advantage of not emitting greenhouse gases. For those who are concerned about climate change, we have to recognize that countries like Japan and France and others have been much more aggressive in their nuclear industry and much more successful in having that a larger part of their portfolio, without incident, without accidents. We're mindful of the concerns about storage of spent fuel and concerns about security, but we still think it's the right thing to do if we're serious about dealing with climate change.

With respect to clean coal technology, it is not possible at this point to completely eliminate coal from the menu of our energy options. And if we are ever going to deal with climate change in a serious way, where we know China and India are going to be greatly reliant on coal, we've got to start developing clean coal technologies that can sequester the harmful emissions, because otherwise—countries like China and India are not going to stop using coal—we'll still have those same problems, but we won't have the technology to make sure that it doesn't harm the environment over the long term.

So I know that there's some skepticism about whether there is such a thing as clean coal technology. What is true is right now that we don't have all the technology to prevent greenhouse gas emissions from coal-powered fire—power plants, but the technology is close, and it makes sense for us to make that investment now, not only because it will be good for America, but it will also ultimately be good internationally. We can license and export that technology in ways that help other countries use a better form of energy that's going to be helpful to the climate change issue.

Mr. Grove. Mr. President, I think we're out of time, but I know a lot of people really enjoyed the opportunity to ask questions of you in this way, and we'd love to do this again with you some time.

The President. You know, this was terrific. And I just want to thank everybody who submitted questions, whether via e-mail or over the Internet. And I hope we get a chance to do this on a more regular basis, because it gives me great access to all the people out there with wonderful ideas. And even if you didn't make your question, even if it wasn't on this show, we appreciate your submission, and hopefully, we'll catch you next time.

Mr. Grove. Great.

The President. All right.

Mr. Grove. Thanks, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. in the Library at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan Maj. Gen. J. Scott Gration, USAF (Ret.).

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Nashua, New Hampshire

February 2, 2010

The President. Thank you. Hello, Nashua! Thank you very much. Everybody, please have a seat. Thank you. Well, it is——

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back. It's great to be here, great to be back in New Hampshire. Now, some of you may remember, I've spent a little time in this State. [*Laughter*] I've had beers at Peddler's Daughter. I manned the scoop at ice cream socials from Dover to Hudson. I've walked Main Street in Concord and visited with folks in all 10 counties. I even once flew in the airport in Milan, which has got to be one of the only airports with a functioning wood stove. [*Laughter*] We spent a bunch of times in this gym, caused traffic jams several times—[*laughter*]—and just have a lot of good friends here in this State, here in this city, and here in this high school. So I'm just grateful to all of you for taking the time to be here.

I've got a couple of special thank yous to say. Now, first of all, please thank Tim Dining for the wonderful introduction and for the great work that he's doing day in, day out. I want to thank David Ryan, doing a great job as principal here at Nashua North. Mayor Donnalee Lozeau is here; give her a big round of applause. Your outstanding Governor, John Lynch, is here. Give John a big round of applause.

Three great Members of Congress: Senator Jeanne Shaheen; Congressman Paul Hodes; Congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter. And behind me, I've got the outstanding Administrator for our Small Business Administration, who hails from these parts, Karen Mills. Give Karen a big round of applause.

So I want to spend a bunch of time hearing from you, answering your questions. But if you'll indulge me, I want to make some brief remarks on the front end.

I've had the privilege of getting to know people here in New Hampshire. I've seen firsthand that spirit of independence and spirit of self-reliance. I know how hard all of you work and how tough and resilient you are. But I also know that people here in New Hampshire have been tested by the last 2 years, just like people all across the country. We've gone through the deepest recession since the Great Depression, and folks here have had their lives uprooted by lost jobs and foreclosed homes, shuttered businesses, vanished savings. Many good, hard-

working people who met their responsibilities are now struggling, in part because folks on Wall Street and people in Washington didn't meet their responsibilities.

So when I took office, we knew the first thing we had to do was to break the back of this recession. And sometimes that meant doing some things that weren't easy, doing some things that weren't popular. Lord knows it wasn't popular to prevent our financial system from collapsing. We had to throw a lifeline to some of the very firms that had helped cause this crisis in the first place. But it was the right thing to do, because if we hadn't taken those steps, the entire system could have gone down and taken our economy and millions of families and businesses with it. We couldn't afford that.

And because of the steps we've taken, the markets have now stabilized. Nobody's worrying about another great depression like they were just a year ago, and the worst of the storm has passed. But I don't need to tell you the devastation remains. Today, 1 in 10 Americans still can't find work. That's why jobs has to be our number-one focus in 2010.

And we're going to start where most new jobs start, with small businesses. These are the companies that begin in basements and garages when an entrepreneur takes a chance on his dream or a worker decides it's time she becomes her own boss. They're companies like ARC Energy, which I just visited before I came here. It's a terrific—[*applause*]—there you go—[*laughter*]—a little booster.

Now, these folks are hard at work on a new manufacturing process for ultra-efficient LED lights that will make them more affordable for people all across the country and around the world. The technology they've created is the only of its kind in the entire world. They're this little business just on Amherst Street, but they've got the potential to revolutionize an entire industry, right here in Nashua—right here in Nashua.

Now, small businesses like ARC Energy have created roughly 65 percent of all new jobs over the past decade and a half. So we need to make it easier for them to open their doors, to expand their operations, to hire more workers. That's why I've already proposed a new tax credit for more than 1 million small businesses that hire new workers or raise wages and a tax incentive for all businesses, large and small, to invest in new plants and equipment. And while we're at it, we should eliminate all capital gains taxes on small-business investment so these folks can get the capital they need to grow and create jobs. And when they start making a profit, they can put those profits back into the business.

Now, that's particularly critical right now, because bank lending standards have tightened since the financial crisis, and many small businesses are still struggling to get loans. And that's why today I'm announcing a proposal to take $30 billion of the money that was repaid by Wall Street banks, now that they're back on their feet, take that $30 billion and use it to create a new small-business lending fund that will provide capital for community banks on Main Street. It's the small, local banks that work most closely with small businesses. They usually provide them their first loan. They watch them grow through good times and bad. The more loans these smaller banks provide to creditworthy small businesses, the better deal we'll give them on capital from this fund that we've set up. And if you combine it with my proposal back in December to continue waiving fees and increasing guarantees for SBA-backed loans, all this will help small banks do even more of what our economy needs, and that's ensure that small businesses are once again the engine of job growth in America. Now, I'm convinced we can make that happen.

This is just one example of what we've been doing to create jobs this past year. As some of you might remember, last February, we passed the Recovery Act, which had three parts: One-third was tax relief for small businesses and for 95 percent of you, 95 percent of working families; one-third of the Recovery Act was emergency relief, like increasing unemployment benefits and helping States keep teachers and police officers and firefighters from losing their jobs; and one-third was putting people to work on infrastructure and renewable energy and medical research and more.

Now, if you hear some of the critics, they'll say, "Well, the Recovery Act, I don't know if that's really worked, because we still have high unemployment." But what they fail to understand is that every economist, from the left and the right, has said, because of the Recovery Act, what we've started to see is at least a couple of million jobs that have either been created or would have been lost. The problem is, 7 million jobs were lost during the course of this recession. So we've still got a big hole to fill. It's going to be absolutely critical that Congress acts over the next several months to make sure that we don't lose sight of the fact that even though the economy's now growing again, almost 6 percent last quarter, people have not started hiring again. And we've got to do everything we can to put people back to work, because we need a sustainable recovery over the long term.

Now, I've got to be honest with you, there's no magic wand that makes the economic problems that were years in the making disappear overnight. And sometimes it's easy for politicians just to exploit the anger, the pain that people are feeling right now. I have to point out, though, that some of the very same folks in Congress who opposed the Recovery Act and claim that it hasn't worked have been all too happy to claim credit for Recovery Act projects and the jobs those projects have produced. They come to the ribbon cuttings and—[*laughter*]. They found a way to have their cake and vote against it too. [*Laughter*]

But look, we're making progress, but it can't come fast enough. We want to accelerate it. And we know that if we truly want to have long-term economic growth in this country, then we need to start addressing some of the struggles that middle class families have been dealing with for years, long before this particular recession hit.

This past decade has been one of the toughest our middle class has faced in generations, because folks have seen their paychecks shrink, their housing prices fall, while the cost of everything, from groceries to health care to college, keeps going up. So a lot of you are working two jobs. Certainly everybody in your household is working. You're working longer hours, but you feel like you're treading water, and in some cases, it's not adding up. A lot of people put their kids to bed wondering whether they'll be able to give them opportunities in life that they got from their parents.

And the thing, New Hampshire, when I was up here campaigning, I told you, I didn't run for President to kick these challenges down the road. I didn't run for President to play it safe. I didn't run to—just to keep my poll numbers high as possible for the next election. I ran to solve problems for the next generation. I ran to get the hard things done. That's why you elected me.

So I won't rest until businesses are hiring again and wages are rising again and the middle class is thriving again and we've finally got an economy that works for all Americans, not just some Americans. I won't rest until we do what we know has to be done to secure our leadership in the 21st century. I don't want to cede our future to China and India and European countries. I'm not willing to settle for second place, not for the United States of America.

But if we're going to win the race, here's the thing: I can't do this alone. Democrats can't do it alone; the President can't do it alone. We've got two parties in this country, and that's a good thing. It means we've got heated debates and vigorous disagreements. And as messy as democracy sometimes is, it means bad ideas can be discarded and good ones can be refined and we don't go too far in any one extreme. That's the genius of American democracy.

So I was very pleased when the House Republican caucus graciously invited me to attend their retreat last week. We had a good time for more than an hour. For more than an hour, we had a frank exchange about the issues facing our country, and we aired some of our grievances, we shared some ideas. There were plenty of things on which we didn't agree, but there were also some things on which we did, and even more things that we should agree on if we could just focus on solving problems instead of scoring political points.

Now, for example, we all agree that education is the key to a 21st-century economy. We all agree that the best antipoverty program around is a world-class education. So why don't we work together to transform our schools so

that every child in America can compete with their counterparts around the world, from Beijing to Bangalore. Let's work together to upgrade our community colleges, which are the gateway to a career for so many children from so many working families. And I know we've got a lot of young people who are about to head off to college. In an era when a high school diploma is no longer a guarantee of a good job, let's make college affordable for every qualified student. As I said at the State of the Union, no graduate should have to pay more than 10 percent of his or her income on student loans each year. We can see to it that they don't. We can see to it that they don't. We've got legislation pending right now that could make this happen.

Now, Republicans and Democrats may not see eye to eye on the threat of global warming. I happen to think the evidence is overwhelming; some disagree. That's—we can have a respectful argument there. But shouldn't we agree that American homegrown energy is good for our security and that new clean energy jobs are good for our economy? Can't we all agree that these jobs shouldn't be going to China or Germany or Spain, they should be right here in United States of America?

So let's invest in innovation. Let's put people to work on solar panels and wind towers and cutting-edge batteries. Because the nation that leads the clean energy economy will be the nation that leads the global economy, and America has to be that nation. These are key parts of the foundation we need to build for a better future for our families, for our country.

Another foundation stone is fixing a health insurance system that works better for insurance industry than it does for the American people. I do not quit. We are going to get that done. Nobody—we've got to get it done. We have to get it done.

Nobody should be satisfied with a system that allows insurance companies to deny care to folks with preexisting conditions, that allows insurance companies to kick people off their plans when they get too sick. Nobody should accept a system where small businesses are forced to pay outrageous premiums to get their workers covered and seniors have big gaps in their Medicare prescription coverage. Nobody should accept another decade in which health insurance premiums double and millions lose their coverage altogether.

There was just a report the other day that showed even greater numbers of Americans now are having to rely on Government insurance, not because of my plan, but because employer-based insurance has declined to an all-time low.

Now, these are the things that I hear about every day in the letters I get from families going bankrupt, from small businesses crushed by their health care costs. So I am not going to walk away from these efforts. I will not walk away from these people, and Congress shouldn't either. We should keep working to get it done, Democrats and Republicans together. Let's get it done this year.

Now, finally, we should all be able to agree that we've got to do something about our long-term deficits. Now, these deficits won't just burden our kids and our grandkids decades from now; they could damage our markets now; they could drive up our interest rates now; they could jeopardize our recovery right now.

Responsible families don't do their budgets the way the Federal Government does—[*laughter*]—right? When times are tough, you tighten your belts. You don't go buying a boat when you can barely pay your mortgage. You don't blow a bunch of cash on Vegas when you're trying to save for college. You prioritized. You made tough choices. It's time your Government did the same.

Now, that's why I continue to insist on making investments for job growth this year, why I continue to insist that we put more money into education. That's why I say we put more money into science and technology for innovation. That's why I continue to believe that we've got to invest in our infrastructure so that we are building the kind of America that can compete in the 21st century. Those are smart investments. That's like buying the new boiler; if it's busted, you got to get a new boiler. If the roof's leaking, you got to fix the roof. There's some things you've got to do. But you can put off buying the new curtains, even if it'd be nice

to have. [*Laughter*] You know, that—remodeling the bathroom, I mean, everything's working. [*Laughter*] You don't need it right now. I mean, what we've been having are folks who want to buy the curtains but don't want to fix the boiler. And our priorities have to change.

That's why I've proposed cutting more than 120 Government programs, consolidating ones that are duplicative, reducing ones that are wasteful, eliminating those that just don't work. That's why I proposed to cap Government spending over the next 3 years. Spending related to Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and our national security will not be affected, but all other discretionary Government programs will. That doesn't mean we have to do less; it just means we've got to do more with the money we've got. That's why I'm grateful that both the House and the Senate have now voted to reinstate what's called the PAYGO rule. It's a very novel concept. It means pay as you go. [*Laughter*] By the way, that is not to be confused with Paul Hodes's wife Peggo. [*Laughter*] All right. That's a different—although, I really like her too. [*Laughter*]

So the PAYGO rule helped create those record surpluses back in the 1990s. You remember that? That was way back when—[*laughter*]—instead of the record deficits that we had when I came into office. And the concept here is, as I said, is it's very simple. You want to start a new program? Go ahead, but you've got to cut another one to pay for it. That's how we'll make sure we're spending your money wisely. You want to cut taxes for somebody? That might be a good idea, but you got to find a way to close the revenue hole so that everything actually adds up. That's how we'll get our deficit under control. That's something that Democrats and Republicans should be able to agree to, if we could just stop playing politics, get past the Washington game.

Now, let me just give you an example here, because we released the budget; right away the other side says, "Oh, look at all these trillions of dollars debt." Absolutely, I mean, I'm concerned about it very much. It keeps me awake at night, looking at all that red ink. Most of it is structural, and we inherited it. The only way that we are going to fix it is if both parties come together and start making some tough decisions about our long-term priorities.

But last week, the Senate blocked a law that I had supported to create a bipartisan fiscal commission that would come up with a set of recommendations for cutting our deficits in the long term. This is a difficult thing, and it's only going to be solved if we do it together. This law failed by seven votes when seven Republicans who had cosponsored the bill—had cosponsored the idea—suddenly walked away from their own proposal after I endorsed it. So they make a proposal. They sign on to the bill. I say, "Great, good idea." I turn around—[*laughter*]—they're gone. What happened? [*Laughter*] Now—[*laughter*]—look, it's one thing to have a honest difference of opinion on something. There's nothing wrong with that. But you can't walk away from your responsibilities to confront the challenges facing the country because you don't think it's good short-term politics. We can't afford that. We can't afford that.

Now, the message you all sent when you elected me, the message that was sent this past month, is, whether you're Democrat, Republican, Independent, you're out of patience. You're out of patience with this kind of business as usual. You want us to start worrying less about our jobs and more about your jobs. You want us to worry less about our election and more about solving your problems. And for once, you'd like a Government that reflects a sense of responsibility and decency and generosity, because that's how you try to live your lives.

That's the spirit that led students here at Nashua North to spring into action in the wake of the tragedy in Haiti. And I want to congratulate you guys for planning fundraisers and selling ribbons and collecting money at lunch, all to help folks that they've never known in a place that most of them have never been. That's—we're proud of you for that. That's good work. That's good work.

It's that same spirit that drives small-business owners like Tim, and like Kedar Gupta, the CEO of ARC Energy. I told you about him; I told about the company. These are the two guys who are running it, right here. Now, Kedar founded ARC, but he also, years before, co-

founded a company called GT Solar with just a thousand dollars. It now has 343 employees, hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue. And as he was growing that company, nursing it from a thousand dollars, he made sure his employees shared in the company's profits. When the company hit hard times, he cut his own salary first. When talking about his business philosophy, he explains that many CEOs take a "me, me, and me" approach. But his approach has been "we," not about benefiting just himself, but lifting his employees too, and his community.

We've—we need that kind of spirit. We've come through a tough year and a tough decade, but that fundamental decency, that sense of determination, that grit, that willingness to work hard in pursuit of a good idea, the determination to do what's right, that's been at the core of the American experience. And that should fill us all with optimism about what lies ahead. So let's put aside the small things. Let's come together. Let's do what's hard. Let's welcome what's hard. Let's welcome the challenge. Let's do what's necessary to help the middle class succeed again, to give our shot—our kids a shot at their dreams again, and to fulfill the promise of this great country in our time, in our generation. That's our task.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you. All right. Thank you guys. All right.

Okay, we—you know, when in New England, we got to do the town hall. [*Laughter*] You guys have been——

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you. God bless you.

Now, a lot of you guys have been in these before, so you know the drill. I'm going to call girl, boy, girl, boy. [*Laughter*] There are microphones in the audience, and I will try to get in as many questions as possible. And it would be nice if you introduce yourself so that people know who you are. And don't yell out.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. The—just raise your hand, and I'll call on you. Although, she seems very eager, so go ahead. All right, we're going to start right around here.

Health Care Reform

Q. I'm—[*inaudible*]. I'm from Fairfield, Connecticut.

The President. Hey. Uh-oh. Hey, how did this Connecticut person sneak in here?

Q. That's right.

The President. All right, go ahead. I love people in Connecticut. Go ahead.

Q. Thank you. Due to the great health care in this country, I'm a three-time cancer survivor——

The President. We're proud of you.

Q. ——but like many cancer patients, was pushed out of a job. I was lucky enough to be able to retire early, buy into the retirees' health plan, and then start my own successful business. However, this is not the case for most people with chronic illnesses. Health care for cancer survivors is more expensive. How are the jobs bill and the proposed health care legislation going to account for the level of variability of the needs of cancer survivors?

The President. Well, look, first of all, we're proud of you. You look great.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. You say you agree, huh? [*Laughter*] You should.

Q. Health-wise I'm great. [*Laughter*]

The President. No, you look good too. Go ahead.

Q. Thank you. [*Laughter*]

The President. The—there are a couple of aspects of this. First of all, I think we shouldn't lose sight of the enormous potential in the new branches of medicine to go after cancer. I was over at NIH, National Institute for Health; we've increased funding drastically. This is an area that should be one of our competitive advantages, right? We have the best scientists in the world. We've got the best universities in the world. We have traditionally led in innovation. And the more money we're putting in, they're starting to come up with drugs that only kill the cancer cells and don't kill healthy cells, or that can be tailored to a particular kind of cancer that's matched up because of new genetic information. So there's enormous potential here to go after cures, and that in-

volves the kind of research and investment that we've made.

In our health care bill, one of the most important components was the idea, the basic principle that nobody should have to go without health insurance because of a preexisting condition. Nobody should have to go after—go without health insurance without—because of a preexisting condition. Now, this is something that's very popular if you just say it in isolation, but when you start explaining what is required to make that happen, then sometimes some people get a little nervous. You can't have insurance companies have to take somebody who's sick, who's got a preexisting condition if you don't have everybody covered, or at least almost everybody covered.

And the reason, if you think about it, is simple. If you had a situation where not everybody was covered, but an insurance company had to take you because you were sick, what everybody would do is they'd just wait till they got sick and then they'd go buy an insurance, right? And so there—the potential would be there to game the system.

The reason I point that out is because a lot of the reforms that we've proposed fit together. So we want insurance reforms that make sure that a cancer survivor can still get health insurance. But to do that, we want to make sure that everybody has health insurance, which in turn allows us to cut back on some wasteful spending and help upgrade hospitals and doctors and how they perform medicine, because now they're not dealing with as many emergency room patients. So the cost control aspects of it, the coverage aspects of it, and the insurance reform aspects of it all fit together.

Here's the problem, though, is when you've got all those things fitting together, it ends up being a big, complicated bill, and it's very easy to scare the daylights out of people. And that's basically what happened during the course of this year's debate. You—but here's the good news: We're essentially on the 5-yard line, for those who like football analogies. We've had to go into overtime, but we are now in the red zone. That's exactly right. We're in the red zone. We've got to punch it through.

What I have said is that both the House bill and the Senate bill were 90 percent there. Ten percent of each bill, people had some problems with, and legitimately so. So we were just about to clean those up, and then Massachusetts' election happened. Suddenly everybody says, "Oh, no, it's over." Well, no, it's not over. We just have to make sure that we move methodically and that the American people understand exactly what's in the bill.

And what I've done is I've said to the Republicans, show me what you've got. You've been sitting on the sidelines criticizing what we're proposing. I'm happy to defend insurance reforms; I'm happy to defend the fact that we need to provide 30 million people with access to coverage; I'm happy to defend the need to provide small businesses an ability to pool so that they can have the same purchasing power that the big companies have and drive down their premiums and drive down their rates for their employees. I'm happy to have these debates. I just want to see what else you got, and if you've got a good idea, great.

You know, I—at the Republican caucus, they held up—they said, we've got a plan; it's going to provide everybody coverage at no cost. And I said, well, if that were true, why wouldn't I take it? I—my wife Michelle thinks I'm stubborn sometimes, but I'm not that stubborn. [*Laughter*] See—okay, let me think. I could have everybody get health care coverage that's high quality, and it's free, which I'll bet's really popular. [*Laughter*] But I'm not going to do that. I'm going to go through the pain of really working through this hard process in Congress, getting yelled at and called a socialist, because I just—that's how I roll. I'm a glutton for punishment. [*Laughter*]

No, look, if this were easy and simple, first of all, somebody would have done it before. Seven Presidents have failed at this; seven Congresses have failed at this. If this was simple, it would have already been done. It's not.

This is one-sixth of our economy; it's extremely complex. But I want everybody to understand here: The health care proposal we put forward is basically the same shape as the proposal that was put forward by Tom Daschle, former Senate Democratic majority leader, Bob

Dole and Howard Baker, two Republican Senate leaders.

So it can't be that radical. It's a very straightforward principle that says we're going to set up an exchange, a pool, where people who don't have health insurance and small businesses who can't afford it right now can buy into the pool. If even after we've driven premiums down—because of increased competition and choice—you still can't afford it, we're going to give you a subsidy, depending on your income. We're going to ask that everybody get health insurance, but if you still can't afford it, we'll exempt you, we will give you a hardship exemption, because there are some folks that, you know, it's just too tough.

We are going to insist that the insurance companies all abide by certain practices, like making sure that you take people with preexisting conditions, that you don't drop people just because they get sick.

We then say that we have to control the costs of medicine. So we're going to set up a panel of experts, doctors and health care economists, who are going to scrutinize how we reimburse things like Medicare to make sure that doctors are encouraged to work as teams, don't order five tests if you could just do one test and then e-mail it to five different doctors—pretty straightforward.

Now, what I just described is the essence of what we're doing. And according to the Congressional Budget Office, it would save $1 trillion in our deficits, which is the single most important thing we can do, by the way, to reduce our deficit over the long term.

Almost all the growth in deficit has nothing to do with my Recovery Act and has everything to do with the growing costs of Medicare and Medicaid—all of—almost all of it. You project out 20, 30 years—almost all the growth is because health care costs are just going out of control, and we've got an older population that's going to need more care. And if we can't figure out how to get a better bang for the buck, we're going to lose.

So here's my thing: You got a better idea? Bring it on. But what I will not do is to stop working on this issue, because it is the right thing to do for America. And you need to let your Members of Congress know they shouldn't give up, they should keep on pushing to make it happen.

All right? Okay. All right, it's a guy's turn. It's a gentleman's turn. This gentleman right here in front. Go ahead—hold on one second, we've got a mike coming over here. That's right.

Senator Judd A. Gregg /Federal Budget

Q. Okay. I'm Gary Meyer. I live in Hampton, New Hampshire, and I was a quality leader who worked with—[*inaudible*]. And I know you're well aware that there's a lot of nonvaluated work, both within health care and within education and with—within a lot of businesses and government. You also talked eloquently about the need to have more jobs and to be more energy efficient. All these things together require that we get a health care act reform passed in the Senate, a better one than we have today, and that we also get a clean air act passed. Would you be willing to meet one on one with Senator Gregg to get these things passed in the Senate?

The President. Oh, I listen, I—the—you know, I—I'm willing to meet with anybody, including Senator Gregg, who I offered a job to. [*Laughter*] I don't know if you guys remember that. I like Senator Gregg. I think he's a serious person. But you know that fiscal commission that I just talked about? That was Gregg's proposal. That was his proposal. It was Senator Judd Gregg and Senator Kent Conrad. And they had been advocating for this for years. Mitch McConnell, the Republican's Senate president—Republican leader had just a few months ago said this was the way to deal with this. So I said, "Great, let's do it." And suddenly, they're gone—now, not Judd, Judd's still supportive of it. So what we're going to try to do it—we're going to try to do it by Executive order.

My point is, the easiest thing to do in politics is to point fingers, to figure out who to blame for something, or to make people afraid of things. That's the easiest way to get attention. That's what reporters will report on. You call somebody a name, you say, "Look what a terrible thing they've done, and they're going

to do more terrible things to you if you don't watch out," and you'll get a lot of press attention. And in some cases, you can win elections, particularly when unemployment's 10 percent.

What's hard is to figure out how to solve these problems. Our long-term deficit, if we can't control health care costs—I don't care who's talking about eliminating waste from the Government—we can't solve the problem. A lot of people just—let me just give you one example. If you ask a lot of folks what accounts for the Federal budget, they'll say foreign aid and pork projects, and if you just eliminated all the foreign aid and the pork projects, somehow we'd bring our deficit under control. Foreign aid accounts for about 1 percent of our Federal budget—1 percent. Not 25 percent, not 20—1 percent. Earmarks, all these pork projects—a lot of them, by the way, people like, a lot of them are wastes of money, and we got to be able to distinguish between the two and make it more transparent so that they're not stuck into bills without anybody knowing about it. But they only cost—they amount to about 1 percent of the budget as well.

What really accounts for our Federal budget is Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, defense, interest on the national debt, and then everything else, from national parks to the environmental—the EPA, the Environmental Protection Agency. And in order—if you just wanted to cut the deficit to balance the budget, only on nondiscretionary—or on discretionary nondefense spending—so if you wanted to exempt out all the entitlements, exempt defense, you'd have to cut all those other things by 60 percent. Sixty percent. Can you imagine?

So we've got to have an honest conversation about all the aspects of the budget, and that's what this commission was designed to do. That's why I think Judd Gregg was absolutely right. I support him on this. And we're going to set up a executive—by Executive order a commission to do this.

But I want good ideas. It is not in my interest to bloat Government with wasteful programs, because every time I spend money on a program that doesn't work, that's money that I'm not spending on early childhood education that would make a difference in a child's life, or on college scholarships to send kids to school. We've got to use our money more wisely. But that can only be done if both parties are responding to the interests of the American people and not their short-term politics.

All right, let's see, a woman's turn. All right, that young lady up there. Yes, you—yes. You sound surprised. [*Laughter*] Oh, wait, wait, wait, I was calling on this young lady in the black blouse right here. I'm sorry. [*Laughter*] Sorry about that, but it's nice to see you, though. I may call on you in a second. [*Laughter*] Go ahead.

Transparency in Government

Q. My name is Ashley Stebbins, and I live here in Nashua and attend Nashua High South. There were a lot of—[*applause*]—during your campaign, there was a lot of promises of transparency, but lately a lot of stuff in the media says that most of health care has been behind closed doors. I was just wondering how you would grade yourself on your transparent Government.

The President. Well, you know, I—I've got to be careful about grading myself. [*Laughter*] But I will tell you that a recent independent watchdog group took a look and said this has been the most transparent Government, most transparent administration, that we have seen in a very, very long time, perhaps in the modern era.

And here's the reason. Let me just list off the things we've done. This is the first White House ever where you know every single person who visits the White House. Now, that seems like a small thing, but that means any lobbyist, any company, anybody who comes to visit the White House, you know who it is.

The Recovery Act that I just talked about, we put every dollar of spending in the Recovery Act on a web site. You can go and look up right now every dollar that's been spent in the Recovery Act. You know where it's been spent, who got contracts, how it's been spent. That's all there, plain as day, for everybody to see.

So we've put more information online. We've declassified things that used to be classified. We've revamped the classification system so it's not used for us to just hide things that might be embarrassing to us. We posted salaries for ev-

erybody in the White House all on a web site, which as you might imagine, when it comes out, everybody is looking in the White House. [*Laughter*] Hmmm. [*Laughter*] No, but seriously, we very much believe in transparency and accountability.

Now, when it came to the health care debate, think about all the hours of congressional hearings, all the meetings that were on C–SPAN. I mean, they were constant. It took a year, remember? I did town hall meetings all across the country in August talking just about health care. So when people say, "Well, the negotiations weren't on C–SPAN," what they're frustrated about, and I take responsibility for this, is that after Congress had finally gone through its processes, the House had voted on a bill, the Senate had voted on a bill, it is true that I then met with the leaders and chairmen of the House and the Senate to see what differences needed to be resolved in order to get a final package done. And that wasn't on C–SPAN.

And look, I made that commitment, and I probably should have put it on C–SPAN; although, one of the tricky things is trying to figure out, well, if it is on C–SPAN, are people actually going to be saying what they think about trying to get the bill done, or is everybody going to be posturing to say things that sound good for the camera?

Having said—but I think it is a legitimate criticism to say, if you say that all of it's going to be on C–SPAN, all of it's going to be on C–SPAN. Which is why, at this point, it's important for me to say that when the Republicans put forward their proposals for what they want to do on health care and we put forward what we want to do on health care, I very much want that on C–SPAN, and I want everybody here to watch. I want everybody here to watch. Because I think it will be a good educational process for people to weigh the arguments about the relative merits of the bill instead of listening to millions of dollars' worth of insurance industry ads that have been put out there or whatever pundit on the left or the right is saying about these different issues.

So we're going to keep on doing it. Have we gotten it perfect? No. Have we done better than any administration in recent memory? Absolutely. And we'll keep on trying to improve on that.

All right? Good. It's a gentleman's turn. This gentleman there in the back, in the tie. He got all spruced up for the meeting; I want to make sure I call on him. [*Laughter*]

Energy/Alternative Energy Sources/Pollution Control

Q. My name is Dick Swett. I live in Bow, New Hampshire.

The President. Hey, Dick, you got a big fan club here.

Q. I used to occupy the seat that Paul Hodes holds now, and he's doing a great job.

The President. He's a good guy.

Q. He is. First of all, thank you for coming to New Hampshire. We are very pleased and proud that you're here. And we are grateful for the opportunity to talk.

Now, in your discussions, you have said that you're ready to listen to anybody with a good idea. Well, I'd like to go out on a limb and say I think I've got a good idea.

The President. Good.

Q. I'd like to share it with you.

The President. Please do.

Q. When we talk about energy issues in this country, we are talking about jobs, we're talking about dependence on international oil, some coming from difficult places that are feeding terrorist organizations that are causing harm to our citizens, we are talking about a problem of keeping our money here at home as opposed to sending it overseas when we purchase that foreign oil.

I think what we can do is we need to put all of these issues together in one basket and first set a date by which time we can be independent enough of foreign oil. I can't say that we could be completely independent, and I think you understand the reasons why.

But if we can invest in technology here at home to develop clean technology, place that technology in developing countries, not only just where they can have energy and electricity to be productive with, but establish with that an economic system where they have jobs and they are opening up new markets that we can sell our products into and that we can build

our relationships with their leaders through, and at home, if we can focus on making ourselves more energy efficient, because we are a very inefficient country when it comes to the use of energy, just like all of the industrialized countries, these two things, I think, done first can help us to avoid having to do cap and trade and other aspects with environmental controls that are going to have negative impacts on our economy. We need to make productive use of our technology and our people so that we can clean up the economy, put people to work, and then if that isn't sufficient enough, we then go to the kinds of problem—the kinds of programs that have been talked about at the Copenhagen summit.

The President. Well, let me respond by talking more broadly about energy. First of all, those are such good ideas I've already adopted them, although, I didn't know they came from you. [*Laughter*]

Number one, we have to invest in innovation and new technologies. There's no doubt about it. And by the way, we've got to upgrade some old technologies. I know it's controversial in some quarters, but if you're serious about dealing with climate change, then you've got to take a serious look at the nuclear industry. If you are serious about climate change, you've got to figure out, is there technology that can allow us to sequester coal and the emissions that are sent out?

The reason for that is not just for the United States. China is building a coal-fired plant once a week, just about—India is doing the same—because coal is cheap. And unless we can come up with some energy alternatives that allow us to franchise that technology so that they are equipped to burn that coal cleanly, we're going to have problems no matter what we do in this country when it comes to the environment. Okay? So technology is key. And by the way, we can make significant profits and create huge jobs just upgrading traditional technologies. Then you've got the whole clean energy sector, which is ready to take off if we provide the kind of seed capital, the kind of R&D credits that are necessary.

This past recession almost killed a lot of our homegrown clean energy sectors. And the industry will tell you—you talk to the wind industry or the solar industry—if we hadn't passed the Recovery Act and all the support for clean energy, a lot of them would have completely gone under, and we would have been ceding leadership, as we already have, unfortunately, to a lot of countries, like Spain and Germany and Japan, that are doing a lot more work on it. So this is a huge engine for job creation, and we've got to make those investments.

Third thing you said: energy efficiency. We are one of the least efficient advanced economies when it comes to energy usage. And it's estimated that we could probably lop off 30 percent of our energy consumption just on efficiency without changing our lifestyles significantly. I say significantly because you'd have to start buying LED batteries—or LED light bulbs. But it's still a light bulb. You don't have to sit in the dark. You don't have to use gas lanterns. You just have to make the investment. And one of the things that a company like ARC Energy is doing is trying to bring down the unit cost for each of those light bulbs.

A school building like this, guarantee you that we could make this school probably 10, 15, 20 percent more energy efficient. But the problem is, school budgets a lot of times don't have the money to put the capital up front to make it more energy efficient. So are there ways we can help universities and schools and other institutions more efficient? We could retrofit every building in this country that was built over the last 50 years and get huge increases in energy, huge decreases in greenhouse gas emissions. But it requires some seed money. It requires some work. And that's why part of our jobs package is actually—it's a very simple concept: Hire people to weatherize homes that will save those homeowners' heating bills or cooling bills and at the same time put people back to work and train them in things like insulation and heating systems. So there—there's a lot of opportunity there.

Now, here's the only thing I would say. The most controversial aspects of the energy debate that we've been having—the House passed an energy bill, and people complained about, well, there's this cap and trade thing. And you just mentioned, let's do the fun stuff before we do

the hard stuff. The only thing I would say about it is this: We may be able to separate these things out. And it's conceivable that that's where the Senate ends up. But the concept of incentivizing clean energy so that it's the cheaper, more effective kind of energy is one that is proven to work and is actually a market-based approach. I mean, a lot of times, people just respond to incentives. And no matter how good the technology is, the fact of the matter is, if you're not factoring in the soot that's being put in the atmosphere, coal's going to be cheaper for a very long time. For the average industry, the average company, we can make huge progress on solar, we can make huge progress on wind, but the unit costs—energy costs that you get from those technologies relative to coal are still going to be pretty substantial. They're going to get better, but it might take 20, 30, 40 years of technology to get better.

And so the question then is, are we—does it make sense for us to start pricing in the fact that this thing's really bad for the environment? And if we do, then can we do it in a way that doesn't involve some big bureaucracy in a control and command system, but just says look, we're just going to—there's going to be a price to pollution? And then everybody can adapt and decide which are the best energies. And that's—by the way, remember acid rain? That's how that got solved, was basically what happened; the Clean Air Act slapped a price on sulfur emissions. And what ended up happening was all these companies who were saying this was going to be a jobs killer, et cetera, they figured it out. They figured it out a lot cheaper than anybody expected. And it turns out now that our trees are okay up here in New Hampshire. That's a good thing. So we should take a lesson from the past and not be afraid of the future.

Oh-oh. This is a signal that I only have time for a few more questions. Okay, I'm going to try to take two more. It is a young lady's turn.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Well, we—I shouldn't be biased against the folks back here. Here you go.

Jobs/Education Reform

Q. Hi. I'm Judy Loftus. I teach at Nashua South High School. I teach in the careers and education program, and that's a career and technical program that prepares students for lives working—to work with children, to make a difference, from preschool up to elementary age.

I have a couple of questions. First of all, what are you going to do about No Child Left Behind? We've had a lot of legacies from the last administration. And as an educator, I've seen the impact of that in my school, and it hasn't been a positive impact. We're focused more on testing and worrying about test scores than what's right for kids.

And the second is, what are you going to do to help my students, who want to be teachers, who want to make a difference in this world, be able to afford a college education and not be saddled with so much debt that they're working—as many teachers in Nashua are—two jobs to make ends meet to pay their student loans?

The President. Good. It's a good question. The short-term proposals that I put forward are designed to accelerate job growth, that inspire a company that's right on the brink of hiring, but it's still kind of uncertain: "Should I make that investment, should I bring in somebody out of the workforce? Well, maybe if I get a $5,000 credit or maybe if I can get a loan from SBA, I'm going to go ahead and take the plunge." So we're trying to induce hiring to start a little quicker than it's been—than has taken place so far.

But long term, the question you ask is the most vital one for how our economy performs. Look, this is a very straightforward proposition here. Countries that have a highly skilled workforce, that innovate, that excel in science and technology are going to dominate the future. And countries that don't are going to see, over time, their standard of living decline. It's pretty straightforward. If we're the country that's innovating and creating new products and at the high end of the product chain, then everybody here is going to have enormous opportunity. And if we're not, we don't.

So what does that mean? On the education front, our elementary schools, our secondary schools have been slipping. We used to have the best; now we have pockets of the best, and then we have mediocrity, and then we have some schools that are just terrible. We've got to make sure every child is getting a good, solid education. And what that means is, it means we continue to invest in early childhood education, which my budget does. It means—so that our kids are prepared when they start school. It means that we help schools with just their basic budgets. And as I said, the Recovery Act prevented a lot of layoffs and really patched holes in a lot of school budgets. It's not sexy, it doesn't get a lot of credit, but it made a huge difference.

We've got to make sure, though, also, that the single most important factor in a elementary and secondary school education is fulfilled, and that is, we've got excellent teachers in the classroom who are getting paid a good salary and are getting the support that they need.

Now, traditionally, what's happened is the debate between the left and the right has said—well, the left just says, we just need more money in the schools and everything will be okay; it's for new equipment, new computers, smaller class sizes. That's been the argument on the liberal side. The conservative side has said, the whole problem is bureaucracy, teachers' unions; you got to blow up the system. Now, what my administration believes is, it's not an either-or proposition, it's both-and. We need more money, but we need to spend the money wisely, and we need to institute reforms that raise standards and push everybody in a school—principal, teacher, student, parent—to pursue excellence.

So last year, what we did is we started with something called Race to the Top, and it's pretty simple proposition. We carved out a little bit of money that doesn't just go to general revenue—title I and all the general Federal support for schools—and we said, this money, this Race to the Top money, you get it only if you're working to make for excellent teachers, you're collecting good data to make sure that your students are actually making progress in the schools, you're dealing with the lowest performing schools in your school district. You've got ideas that are showing concrete results in improvement, not in absolute test scores, but in the progress that that school is making, we're going to fund those improvements. And we've already seen reforms across 48 States, just because we incentivized reform. That's a good thing.

This year is when reauthorization for what's called No Child Behind would be coming up as part of the broader education legislation that's up for reauthorization. And what we're saying there is, on the one hand, we don't want teachers just teaching to the test; on the other hand, we also want to keep high standards for our kids. And I think the best way to do that is to combine high standards, measurable outcomes, but have an assessment system that you work with teachers on so that it's not just a matter of who's filling out a bubble, and you're also taking into account where do kids start, because not every kid's going to start at the same place. So you want to see where do they end up at the end of the year.

So I just had a meeting with my team this week about this, trying to find ways that we can improve the assessment system so we're still holding schools accountable, we're still holding teachers accountable, but we're not just holding them accountable for a score on a standardized test, but we have a richer way of assessing whether these schools are making progress. All right? So that's the answer to the No Child Left Behind.

On the college front, here's the deal. We've already increased Pell grants, and we want to increase them again. We've already increased both the size of each grant that's permissible, but also the number of grants available so more students can get to them. The next step—and this is legislation that's pending that we are strongly supportive of and I think our entire congressional delegation from New Hampshire is strongly supportive of—what it would do is it would say to every student all across America, and this is especially important for somebody who wants to go into teaching, not a high-salary profession, that you will never have to pay more than 10 percent of your income on student loans. And to every student, we would say that

after 20 years, your debt would be forgiven as long as you were making payments commensurate with your income. But if you went into public service, we would forgive those student loans after 10 years. And teaching, obviously, is one of our most important public services.

So we think this is a fair deal, because what it says is you won't go bankrupt if you decide to go to college. But what it also says is you can make the choice for the lower salary but greater fulfillment, greater satisfaction, pursuing your passion—you can do that and it's not going to be cost prohibitive.

Now, you may ask, how are we going to pay for it? Remember, we were—we said we're going to pay for everything from here on out, pay as you go, PAYGO, right? So here's how we're going to do it. It turns out that right now a lot of the student loan programs are still run through financial institutions and banks. So you got this middleman, and they get billions of dollars per year managing loans that are guaranteed by the Federal Government. So think about this. You, the taxpayers, are guaranteeing that this is going to be paid back. These institutions are essentially taking no risks, and yet they're still extracting these huge profits.

And what we've said is, look, cut out the middleman. You take those billions of dollars, give it directly to the students; with the money that we save, we can make sure that nobody goes bankrupt because they're going to college, because we need every single person to go to college. We think it's a good idea. We're going to make it happen. All right?

All right. I've only got—I got one last question. Oh, and it's a guy's turn. It's a guy's turn. All right, this gentlemen over here. We figured—are you a student? Oh, you look like a student. That's why I called on you. [*Laughter*] You've got a baby face.

Earthquake Relief Efforts in Haiti/U.S. Humanitarian Efforts

Q. It's my young face. Thank you, Mr. President. My name is Ronnie Camile. I live in Nashua, New Hampshire. Three weeks ago, as you know, there was an earthquake in Haiti. I traveled to Haiti to visit my family. And I know times are tough for the American people. And as President, what will you do to ensure that Haiti will be continued—will receive help, because many people down there have yet to receive help?

The President. Well, first of all, I appreciate that you went down. I appreciate what the students did here at Nashua North. There's been an outpouring of incredible generosity in response to this earthquake, and it's a testament to the American people. Our military and our Government has responded, I believe, in exemplary fashion. I mean, we got marines and aid workers and helicopters and food and clean water facilities; we got those down in record time. The devastation and the fact that Haiti already had such poor infrastructure to begin with makes it that much harder. So yes, there are still a lot of people there who are going through enormous hardship. But America should be proud of what we've done so far. We really should.

Now, part of the point you're making, though, is, you know, the headlines start to drift in another direction, right? So it was 24/7 Haiti for about a week, and then the media decided it was time to move on to something else, so now you're not hearing about it as much. And what can happen is that everybody's memories of the devastation start fading away, and then pretty soon people are asking, why are we giving money to Haiti? So what we have to do is to build a strong consensus around a long-term recovery plan for Haiti that is not just shouldered by the United States but the entire international community. I'm going to be working with countries like France and Brazil and Canada, the European Union, Japan, China. We want to get countries that have capacity and resources to come together with the United Nations, with the Haitian Government to determine how can we see if out of this incredible tragedy we can start actually rebuilding in a way that makes life even better for people over the long term than it was before the earthquake. And that's going to require improving our schools, that's going to require improving the infrastructure in Haiti, that's going to require providing the ability of Haitians to sell their products, like textiles, in-

to advanced countries at an advantageous situation so that they can start rebuilding their commerce and their industry.

It's in our interest to do so, though. I want everybody to do it. We do it because it's right, but we also do it because when the United States sends the USS *Vinson* to Haiti to allow a bunch of helicopters to unload food and marines or helping—and we've got a hospital that's set up—that sends a message of American power that is so important, because too often what other countries think of when they think of the United States and our military is just war.

But when they see us devoting these resources and the incredible capacity that we have to help people in desperate need, that message ripples across the world. And it means that when you've got a guy like bin Laden out there screaming, "Blow up America," it's a lot harder for that seed to take root when people have been seeing images of America making sure that people in desperate need are helped. So it's part of our national security. It's the smart thing to do.

It's great to see you, Nashua. I love you guys. Thank you. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:05 p.m. at Nashua High School North. In his remarks, he referred to Tim Dining, president, Greenerd Press & Machine Company, Inc.; former Sens. Robert J. Dole and Howard H. Baker; and Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation in or in Relation to Cote d'Ivoire

February 2, 2010

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency, unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13396 of February 7, 2006, with respect to the situation in or in relation to Cote d'Ivoire is to continue in effect beyond February 7, 2010.

The situation in or in relation to Cote d'Ivoire, which has been addressed by the United Nations Security Council in Resolution 1572 of November 15, 2004, and subsequent resolutions, has resulted in the massacre of large numbers of civilians, widespread human rights abuses, significant political violence and unrest, and fatal attacks against international peacekeeping forces. In March 2007, the Ouagadougou Political Agreement was signed by the two primary protagonists in Cote d'Ivoire's conflict. Although considerable progress has been made in implementing this agreement, the situation in or in relation to Cote d'Ivoire poses a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.

For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency and related measures blocking the property of certain persons contributing to the conflict in Cote d'Ivoire.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 2, 2010.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the Senate Democratic Policy Committee Issues Conference and a Question-and-Answer Session
February 3, 2010

The President. Thank you. Listen, you guys had to listen to me at the State of the Union, or at least pretend to listen to me. [*Laughter*] So I'll try to keep it relatively brief, some opening remarks and then open it up for questions.

First of all, I just want to thank Harry Reid. And I recently said he's got one of the toughest jobs in Washington, managing an institution that by its very nature is, let's face it, you guys are a little difficult to manage. I've been a part of this caucus. I really don't think anybody could have done a better job under more trying circumstances than Harry Reid. And I think he deserves a huge round of applause.

Now, let me start by saying, we always knew this was going to be a difficult year to govern, an extraordinarily difficult year to govern. We began 2009 with a financial system on the brink of collapse, an economy bleeding nearly 700,000 jobs per month, a $1.3 trillion deficit, and two wars that were costly in every sense of the word. And we knew that solutions wouldn't come easily or come quickly. We knew that the right decisions would be tough and sometimes they would be unpopular. And we knew that we might have to make them sometimes without any help from our friends on the other side of the aisle.

But we made those decisions. We led. Those actions prevented another great depression; they broke the back of a severe recession. The economy that was shrinking by 6 percent a year ago is now growing at nearly 6 percent 1 year later. That's because of the work that you did.

Harry listed some of the work that you did on behalf of the American people, even under these difficult circumstances: extending health insurance to 4 million children, protecting consumers from getting ripped off by their credit card companies and kids being targeted by big tobacco. Some things that weren't noted or didn't get a lot of attention: You reformed defense spending by eliminating waste and saved taxpayers billions while keeping us safe at the same time. You gave billions of dollars of tax relief to small businesses and 95 percent of working families here in America.

You did all this despite facing enormous procedural obstacles that are unprecedented. You may have looked at these statistics: You had to cast more votes to break filibusters last year than in the entire 1950s and sixties combined. That's 20 years of obstruction packed into just 1. But you didn't let it stop you.

As Harry mentioned, though, our mission is far from accomplished, because while the worst of the storm has passed, far too many Americans are still hurting in its wake. I know you've seen it back home in the shuttered businesses, the foreclosed homes, you've heard it from constituents who are desperate for work, and we've seen it in the burdens that families have been grappling with long since this recession hit, issues that we've been talking about now for years: the burden of working harder and longer for less, of being unable to save enough to retire or to help a kid with college expenses, the extraordinarily constant rising costs of health care.

These problems haven't gone away. It's still our responsibility to address them. All that's changed in the last 2 weeks is that our party's gone from having the largest Senate majority in a generation to the second largest Senate majority in a generation. And we've got to remember that. There was apparently a headline after the Massachusetts election; the Village Voice announced that Republicans win a 41–59 majority. [*Laughter*] It's worth thinking about. We still have to lead.

Saving and creating jobs have to continue to be our focus in 2010. Last year, we gave small business, the engines of job creation, tax relief, and expanded lending through the SBA. Now, I don't know if you are aware that SBA loans have gone up 70, 80 percent, which, by the way, indicates the degree to which there is still huge demand among small businesses. Some of the banks are saying, "Well, we're not lending because there's not as much demand out

there." There are a lot of small businesses that are hungry for loans out there right now. And we've made progress, but they're still struggling. So I've proposed additional ideas to help small businesses start up and hire, to raise wages and expand, and to get the credit they need to stay afloat. Now, you've made some of these same proposals as well. We should put them into action without delay.

We've invested in America's infrastructure, rebuilding roads and bridges and ports and railways and putting people to work strengthening our communities and our country. And as you know, the Recovery Act was designed so that a lot of that work is going to be taking place this year, not just last year. Many of the projects you funded come on line in the next 6 months. But we can do more, and we should do so without delay.

Through the investments you made in clean energy startups, we've not only helped put Americans to work, we're on track to double our Nation's capacity to generate renewable energy over the next few years. I've proposed additional tax credits that will promote private sector hiring and energy conservation. We should do that without delay.

I think ideas like this should be pretty palatable to the other party. They seem pretty common sense, pretty centrist. We should be able to hear their ideas as well. That's why I spoke to the Republican caucus last Friday. I think it was to the country's benefit that we had an open and frank discussion about the challenges facing the American people and our ideas to solve them. I got to admit, I had a little fun at that caucus. [*Laughter*]

Now, obviously, on some issues, we didn't agree. But on some, we did. And I'm reminded that when it came to health insurance reform in particular, I sought out and supported Republican ideas from the start; so did you. Max Baucus—where's Max? I think he can testify to spending a little time listening to Republican ideas; so can Chris Dodd and Tom Harkin. You considered hundreds of Republican amendments and incorporated many of their ideas into the legislation that passed the Senate. So when I start hearing that we should accept Republican ideas, let's be clear: We have. What hasn't happened is the other side accepting our ideas.

And I told them I want to work together when we can, and I meant it. I believe that's the best way to get things done for the American people. But I also made it clear that we'll call them out when they say they want to work with us and we extend a hand and get a fist in return.

Last week, for example, you put up for a vote a bill I supported, Conrad-Gregg fiscal commission. We were assured this was going to be bipartisan, only to see seven Republicans who cosponsored the idea in the first place suddenly decide to vote against it.

Now, I'm open to honest differences of opinion, but what I'm not open to is changing positions solely because it's good short-term politics. And what I'm not open to is a decision to stay on the sidelines and then assign blame. I've little patience for the kinds of political calculations that says the cost of blocking everything is less than the cost of passing nothing, that basically says, "If you lose, I win." That's been the politics in Washington for too long, and the problem is, it leaves the American people out of the equation.

So I would just suggest to this caucus, if anybody is searching for a lesson from Massachusetts, I promise you the answer is not to do nothing. The American people are out of patience with business as usual. They're fed up with a Washington that has become so absorbed with who's up and who's down that we've lost sight of how they're doing. They want us to start worrying less about keeping our jobs and more about helping them keep their jobs.

And they want to see their business done in an open and transparent way. When we took back the Senate in 2007, we did so in part because we made a case that we'd be better on ethics and transparency. And we backed that up by passing the most sweeping ethics reforms since Watergate and by beginning to address earmark abuse. We should be proud of those accomplishments. But if we're going to erase that deficit of trust that I mentioned at the State of the Union, we're still going to have to do more.

Now, that's why I've proposed that we work together to make all earmark requests public,

on one central web site, before they come up for a vote and to require lobbyists to discuss details of their contacts on behalf of their clients with the administration or with Congress. That's why, working with people like Dick Durbin, who's been vocal on this for a long time, we've got to confront the gaping loophole that the Supreme Court recently opened in our campaign finance laws that allowed special interests to spend without limit to influence American elections.

We've also got to get back to fiscal responsibility. And I spoke about this at the State of the Union. Just 10 years ago, America had a budget surplus of over $200 billion. Remember, people were worried about what might happen with all these surpluses and whether it would create problems in the financial markets. That was just a decade ago.

After two wars, two tax cuts, prescription drug program, none of which were paid for, we faced a deficit of over a trillion dollars, a debt over the next decade of $8 trillion, before my administration spent a single dollar.

Now, we can't change the past, but we can change the future. That's why I'm asking you to adopt a freeze in nonsecurity discretionary spending for the next 3 years, starting next year. We're still having a tough time right now, given the economy is just starting to pick up steam, but starting next year.

That's why I'm grateful that all of you restored the PAYGO rules that worked so well in the 1990s. I already mentioned the fiscal commission. We may not have been able to get the votes for a statutory commission, but we're going to—I am going to appoint a commission by Executive order, because it's important for us to take these issues seriously, not just for us but for our children and our grandchildren.

Let me just wrap up by saying this: I know these are tough times to hold public office. I'm there in the arena with you. The need is great. The anger and the anguish are intense. The economy is massive, and so, as a consequence, no matter what levers and buttons we press, sometimes it doesn't move as quickly as is needed to provide relief to so many of our constituents. In that kind of circumstance, I think the natural political instinct is to tread lightly, keep your head down, and to play it safe.

I've said this before to this caucus; I just want to say it again. For me, it is constantly important to remind myself why I got into this business in the first place, why I'm willing to be away from my family for big stretches at a time, the financial sacrifices that so many of you have made, being subject to criticism constantly. Yes, you don't get in this for the fame. You don't get in it for the title. You get in it because somewhere in your background, at some point in time, you decided there was an issue that was so important that you were willing to stand up and be counted. You were going to fight for something. And you decided you were going to run as a Democrat because there was a core set of values within the Democratic Party about making sure that everybody had a fair shot, making sure that middle class folks were treated fairly in our economy, making sure that those who were on the outside had a way in, that led you to get involved in public service.

And that's what we have to remind ourselves, especially when it's hard—especially when it's hard. You look at an issue right now like health care. So many of us campaigned on the idea that we were going to change this health care system. So many of us looked people in the eye who had been denied because of a preexisting condition, or just didn't have health insurance at all, or small-business owners in our communities who told us that their premiums had gone up 25 percent or 30 percent, and we said we were going to change it.

Well, here we are with a chance to change it. And all of you put extraordinary work last year into making serious changes that would not only reform the insurance industry, not only cover 30 million Americans, but would also bend the cost curve and save a trillion dollars on our deficits, according to the Congressional Budget Office. There's a direct link between the work that you guys did on that and the reason that you got into public office in the first place.

And so as we think about moving forward, I hope we don't lose sight of why we're here. We've got to finish the job on health care.

We've got to finish the job on financial regulatory reform. We've got to finish the job even though it's hard.

And I'm absolutely confident that if we do so in an open way, in a transparent way, in a spirit that says to our political opponents that we welcome their ideas, we are open to compromise, but what we're not willing to do is to give up on the basic notion that this Government can be responsive to ordinary people and help give them a hand up so they can achieve their American Dreams, we will not give up that ideal, if that's where we go, I'm confident that politics in 2010 will take care of themselves.

Harry, thank you very much. Let me turn it over to questions. Thank you.

Senator Harry M. Reid. First question, Arlen Specter. And let me tell everyone, people have come to me and indicated they wanted to ask questions. I've taken a list of those. Arlen Specter is first.

Trade

Senator Arlen Specter. Mr. President, I begin by applauding your decision to place the economy at the top of the agenda, to put America back to work and to provide jobs, jobs, jobs.

[*At this point, Sen. Specter made brief remarks, concluding as follows*.]

The first part of my question is, would you support more effective remedies to allow injured parties—unions which lose jobs, companies which lose profits—by endorsing a judicial remedy, if not in U.S. courts perhaps in an international court, and eliminate the aspect of having the ITC decisions overruled by the President, done four times in 2003 to 2005, at a cost of a tremendous number of jobs on the basis of the national interest. And if we have an issue on the national interest, let the Nation pay for it, as opposed to the steel industry or the United Steel Workers.

And the second part of the question, related, is, when China got into the World Trade Organization, a matter that 15 of us in this body opposed, there were bilateral treaties. And China has not lived up to its obligations to have its markets open to us, but take our markets and take our jobs. Would you support an effort to revise, perhaps even revoke, those—that bilateral treaty, which gives China such an unfair trade advantage? Thank you.

The President. Arlen, I would not be in favor of revoking the trade relationships that we've established with China. I have shown myself during the course of this year more than willing to enforce our trade agreements in a much more serious way. And at times, I've been criticized for it. There was a case involving foreign tires that were being sent in here, and I said this was an example of where we've got to put our foot down and show that we're serious about enforcement. And it caused the usual fuss at the international level, but it was the right thing to do.

Having said that, I also believe that our future is going to be tied up with our ability to sell products all around the world, and China is going to be one of our biggest markets, and Asia is going to be one of our biggest markets. And for us to close ourselves off from that market would be a mistake.

Now, the point you're making, Arlen, which is the right one, is it's got to be reciprocal. So if we have established agreements in which both sides are supposed to open up their markets, we do so and then the other side is imposing a whole set of nontariff barriers in place, that's a problem. And it has to be squarely confronted.

So the approach that we're taking is to try to get much tougher about enforcement of existing rules, putting constant pressure on China and other countries to open up their markets in reciprocal ways.

One of the challenges that we've got to address internationally is currency rates and how they match up to make sure that our goods are not artificially inflated in price and their goods are artificially deflated in price. That puts us at a huge competitive disadvantage.

But what I don't want to do is for us as a country, or as a party, to shy away from the prospects of international competition, because I think we've got the best workers on Earth, we've got the most innovative products on Earth, and if we are able to compete on an even playing field, nobody can beat us. And by the

way, that will create jobs here in the United States.

If we just increased our exports to Asia by a percentage point, by a fraction, it would mean hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, of jobs here in the United States. And it's easily doable. And that's why we are going to be putting a much bigger emphasis on export promotion over the next several years. And that includes, by the way, export promotion not just for large companies, but also for medium-size and small companies, because one of the challenges—I was up in New Hampshire yesterday, and you saw this terrific new company that had just been started up. It's only got 13, 14 employees at this point. But it has a new manufacturing technique for the component parts in LED light bulbs, potentially could lower the price of LED light bulbs, cut them in half.

And these folks, they potentially could market not just here in the United States, but this is a technology that could end up being sent all around the world. But they don't have the money to set up their own foreign office in Beijing to navigate through the bureaucracy. They've got to have some help being over there. And so that's one of the things that we really want to focus on in this coming year, is making sure that our export-import banks, our trade offices, that we are assisting not just the big guys, although, we do want to help them, but also the medium-sized and small businesses that have innovative products that could be marketed if they just got a little bit of help and a little bit of push from the United States Government. All right.

Sen. Reid. Sir, Michael Bennet, Colorado.

Congress/Transparency in Government/Health Care Reform/Media Spin

Senator Michael F. Bennet. Thanks for coming, Mr. President. It's good to see you. You talked in the State of the Union very well about a number of the challenges that we face as a country, which are serious. I mean, even before we were driven into the worst recession since the Great Depression, the last period of economic growth in this country's history was the first time middle class family income actually fell during a period of economic growth; no net jobs created since 1998; household wealth the same at the end of the decade as it was at the beginning; and an education system that's not working well enough for our kids. And on top of everything else, got a $1.4 trillion deficit and $12 trillion of debt.

I was saying that the other day, by the way, in Colorado, and I was talking about how our kids were going to have to pay this back if we didn't make this decision that we've got to face up to. And my daughter Caroline, who's 10, was there, and she walked out with me at the end, and she said, "Just so you know, I'm not paying that back." [*Laughter*] She has the right attitude, I think. [*Laughter*]

The President. Just in case you're counting on it. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Bennet. But at the same time, this place looks broken to the American people. The ability—our ability to make these decisions is open to enormous question in the wake of the health care discussion, in particular. I had a woman the other day in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, ask me where she could get her lobbyist in Washington, DC.

What are we going to do differently? What are you going to do differently? What do we need to do differently as Democrats and Republicans to fix this institution so that our democracy can actually withstand the test that we're facing right now?

The President. Well, let me just make a couple observations, having served in the Senate and now seeing it from the perspective of the White House.

First of all, whenever people ask me, "Why isn't Washington working," I am a fierce defender of the integrity and hard work of individual Members, which is, by the way, matched up by, when you look at polls, people hate Congress, but individual Members, a lot of them feel are really working hard on their behalf.

So the problem here you've got is an institution that increasingly is not adapted to the demands of a hugely competitive 21st-century economy. I think the Senate in particular, the challenge that I gave to Republicans and I will continue to issue to Republicans is, if you want

to govern, then you can't just say no. It can't just be about scoring points. There are multiple examples during the course of this year in which that's been the case.

Look, I mentioned the filibuster record. We've had scores of pieces of legislation in which there was a filibuster, cloture had to be invoked, and then ended up passing 90 to 10, or 80 to 15. And what that indicates is a degree to which we're just trying to gum up the works instead of getting business done.

That is an institutional problem. In the Senate, the filibuster only works if there is a genuine spirit of compromise and trying to solve problems, as opposed to just shutting the place down. If it's just shutting the place down, then it's not going to work. That's point number one.

Point number two, in terms of what—how we operate, we as Democrats, I do think that the more open we are, the more transparent we are, the more people know exactly how things are working even if sometimes it takes longer to maintain that transparency, the better off we are.

And I think the health care bill is a perfect example. I mean, the truth of the matter is, is that the process looked painful and messy, but the innumerable hearings that were held did give an opportunity for the product to get refined so that I think that the ultimate package, after potential negotiations between the House and the Senate, is better than when—where we started. And there was a possibility and continues to be a possibility to be in discussions with the American people about what exactly that bill accomplishes.

On the other hand—and I take some fault for this—at the end of the process, when we were fighting through all these filibusters and trying to get it done quickly so that we could pivot and start talking about other issues that were so important to the American people, some of that transparency got lost. And I think we paid a price for it.

And so it's important, I think, to constantly have our cards out on the table and welcome challenges and welcome questions. If the Republicans say that they can insure every American for free, which is what was claimed to—the other day, at no cost, I want to know. [*Laughter*] Because I told them, I said, why would I want to get a bunch of lumps on my head doing the hard thing if you've got the easy thing? But you've got to show me, you've got to prove to me that it actually works, because I've talked to every health care expert out there, and it turns out, if you want to reform the insurance system, if you want to make sure that people without preexisting conditions are able to get insurance, if you want to provide coverage for people, if you want to bend the cost curve, then you need a comprehensive bill, because this is a complicated area involving one-sixth of our economy.

But we should be open to that dialogue and not underestimate the power of the American people over time—despite millions of dollars of advertising to the contrary from the insurance industry and others—we should not underestimate the American people's willingness to say, "Okay, I got it." And there are still going to be disagreements, and some will disagree with us. But we've got to constantly make our case, I think, and not play an insider's game. Play an outsider's game.

Last point I would make about this: You know what I think would actually make a difference, Michael? I think if everybody here—excuse all the members of the press who are here—if everybody here turned off your CNN, your FOX, your—just turn off the TV——

Sen. Reid. Blogs.

The President. ——MSNBC, blogs, and just go talk to folks out there, instead of being in this echo chamber where the topic is constantly politics. The topic is politics. It is much more difficult to get a conversation focused on how are we going to help people than a conversation about how is this going to help or hurt somebody politically.

And that's part of what the American people are just sick of. They—because they don't care, frankly, about majorities and minorities and process and this and that. They just want to know, are you delivering for me? And we've got to, I think, get out of the echo chamber. That was a mistake that I think I made last year, was just not getting out of here enough. And it's helpful when you do. All right?

Sen. Reid. Mr. President, you've told me—suggested don't pay any attention to the

blogs, don't listen to talk radio, don't watch cable TV. And I follow that advice pretty good. [*Laughter*]

Next question will be from the chair of our Agriculture Committee, the Senator from Arkansas, Blanche Lincoln.

National Economy

Senator Blanche L. Lincoln. Me neither, Mr. President. I stay away from the TVs and everything else. But thank you so much for being here with us today. And I want to thank you also—I had an opportunity with several of my colleagues from the House and Senate to have a bipartisan meeting yesterday with the First Lady on childhood obesity. It was a great meeting, and we look forward to working with her and you and your administration to really tackle that problem on behalf of our children and the future of our country.

[*Sen. Lincoln made brief remarks, concluding as follows*.]

And I think that you're exactly right. People out there watching us, they see us nothing more than Democrats and Republicans up here fighting, fighting only to win a few political points, not to get the problem solved. And so I just—I want to echo, I guess, some of what my colleague, Michael Bennet from Colorado, mentioned, but also to ask to you, in terms of where we are going, what can we tell the people in terms of predictability and certainty in getting this economy back on track? How are we going to do that?

And are we willing as Democrats not only to reach out to Republicans but to push back in our own party for people who want extremes and look for the common ground that's going to get us the success that we need not only for our constituents but for our country in this global community, in this global economy? Are we willing as Democrats to also push back on our own party and look for that common ground that we need to work with Republicans and to get the answers? And it's really the results that are going to count to our constituents. And we appreciate the hard work that you put into it.

The President. Well, the—look, there's no doubt that this past year has been an uncertain time for the American people, for businesses, and for people employed by businesses. Some of that certainty just had to do with the objective reality of this economy entering into a freefall. And so let's just be—let's remind ourselves that if you've got an economy suddenly contracting by 6 percent, or a loss of trillions of dollars of wealth basically in the blink of an eye, or home values descending by 20 percent, that that's going to create a whole lot of uncertainty out there in the business environment and among families.

And part of what we've done over the course of this year is to put a floor under people's feet. That's what the Recovery Act did. That's what the interventions and the financial markets did. It broke the back of the recession, stabilized the markets. Nobody is talking about a market meltdown at this point. And people haven't recovered all that they had lost in their 401(k)s, but they're feeling a little better when they open that envelope now than they did 6 months ago. State budgets were in freefall; that was stabilized. States are still going through incredible pain, but they did not have to lay off teachers and firefighters and cops at the levels that they would have to otherwise lay them off. That provided some stability and some certainty. So the steps you've taken as a Congress, the steps we've taken as an administration, have helped to stabilize things.

Now, moving forward, Blanche, what you're going to hear from some folks is that the way to achieve greater—even greater economic growth—and keep in mind, the economy is now growing at a 6-percent clip, so the question is, when do businesses actually start hiring, because they're now making a profit—what you're going to start hearing is, the only way to provide stability is to go back and do what we'd been doing before the crisis.

So I noticed yesterday, when we were—there was some hearing about our proposal to provide additional financing to small businesses and tax credits to small businesses. Some of our friends on the other side of the aisle said: "This won't help at all. What you have to do is to make

sure that we continue the tax breaks for wealthiest Americans. That's really what's going to make a difference."

Well, if the agenda—if the price of certainty is essentially for us to adopt the exact same proposals that were in place for 8 years leading up to the biggest economic crisis since the Great Depression—we don't tinker with health care, let the insurance companies do what they want, we don't put in place any insurance reforms, we don't mess with the banks, let them keep on doing what they're doing now because we don't want to stir up Wall Street—the result is going to be the same.

I don't know why we would expect a different outcome pursuing the exact same policies that got us into this fix in the first place. Michael Bennet articulated it very well. Part of the reason people are feeling anxious right now, it's not just because of this current crisis; they've been going through this for 10 years. They've been working and not seeing a raise. Their costs have been going up; their spouses going to the workforce. They work as hard as they can; they're barely keeping their heads above water. They're trying to figure out how to retire. They're seeing more and more of their costs on health care dumped in their lap; college tuition skyrockets.

They are more and more vulnerable, and they have been for the last decade, treading water. And if our response ends up being, because we don't want to stir things up here, we're just going to do the same thing that was being done before, then I don't know what differentiates us from the other guys. And I don't know why people would say, "Boy, we really want to make sure that those Democrats are in Washington fighting for us."

So the point I'm making—and Blanche is exactly right—we've got to be nonideological about our approach to these things. We've got to make sure that our party understands that, like it or not, we have to have a financial system that is healthy and functioning, so we can't be demonizing every bank out there. We've got to be the party of business, small business and large business, because they produce jobs. We've got to be in favor of competition and exports and trade. We don't want to be looking backwards. We can't just go back to the New Deal and try to grab all the same policies of the 1930s and think somehow they'd work in the 21st century.

So Blanche is exactly right that sometimes we get ideologically bogged down. I just want to find out what works, and I know you do too, and I know the people in Arkansas do too. But when you're talking to the folks in Arkansas, you also have to remind them, what works is not just going back and doing the same things that we were doing before. And, yes, there's going to be some transition time. If we have a serious financial regulatory reform package, will the banks squawk? Yes. Will they say, this is the reason we're not lending? Yes. The problem is, we know right now they're not lending, and paying out big bonuses. And we know that the existing regulatory system doesn't work.

So we shouldn't be spooked by this notion that, well, is now the time to take seriously, in an intelligent way, not in a knee-jerk way, the challenge of financial regulatory reform so that you don't have banks that are too big to fail and you're not putting taxpayers at risk and you're not putting the economy at risk? Now is the time to do it.

The same is true with health care. The same is true with health care. There are, I promise you, at least as many small businesses out there, if you talk to them, who will say, "I just got my bill from my health insurance, and it went up 40 percent." And we've got to do something for them. All right? All right.

Sen. Reid. Next question, the junior Senator from the State of New York, Kirsten Gillibrand.

Health Care for September 11, 2001, Terrorist Attack First-Responders

Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand. Mr. President, I have an issue I'd like to——

The President. Here, Kirsten, we've got a mike for you.

Sen. Gillibrand. Thank you, Mr. President. I have an issue I'd like to raise that is very important to every New Yorker and to many, many Americans, and that's health care for our 9/11 responders and for all the communities that live near Ground Zero.

Now, these Americans hail from every one of the 50 States and every single congressional district in the entire United States.

The President. Right.

Sen. Gillibrand. And now, because of exposure to toxins from the collapse of the World Trade Center Towers, there's about 20,000 people who are sick, some of them gravely ill, suffering from serious health effects, some are disabled, some have died.

I've introduced legislation to provide permanent care and proper compensation for these Americans. And my question is, would you today commit to working with Congress to pass comprehensive 9/11—a comprehensive 9/11 health bill that's fully paid for?

The President. Well, I fully commit to working with you guys. Keep in mind that our budget already significantly increased funding precisely for this purpose. So I'm not just talking the talk; we've been budgeting this as a top priority for the administration.

I confess, Kirsten, I have not looked at all the details of your legislation. But I know that not only you and Chuck but everybody here wants to make sure that those who showed such extraordinary courage and heroism during 9/11, that they are fittingly cared for, and that's going to be something that we are going to be very interested in working with you on. All right?

Sen. Gillibrand. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Good.

Sen. Reid. The next question is the chairperson of the Environmental Public Works Committee, Senator Barbara Boxer.

Small Businesses/Bank Lending/National Economy

The President. Hey, Barbara Boxer.

Senator Barbara Boxer. Great to see you here, Mr. President. And thanks for doing this, and thanks for meeting with the Republican caucus at the House. I thought it was very instructive for the American people.

[*Sen. Boxer made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So I want to ask you about small business. We all know they're the job creators; 64 percent of new jobs over the last 15 years came from small business. Your new proposal, which does mirror a couple of people—I look at Senator Merkley, I know Senator Warner and others, we've worked hard on this.

For community banks to lend, can you do that by Executive order? Because my understanding is you can use some of the TARP funds that were paid back and use that—or those funds that have not been used—can you use that and get this going by Executive order, or do you need us to put that program into a jobs bill?

And second, are you using your influence as much as you can to get the big banks to lend? They've dropped lending by $12 billion over the last year, so I wonder if you can give us an update on that.

The President. First of all, I've now taken trips to Allentown, Pennsylvania; Elyria, Ohio; most recently——

Audience member. Baltimore.

The President. I was in Baltimore. [*Laughter*] Had a great time in Baltimore. [*Laughter*] Just recently in——

Sen. Reid. Searchlight.

The President. ——Nashua, New Hampshire. Haven't been to Searchlight yet, but we're going to get there. [*Laughter*] And everywhere I go, you talk to small business, and they will tell you they are still experiencing a severe credit crunch. The larger businesses right now are able to get financing. Even the medium-size businesses, the credit markets have improved. Smaller businesses, even if they are making a profit and have not missed a payment, are finding that banks are averse to providing them capital.

Now, two reasons that they cite: One is they say their bankers are telling them that the regulators are just looking over their shoulder too much, and so the community banks feel that their hands are tied. These are independent regulators. They are diligent in doing their jobs. Obviously, they feel caught off guard because of the lax regulation, in some cases, of the banking industry before the financial cri-

sis. You get a sense that the pendulum has swung too far in the other direction.

The challenge that we've got is we've got to be careful because these are independent regulators, and we don't want to politicize that. But what Treasury Secretary Geithner and others have done is to discuss with the regulators what we are hearing in the field and to make sure that there is a consistency of approach that doesn't prevent banks from making what are good loans and taking reasonable risks.

So that's one thing we're hearing. The other thing, though, that is still out there is that the larger banks generally haven't been in this market; a lot of the smaller companies never had access to them in the first place. And we want to actually see if we can get more of those large banks to get into this marketplace. And when I met with the big bank CEOs, this was something that I pushed them on. They tell me, and we have seen some confirmation of this, that they are actually ramping up some of their small-business lending and setting up more aggressive divisions, actively seeking out loans.

So that's the effort that we're making to jawbone the private sector to do what it needs to do. In the meantime—you mentioned the specific proposals that we've put forward—I do think it's better to do them through legislation than through Executive order. TARP was a congressionally created structure with some fairly stringent guidelines in terms of how we were supposed to approach it. It shouldn't be hard to do though. It's a pretty simple concept. Banks have repaid money; there's $30 billion that we could take that has already been repaid, immediately apply that to a fund so that small banks are—or community banks are able to provide their small-business customers with greater lending.

And I do think that getting that as part of a jobs package is priority number one. And I know I've already talked to Harry about this. My assumption is, is that if you combined that with the tax credits that we've put in place for hiring, the provisions that we've talked about to incentivize weatherization programs that can immediately start hiring people to retrofit homes and businesses and help reduce our energy costs, taking some of those immediate steps now, I think, will pay some big dividends down the road.

And the timing of it is perfect, because our job last year was to make sure the economy was growing. The economy is now growing. But what's happening is businesses, either because they can't find financing or because they're still just dipping their toe in the water, have been hesitant to hire full-time workers. And for us to start giving them some serious incentives, giving them additional access to financing, could accelerate a process that otherwise could take a much longer time, and frankly, all those folks out there who are out of work right now, they just can't afford to wait any longer; they need it now. All right?

Sen. Reid. We have time for one or two more questions, if the question is short——

The President. And the answer is short. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Reid. Otherwise, we'll only have one question. The chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Pat Leahy.

Judicial Nominees and Federal Appointees

Senator Patrick J. Leahy. Mr. President, I want to thank you for coming here. I think this is—thank you for coming here. I was just whispering to Marcelle, these answers are so good and need to be heard.

You have a great sense of what the Federal judiciary should be. I think back to President Clinton's time, when the other side blocked 61 of his judges. You've had some superb judges. You've talked to both Republicans and Democrats, sent up some superb names. And Senator Reid still has to file a cloture. We have to spend a week of doing that, and then they pass by 100 to nothing or 90 to 10.

My thing is this: Because of what they did last time, we end up with the greatest shortage and the most judicial crises, I think, in our history. Will you continue to work very hard to get up names as quickly as possible so that we can do this, and help us get these judges through? I don't want the same judicial crises to occur. You've had good nominees. Can you commit to work with us, both parties, and keep trying to get them through?

The President. Good. Well, this is going to be a priority. Look, it's not just judges, unfortunately, Pat, it's also all our Federal appointees. We've got a huge backlog of folks who are unanimously viewed as well qualified, nobody has a specific objection to them, but end up having a hold on them because of some completely unrelated piece of business. That's an example, Michael, of the kind of stuff that Americans just don't understand.

On the judges front, maybe—we had a judge for the—coming out of Indiana, Judge Hamilton, who everybody said was outstanding: Evan Bayh, Democrat; Dick Lugar, Republican; all recommended. How long did it take us?

Sen. Reid. Six months.

The President. Six months, 6, 7 months for somebody who was supported by the Democratic and Republican Senator from that State. And you can multiply that across the board. So we have to start highlighting the fact that this is not how we should be doing business.

Now, in fairness, when we were in the minority, there were some times where we blocked judges, we blocked appointees. I think it's fair to say we were a little more selective in how we did it.

Audience member. A lot more.

The President. "A lot more," somebody said. [*Laughter*]

So this is an example of where I'm going to reach out to Mitch McConnell; I know Harry has as well. And I'm just going to say, look, if the Government is going to work for the American people, I can't have the Administrator for GSA, which runs every Federal facility, all Federal buildings all across the country—here we are, we're trying to save billions of dollars, cut waste—Claire McCaskill has been all on top of how can we audit our spending, and we could save billions of dollars in ending old leases that don't work or renegotiating them or consolidating buildings and efficiencies—but I don't have a GSA Administrator, even though I nominated somebody who was well qualified several months ago, and nobody can tell me that there's anything particularly wrong with her. They're blocking her because of some unrelated matter. I don't know; you guys may know better than I do. And that is—that has to end. It has to end. And the American people want it to end.

Let's have a fight about real stuff. Not a—don't hold this woman hostage. If you have an objection about my health care policies, then let's debate the health care policies. But don't suddenly end up having a GSA Administrator who is stuck in limbo somewhere because you don't like something else that we're doing, because that doesn't serve the American people. Then they don't know what the argument is about. Then it's just sort of a plague on both your houses, because it looks like you guys are just fighting all the time.

Sen. Reid. Mr. President——

The President. And we've got to put an end to that.

Sen. Reid. ——I missed somebody on my list. If you would just be patient with us, we'll have two very short questions.

The President. I will indulge you, Harry.

Sen. Reid. Okay. The first question is going to come from the only person that's a Member of the United States Senate who has a spouse that's won a Pulitzer Prize, Sherrod Brown from Ohio. [*Laughter*]

Research and Development/Manufacturing Industry/Energy

Senator Sherrod C. Brown. Thank you for joining us. Thank you for your visit to Lorain County, Ohio, a week and a half ago—first Presidential visit to that county of 300,000 since Harry Truman in 1948.

The President. It was a great visit. We had a great time.

Sen. Brown. And you—it was terrific. Ten miles from there, at Oberlin College, one of the great private institutions of higher learning in this country—at Oberlin College, there was a building built there 7 or 8 years ago, fully powered by solar panels. It's the only—it's the largest building on any college campus in America like that. Those solar panels were bought in Germany and Japan, not surprisingly, Germany, a country that has both an energy policy and a manufacturing policy. And 75-miles west of there is Toledo, Ohio, where you've been several times, and Toledo has

more solar energy manufacturing—solar manufacturing jobs than any city in America.

It begs the question of two things in terms of manufacturing policy and energy policy. We have all kinds of things in so many of our States, manufacturing wind turbine components and solar panel components, but we're the only major industrial country in the world without a manufacturing policy. And every rich country in the world has one; we don't.

I know what you're doing with Ron Bloom in the White House and other things, but how do we get there? How do we—when we read these articles in the paper that China is just exploding in terms of wind turbine manufacturing and solar panel manufacturing, how do we rebuild our manufacturing sector with a manufacturing policy combined with an energy policy that gets us there?

The President. I hope people had a chance to read that article that was in the New York Times, I guess, last Sunday, talking about how China is not waiting, it is moving. And already the anticipation is, is that they will lap us when it comes to clean energy.

Now, they're not a democracy, and so they don't debate. [*Laughter*] And there are no filibuster rules. [*Laughter*] And so obviously, over the long term, a system that allows for robust debate and exchange of ideas is going to produce a better result. I believe that. But we have to understand that when it comes to some key issues like energy, we are at risk of falling behind.

We've already fallen behind, but it's not irrevocable because we still have the best research, we still have potentially the best technology, we've got the best universities, the best scientists, and as I said, we've got the most productive workers in the world. But we've got to bring all those things together into a coherent whole.

Now, I think there are a couple of elements to this. One, in terms of manufacturing generally—you just mentioned Ron Bloom, who we put in charge of a manufacturing task force, is just issuing now a report to me about the direction we need to go to have some coordination when it comes to manufacturing.

Now, this is not some big, bureaucratic, top-down industrial policy; it is figuring out how do we coordinate businesses, universities, Government to start looking at where there are our strategic opportunities and then making those investments, filling holes that exist so that we can be competitive with what China is doing or what Germany is doing or what Spain is doing.

And my hope is, is that during the course of this year, we're going to be able to work with all 50 Senators, because all of you have a stake in this, to just see where are our manufacturing opportunities and where can we fill some—plug some holes in order to make sure that we're competitive internationally.

Specifically on clean energy, we know that's an opportunity. I continue to believe, and I'm not alone in this, that the country that figures out most rapidly new forms of energy and can commercialize new ideas is going to lead the 21st-century economy. I think that is our growth model.

Sen. Reid. Final question——

The President. But hold on a second.

Sen. Reid. Oh, I'm sorry.

The President. Just one last thing I want to say about this: In order for us to maximize it, part of it is the good work that Jeff has been doing in terms of just finding the right incentives. We've got to be openminded about a whole range of technologies. We've got to look at clean coal technology. We've got to look at nuclear technology.

We're going to be making some significant announcements this year. This is an example, Blanche, of where we can't be stuck in the past in terms of how we see these things. We're not going to be able to ramp up solar and wind to suddenly replace every other energy source anytime soon, and the economy still needs to grow. So we've got to look at how to make existing technologies and options better.

But—and this is just the point that I wanted to make because it came up in New Hampshire yesterday—we still—one of the best ways to be on the forefront in energy is to incentivize clean energy and discourage the old sources or methods that aren't going to work in the future.

And so the fact that Joe Lieberman is working with Lindsey Graham, John Kerry has been all over this, the three of them are coming together to try to find a workable, bipartisan

structure so that we are incentivizing and rewarding the future—and understanding that there's a transition so that we've got to make sure that the disruptions are minimized as we move into this new energy future—that's going to be vital.

So don't give up on that. I don't want us to just say the easy way out is for us to just give a bunch of tax credits to clean energy companies. The market works best when it responds to price. And if they start seeing that, you know what, dirty energy is a little pricier, clean energy is a little cheaper, they will innovate, and they will think things through in all kinds of innovative ways.

So I want to congratulate specifically John Kerry, Joe Lieberman, and Lindsey Graham, who it probably doesn't help him for me to compliment him—[*laughter*]—but has been very thoughtful in terms of how they're approaching this issue.

Sen. Reid. Final question, Evan Bayh, Indiana.

Democratic Party/Nondefense Discretionary Spending

Senator Evan Bayh. Thank you for being with us, Mr. President.

The President. Wait, no, no. We can get you a mike. Yes. Nice sneakers, by the way, Evan. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Bayh. Oh, thank you. You know? You've got to stay light on your feet around here, right? [*Laughter*] Mr. President, you've already addressed this in part, and several of the other questioners have raised this, but I'd like to present it in a little bit different way that I think is on the minds of people in my State, and perhaps in the minds of Independents and moderate Republicans and conservative Democrats around the country, and that's this issue of the deficit and rising debt and restoring the fiscal health of this country to a position where it ought to be.

[*Sen. Bayh made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So my question to you, Mr. President, is, speaking to Independents, conservative Democrats, moderate Republicans—people who know we have to do this—why should the Democratic Party be trusted? And are we willing to make some of the tough decisions to actually head this country in a better direction?

The President. Well, I'll tell you why the Democratic Party should be trusted, because the last time this budget was balanced, it was under a Democratic President who made some very tough decisions. So I mean, I think this is pretty straightforward. Bill Clinton made some very hard political decisions. Some of you were there in Congress. You know how tough those votes were. You got no help from the other side. But as a consequence, the economy took off, and you had a $200 billion surplus at the end of his Presidency. So I think he deserves enormous credit for that. Those of you who took those votes deserve enormous credit for that. That's why we've had—we should have credibility.

But we're still haunted by the debates that took place from the seventies, the sixties. All right? And that hasn't completely worked through the political mindset. So we're still saddled with this notion of the tax-and-spend model when, if you actually look at it, we've been very fiscally responsible.

Now, having said that, we have been complicit in some ways over the last decade: I mean, the prescription drug bill, not paid for; two wars, not paid for; two tax cuts, not paid for; the emergence of a structural deficit that is only going to grow, because we all know that the biggest drivers are Medicare and Medicaid, and as people get older, as the population gets older, and as new technologies come on line, people are demanding new services for health care, those are going to become more and more expensive, and that's what's going to blow up the budget in the long term.

So to answer your question, how do we—having said that, there's no doubt that we've lost trust. And part of it was just, look, bad timing. It's like the cartoon, right? You're sort of standing there, and somebody suddenly hands you a ticking timebomb, and it explodes, and you've got all this gunpowder on your hands, and you didn't construct the bomb, but you're holding it.

And so what happened last year was, we come in. You got a $1.3 trillion deficit that we're inheriting, you've got $3 trillion revenue that are lost because of the recession, you've got an $8 trillion projected debt over the next 10 years, and you've got trillions more in projected deficits when you start looking—counting entitlements. Kent—everybody has been looking at Kent Conrad's charts here for the last several years about it. And so at that very moment, suddenly the headlines that people are seeing is, "bank bailout," "recovery package," and it all kind of merges together into just this blob of spending, and people aren't seeing, how is this benefiting me. It just looks like Washington business as usual. And all that suspicion gets amplified. So it's completely understandable.

I think the way that we regain trust is to pursue good policies but not be afraid also to explain these policies and to be honest with the American people that we're not going to dig ourselves out of this hole overnight.

So a couple of things I've done: I have encouraged that we go back to PAYGO, pay as you go. People understand that concept: You pay as you go. I congratulate the Senate on voting for it. I expect the House to get it done. I want to sign that.

Sen. Reid. Not a single Republican.

The President. The second thing you already mentioned, is this nondefense discretionary freeze. One thing I want to mention though. It's not as if we're not going after defense as well. It's just it would be irresponsible when we have two wars for me to impose that same kind of limitation, tie my hands not knowing what contingencies may be needed. But if you look at what Bob Gates has been doing in the Defense Department in really going after some sacred cows over at the Pentagon, he's been serious about it. We've already saved billions of dollars. We intend to keep saving billions of dollars more on that front as well.

We've already proposed $20 billion worth of savings for this year by eliminating and consolidating programs. Last year, we proposed 17 billion and we were pooh-poohed. Some of the editorials were all, "Uh-huh, 17, this is a pittance." You know, only in Washington is $17 billion a pittance. But it also indicates one of the dangers that we have, is that you've got to chip away at this problem. So every dollar counts. The work that Claire has done on auditing—if we can squeeze out 5 million here, 10 million here, make this program work a little bit better, over time it creates good habits, and it starts exercising the fiscal restraint muscles in ways that won't affect programming for people but will affect our bottom line. So we're moving aggressively. We hope this year we get that stuff done.

But what we also have to understand is that if I take all the steps that I've put forward, and Congress follows my lead on the nondefense discretionary spending, we're prudent in terms of defense spending, and we do all the things that we've talked about, we've still got this structural deficit that we've inherited.

Essentially, what my proposal does is to pay for the Recovery Act and the other extraordinary steps we had to take for last year so that I will have covered what happened on my watch. That's important to understand. Whatever spending that I had to take that was extraordinary, that you took with me, including the Recovery Act, if we follow my budget outline, we will have taken care of, paid for what happened on our watch.

But what we will not have solved is that huge structural deficit that existed the day I walked in. And we've got to be able to tell the truth to the American people, that that is hard to solve. And the reason it's hard to solve is most of it is coming from entitlements that people like. And it has to do with the fact that there's this huge gap between the amount of money being paid out and the amount of money coming in.

And everybody understands this here, but I think that there's a misperception in the public. If you ask your average constituent, "Where does Federal dollars go?" they'll tell you, "Foreign aid." And you say, "Well, foreign aid accounts for 1 percent of our budget." And then they'll say, "Well, earmarks."

Look, I think we have to discipline ourselves on earmarks just because, symbolically, I think people—it makes people feel like we're not showing the same kind of discipline that they are. Even for worthy projects, you've still got to make choices. So they're absolutely right about

that. But earmarks account for about 1 percent of the budget.

All right, so even if we eliminated all foreign aid and all earmarks, it doesn't solve our problem. And as far as the arguments that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle are making, I think it's important to explain to people that in order for us to balance the budget while exempting entitlements, no new revenues, you'd have to cut nondiscretionary defense spending by 60 percent—cut it by 60 percent. That's everything—student loans, NASA, veterans programs—you name it, we'd have to cut by 60 percent. Six-zero.

That's just not going to happen. That's why we called for the commission, because we've got to look at some tough, long-term policy objectives. And that's why we've got to—and I will personally do this, I will say to my Republican friends, I want to solve it. I don't want to play politics on it, but you've got to step up, you've got to fill these slots with this commission that we're going to set up, put these people in a room, and actually solve some of these problems. And I hope they do.

And maybe I'm naive. I'm still counting, Evan, on the notion that good policy over the long term is good politics. If you do the right thing and you explain it clearly and you do it openly, I'm confident that the American people—you can have an adult conversation and say, this is not going to be easy, this is not going to be painless, we're going to be struggling for a while, but our future is bright. And if we show the same grit and determination that previous generations have shown, I have every confidence that we are going to have a 21st century that was the American century, just like the 20th.

All right? Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:09 a.m. at the Newseum. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Charles E. Schumer; Judge David F. Hamilton, 7th Circuit, U.S. Court of Appeals; Martha N. Johnson, Administrator-designate, General Services Administration; Treasury Department Senior Adviser for Auto Issues Ron Bloom, in his capacity as Senior Counselor to the President for Manufacturing Policy; and Sen. Jeffrey A. Merkley. Sen. Leahy referred to his wife Marcelle. Sen. Reid referred to Connie Schultz, wife of Sen. Brown.

Remarks During a Meeting With the Nation's Governors
February 3, 2010

The President. Well, listen, I just want to personally welcome all the Governors who are here today. As I said at the State of the Union last week, I am convinced that whoever builds a clean energy economy, whoever is at the forefront of that, is going to own the 21st-century global economy. Last year, we made the largest investment in clean energy in our history. It's an investment that's already leading to new jobs and new businesses across the country. You've got solar panel production in California. You got advanced batteries in North Carolina. Every State is starting to take advantage of a lot of what's already been done.

But if anybody read the story in the New York Times last Sunday, countries like China are moving even faster. And they're very aggressive about wanting to make sure that these clean energy jobs are in their countries. And as I said at the State of the Union, I'm not going to settle for a situation where the United States comes in second place or third place or fourth place in what will be the most important economic engine in the future.

Now, there's no reason that we shouldn't be able to work together in a bipartisan way to get this done. I know that there is some concern about how energy fits together with climate change. I happen to believe that climate change is one of the reasons why we've got to pursue a clean energy agenda, but it's not the only reason. So even if you don't believe in the severity of climate change, as I do, you still should want to pursue this agenda. It's good for our national security and reducing our dependence on foreign oil. It's good for our economy because it will produce jobs.

We can't afford to spin our wheels while the rest of the world speeds ahead. And that's why I've asked these Governors, leaders in their own right and their States around energy issues, Democrats and Republicans, to meet here today so that we can work through some of these challenges and opportunities that are presented by the transition to a clean energy economy.

I want to be clear that my administration is following a nonideological approach to this issue. We believe in a strategy of more production, more efficiency, and more incentives for clean energy. We're willing to make some tough decisions on issues like offshore drilling, so long as we protect coastlines and communities. We are moving forward on a new generation of nuclear power plants, although we want to make sure that they are safe and secure.

One of the things that we're going to be talking about today is investing in the kind of technology that will allow us to use coal, our most bountiful natural resource here in the United States, without polluting our planet.

It's been said that the United States is the Saudi Arabia of coal, and that's because, as I said, it's one of our most abundant energy resources. If we can develop the technology to capture the carbon pollution released by coal, it can create jobs and provide energy well into the future. So today I'm announcing a Carbon Capture and Storage Task Force that will be charged with the goal of figuring out how we can deploy affordable clean coal technology on a widespread scale within 10 years. And we want to get up 10 commercial demonstration projects, get those up and running by 2016.

We're also going to be talking about some developments we're making on biofuels, so that more folks can start filling up their cars and trucks with cleaner, American-grown fuels. By 2022, we will more than double the amount of biofuels we produce to 36 billion gallons, which will decrease our dependence on foreign oil by hundreds of millions of barrels per year. We're also working to make sure that we can start turning things like plants and wood chips into heat, power, and biofuels, and that'll create new economic opportunities for rural communities. And our biofuels working group is releasing its first report that details the Government's strategy for supporting the biofuels industry.

The bottom line is this: I am convinced that America can win the race to build a clean energy economy, but we're going to have to overcome the weight of our own politics. We have to focus not so much on those narrow areas where we disagree, but on the broad areas where we agree.

And I also think it's important for us to understand that in order for us to move forward with a robust energy policy, we've got to have not an either-or philosophy, but a both-and philosophy, a philosophy that says traditional sources of energy are going to continue to be important for a while so we've got to just use technologies to make them cleaner and more efficient, that we're going to have to pursue an energy efficiency agenda across our economy.

We're going to also have to develop new sources of energy that allow us to take advantage of sun, wind, our coastlines, and in ways that, over time, can actually enhance our standards of living, create jobs, and also protect our environment.

That's the agenda I want to pursue. I am confident that's the agenda that these Governors want to pursue as well. And so I'm grateful to have them here, and I'm looking forward to hearing their ideas.

I should point out, obviously, that we also have our key Cabinet members here—Steven Chu, Tom Vilsack, Ken Salazar, Lisa Jackson—who are here, as well as Nancy Sutley at our Council of Environmental Quality and Carol Browner, who's doing a lot of our coordination in the White House, so that we've got our top people on energy and the environment in the room to have this discussion.

Now, with that, I want to give Joe just a brief chance to speak, and then we'll open it up.

[*At this point, Vice President Joe Biden made brief remarks.*]

The President. And let's get it done. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:06 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden.

Statement on National Girls and Women in Sports Day
February 3, 2010

National Girls and Women in Sports Day is a time for us all to commemorate the participation of women and girls in sports and athletics and celebrate their achievements. Women compete at all levels today, in large part due to the foundation laid by title IX, which has done much to advance the number of women taking part in collegiate athletic programs and has increased access to the classroom. Today, as we celebrate, we must also recognize that more needs to be done, and we should recommit ourselves to achieving true equality for all.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on North Korea
February 3, 2010

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Pursuant to section 1255 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 (Public Law 111–84), and in order to keep the Congress fully informed, I am providing a classified report prepared by my Administration. This report includes information on our examination of the conduct of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) from June 26, 2008, through November 16, 2009, and concludes that the DPRK does not meet the statutory criteria to again be designated as a state sponsor of terrorism.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

Remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast
February 4, 2010

Thank you so much. Heads of state, Cabinet members, my outstanding Vice President, Members of Congress, religious leaders, distinguished guests, Admiral Mullen: It's good to see all of you. Now, let me begin by acknowledging the cochairs of this breakfast, Senators Isakson and Klobuchar, who embody the sense of fellowship at the heart of this gathering. They're two of my favorite Senators. Let me also acknowledge the Director of my faith-based office, Joshua DuBois, who is here. Where's Joshua? He's out there somewhere. He's doing great work.

I want to commend Secretary Hillary Clinton on her outstanding remarks and her outstanding leadership at the State Department. She's doing good every day. I'm especially pleased to see my dear friend Prime Minister Zapatero, and I want him to relay America's greetings to the people of Spain. And, Johnny, you are right, I am deeply blessed, and I thank God every day for being married to Michelle Obama.

Now, I'm privileged to join you once again, as my predecessors have for over half a century. And like them, I come here to speak about the ways my faith informs who I am as a President and as a person. But I'm also here for the same reason that all of you are, for we all share a recognition—one as old as time—that a willingness to believe, an openness to grace, a

commitment to prayer can bring sustenance to our lives.

There is, of course, a need for prayer even in times of joy and peace and prosperity. Perhaps especially in such times, prayer is needed to guard against pride and to guard against complacency. But rightly or wrongly, most of us are inclined to seek out the divine not in the moment when the Lord makes His face shine upon us, but in moments when God's grace can seem farthest away.

Last month, God's grace, God's mercy seemed far away from our neighbors in Haiti. And yet I believe that grace was not absent in the midst of tragedy. It was heard in prayers and hymns that broke the silence of an earthquake's wake. It was witnessed among parishioners of churches that stood no more, a roadside congregation holding Bibles in their laps. It was felt in the presence of relief workers and medics, translators, service men and women bringing food and water and aid to the injured.

One such translator was an American of Haitian descent, representative of the extraordinary work that our men and women in uniform do all around the world, Navy Corpsman Christian [Christopher]* Brossard. And lying on a gurney aboard the USNS *Comfort*, a woman asked Christopher: "Where do you come from? What country?" "After my operation," she said, "I will pray for that country." And in Creole, Corpsman Brossard responded, "*Zetazini*"—the United States of America.

God's grace and the compassion and decency of the American people is expressed through the men and women like Corpsman Brossard. It's expressed through the efforts of our Armed Forces, through the efforts of our entire Government, through similar efforts from Spain and other countries around the world. It's also, as Secretary Clinton said, expressed through multiple faith-based efforts, by evangelicals at World Relief, by the American Jewish World Service, by Hindu temples, and mainline Protestants, Catholic Relief Services, African American churches, the United Sikhs, by Americans of every faith, and no faith, uniting around a common purpose, a higher purpose.

It's inspiring. This is what we do, as Americans, in times of trouble. We unite, recognizing that such crises call on all of us to act, recognizing that there but for the grace of God go I, recognizing that life's most sacred responsibility—one affirmed, as Hillary said, by all of the world's great religions—is to sacrifice something of ourselves for a person in need.

Sadly, though, that spirit is too often absent when tackling the long-term, but no less profound, issues facing our country and the world. Too often, that spirit is missing without the spectacular tragedy—the 9/11 or the Katrina, the earthquake or the tsunami—that can shake us out of complacency. We become numb to the day-to-day crises, the slow-moving tragedies of children without food and men without shelter and families without health care. We become absorbed with our abstract arguments, our ideological disputes, our contests for power. And in this Tower of Babel, we lose the sound of God's voice.

Now, for those of us here in Washington, let's acknowledge that democracy has always been messy. Let's not be overly nostalgic. Divisions are hardly new in this country. Arguments about the proper role of government, the relationship between liberty and equality, our obligations to our fellow citizens, these things have been with us since our founding. And I'm profoundly mindful that a loyal opposition, a vigorous back and forth, a skepticism of power, all of that is what makes our democracy work.

And we've seen, actually, some improvement in some circumstances. We haven't seen any canings on the floor of the Senate any time recently. [*Laughter*] So we shouldn't overromanticize the past. But there is a sense that something is different now, that something is broken, that those of us in Washington are not serving the people as well as we should. At times, it seems like we're unable to listen to one another, to have at once a serious and civil debate. And this erosion of civility in the public square sows division and distrust among our citizens. It poisons the well of public opinion. It leaves each side little room to negotiate with the other. It makes politics an all-or-nothing sport, where

* White House correction.

one side is either always right or always wrong, when in reality neither side has a monopoly on truth. And then we lose sight of the children without food and the men without shelter and the families without health care.

Empowered by faith, consistently, prayerfully, we need to find our way back to civility. That begins with stepping out of our comfort zones in an effort to bridge divisions. We see that in many conservative pastors who are helping lead the way to fix our broken immigration system. It's not what would be expected from them, and yet they recognize, in those immigrant families, the face of God. We see that in the evangelical leaders who are rallying their congregations to protect our planet. We see it in the increasing recognition among progressives that government can't solve all of our problems and that talking about values like responsible fatherhood and healthy marriage are integral to any antipoverty agenda. Stretching out of our dogmas, our prescribed roles along the political spectrum, that can help us regain a sense of civility.

Civility also requires relearning how to disagree without being disagreeable, understanding, as President [Kennedy]* said, that "civility is not a sign of weakness." Now, I am the first to confess I am not always right. Michelle will testify to that. [*Laughter*] But surely you can question my policies without questioning my faith or, for that matter, my citizenship. [*Laughter*]

Challenging each other's ideas can renew our democracy. But when we challenge each other's motives, it becomes harder to see what we hold in common. We forget that we share, at some deep level, the same dreams, even when we don't share the same plans on how to fulfill them.

We may disagree about the best way to reform our health care system, but surely we can agree that no one ought to go broke when they get sick in the richest nation on Earth. We can take different approaches to ending inequality, but surely we can agree on the need to lift our children out of ignorance, to lift our neighbors from poverty. We may disagree about gay marriage, but surely we can agree that it is unconscionable to target gays and lesbians for who they are, whether it's here in the United States or, as Hillary mentioned, more extremely in odious laws that are being proposed most recently in Uganda.

Surely we can agree to find common ground when possible, parting ways when necessary. But in doing so, let us be guided by our faith and by prayer. For while prayer can buck us up when we are down, keep us calm in a storm, while prayer can stiffen our spines to surmount an obstacle—and I assure you I'm praying a lot these days—prayer can also do something else. It can touch our hearts with humility. It can fill us with a spirit of brotherhood. It can remind us that each of us are children of a awesome and loving God.

Through faith, but not through faith alone, we can unite people to serve the common good. And that's why my Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships has been working so hard since I announced it here last year. We've slashed redtape and built effective partnerships on a range of uses, from promoting fatherhood here at home to spearheading interfaith cooperation abroad. And through that office, we've turned the faith-based initiative around to find common ground among people of all beliefs, allowing them to make an impact in a way that's civil and respectful of difference and focused on what matters most.

It is this spirit of civility that we are called to take up when we leave here today. That's what I'm praying for. I know in difficult times like these, when people are frustrated, when pundits start shouting and politicians start calling each other names, it can seem like a return to civility is not possible, like the very idea is a relic of some bygone era. The word itself seems quaint, "civility."

But let us remember those who came before, those who believed in the brotherhood of man even when such a faith was tested. Remember Dr. Martin Luther King. Not long after an explosion ripped through his front porch, his wife and infant daughter inside, he rose to that pulpit in Montgomery and said,

* White House correction.

"Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend." In the eyes of those who denied his humanity, he saw the face of God.

Remember Abraham Lincoln. On the eve of the Civil War, with States seceding and forces gathering, with a nation divided half slave and half free, he rose to deliver his first Inaugural and said, "We are not enemies, but friends . . . Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection." Even in the eyes of Confederate soldiers, he saw the face of God.

Remember William Wilberforce, whose Christian faith led him to seek slavery's abolition in Britain. He was vilified, derided, attacked, but he called for "lessening prejudices [and] conciliating good will, and thereby making way for the less obstructed progress of truth." In the eyes of those who sought to silence a nation's conscience, he saw the face of God.

Yes, there are crimes of conscience that call us to action. Yes, there are causes that move our hearts and offenses that stir our souls. But progress doesn't come when we demonize opponents. It's not born in righteous spite. Progress comes when we open our hearts, when we extend our hands, when we recognize our common humanity. Progress comes when we look into the eyes of another and see the face of God. That we might do so—that we will do so all the time, not just some of the time, is my fervent prayer for our Nation and the world.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:08 a.m. at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Joshua DuBois, Director, White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerhsips.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Pay-As-You-Go Legislation
February 4, 2010

I am pleased that the House of Representatives has passed Statutory Pay-As-You-Go (PAYGO) into law. Statutory PAYGO would hold us to a simple but bedrock principle: Congress can only spend a dollar if it saves a dollar elsewhere. Mandatory spending increases and tax cuts must be paid for; they're not free, and borrowing to finance them is not a sustainable long-term policy.

It is no coincidence that when we last had statutory PAYGO, during the 1990s, we turned deficits into surpluses. The passage of statutory PAYGO today will help usher out an era of irresponsibility and begin putting the country back on a fiscally sustainable path.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser and a Question-and-Answer Session
February 4, 2010

The President. Hello, everybody! Thank you. Well——

Audience member. Yes we can!

The President. Thank you. It is wonderful to see so many good friends. First of all, I want to thank Michele for the wonderful introduction and great story that she told. I want to thank Tim Kaine, who has been not only an outstanding leader for us but one of the best Governors Virginia has ever had. Give Tim Kaine a big round of applause.

I understand we've got thousands of people online, so I just want to say to all the folks online, thank you for joining us. We appreciate it. And I want all of you to know right off the bat how much I appreciate what each and every one of you has done, not just for me, but for the country.

Now, many of you were on the frontlines in our campaign, some of you from the very beginning, making phone calls and knocking on doors and trudging through the frozen fields of Iowa.

You didn't know the snow was moving this way. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. We can handle it!

The President. We can handle it. You staked your reputation on some guy that nobody had ever heard of—couldn't pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] Some of you got involved in a campaign for the very first time. In some cases, you just got involved for the first time in a very long time. Because you believed that we were at a defining moment in our Nation's history, that your voice could make a difference. And not a single day goes by when I don't think of the time, the energy, the money, the undying faith that you put into a campaign that wasn't just about winning an election, it was about changing a country.

Last year, we asked you to take on something new. We asked you to help us make the promise of the campaign a reality. And I know how hard many of you have worked in your communities to do that, either as part of Organizing for America or simply by talking to your friends and neighbors, your coworkers. What you do matters. It's made the successes of the last year possible.

It's because of you that we were able to uphold the principle of equal pay for equal work. It's because of you that we lifted the ban on stem cell research and began restoring science to its rightful place in America. It's because of you that we extended the promise of health care to 4 million children who didn't have it. It's because of you that we passed the strongest veterans budget in decades. It's because of you that we protected families from getting ripped off by credit card companies and children from being targeted by big tobacco and responsible consumers from the twin plagues of mortgage fraud and predatory lending.

We appointed Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court. We passed a service bill named for Ted Kennedy that's giving young people and not-so-young people new ways to give back to their community. We've begun working with Congress and our military to finally repeal the law that denies gay Americans the right to serve the country that they love because of who they are.

That's what your support has helped us do here at home. Abroad, we've begun a new era of engagement. We're working with our partners to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, and seek a world free of them. We're working with other nations to confront climate change. We banned torture. We're rebuilding our military and reaffirming our alliances. We've begun to leave Iraq to its own people. We've charted a new way forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan. And we've made progress in taking the fight to Al Qaida across the globe. I went to Cairo on behalf of America to begin a new dialogue with the Muslim world. And we are living up to a moment that demands American leadership by standing tall alongside the people of Haiti.

So in ways large and small, we've begun to deliver on the change that you believed in. But the reason you and I are here tonight is because there's so much more work to be done.

On the day I took office, we confronted a financial system on the brink of collapse, an economy bleeding 700,000 jobs per month, a $1.3 trillion deficit, and two wars that were costly in every sense of the word.

The solutions to these challenges wouldn't be quick or easy, and sometimes they wouldn't be popular. We knew that. But we decided that we were going to govern. We decided that we were going to lead. We didn't have our finger out to the wind. We weren't reading the polls every minute. We decided that we would begin a long and difficult journey to get this country back where it needs to be.

And because of the bold, swift, and coordinated action we took, we can stand here today and say we prevented another depression. We broke the back of the recession. The economy that was shrinking by 6 percent a year ago is now growing by 6 percent.

So the worst of the storm has passed, but all of you know from what you see in your own lives, what you see in your neighborhoods, what you see on the job is that a lot of devastation remains. Many of you are seeing it in your own communities: shuttered businesses; foreclosed homes; friends, neighbors, family members who still can't find work. And on top of all this, you've got the underlying challenges that

middle class families were dealing with for decades.

For 2 years, I traveled this country with you, and everywhere I went, I heard stories of folks who were trying their best to hold it all together while working harder and harder for less money. We heard families sitting around the kitchen table wondering if a secure retirement was even possible, if a college education was still achievable, if the climb of health care costs would ever stop. We heard people wondering if the dream that generations of Americans had built and defended was slowly slipping away.

Those are the stories that caused me to run for President of the United States. Those are the stories that led you to support me. Those are the stories that lead us to do every single thing that we can to create an economy that hasn't just recovered, but where hard work is valued and responsibility is rewarded, where businesses are hiring and wages are rising, where our middle class is getting stronger and feeling more secure.

Now, our most urgent task is job creation. That was our number-one priority last year; it's our number-one priority this year. So we'll give tax breaks and loans to small business to help them hire new workers and raise wages and invest in new plants and equipment. We'll put even more Americans to work constructing clean energy facilities and upgrading our infrastructure for the future. We'll create incentives for consumers to make their homes more energy efficient, creating jobs and saving families money. And it's time that we put an end to tax breaks for companies that are shipping jobs overseas. We need to give those tax breaks to companies that create jobs right here in the United States of America.

But the truth is, these steps alone won't make up for the 7 million jobs that we've lost over the last 2 years. Those steps alone won't make up for the economic security—insecurity that middle class families have lost over the past decade. The only way to do that is to lay a new foundation for long-term economic growth. The only way to do that is to finally confront the problems that Washington has put off for too long and that we've been talking about for decades.

Now, here's the deal, though, folks. This is where change gets hard, when you start going after the real hard things that have been holding us back for so long. This is where we start running headlong into the lobbyists and the special interests; this is where the bitterness and misinformation that has come to characterize so much of our politics starts rearing its ugly head. I know some of you might feel discouraged because changing the ways of Washington is hard; it's harder than a lot of you thought it might be. Sometimes it may make you feel like—that it's not possible. You might want to give up.

Audience member. We believe in you!

The President. Don't give up. I don't want you to feel discouraged. I want you to understand that it just means we got to push that much harder. It means that we've got to keep up the fight. The forces of the status quo may not give an inch, but we will not give an inch. Because we didn't come this far to put things off; we didn't come here to play it safe; we didn't do all this work to take the easy road to get through the next election.

Audience member. Yes we can!

The President. That's not why you elected me. You came here to solve problems, once and for all, for the next generation.

Audience member. Yes we can!

The President. That begins by opening this Government up to the people. We were the first White House ever to post all our visitors online. We excluded lobbyists from policymaking jobs or seats on Federal boards and commissions. I've called on Congress to make all earmark requests public on one central web site before they come up for a vote so that you can see how your money is spent.

And even as we open up Government, we also have to change its tone. And I won't give up on that either. The American people are right to be frustrated by a Washington where every single day is election day. It's a place so absorbed with how each party is doing that it loses sight of how the American people are doing.

And that's why I went and visited with the House Republican caucus last Friday. And we had a good exchange, a good discussion about the challenges facing the American people, our

ideas to solve them. We think it was good for the country. I had fun. [*Laughter*]

Now, look, obviously, there's some issues where we don't agree. That's okay. Vigorous debate is healthy. We'll tussle from time to time. That's what democracy is all about. But there's some issues we do agree on. So I told my Republican friends I want to work together when we can, and I meant it. I believe that if we put a focus on solving problems instead of scoring political points, we can get a lot done together. Now, I also made clear that I'm going to call them out if what they're offering are political talking points that won't solve problems. And I had to insist that we have to throw out that tired old playbook that says blocking everything is easier than actually delivering for the American people. Otherwise, we won't move this country forward.

And ultimately, that's why I'm here. That's why you're here. That's why you joined this campaign. That's why you've helped this past year. That's why I need your help now, because you know as well as anyone that change never comes without a fight. And we've got some fights to wage.

We're going to keep fighting to spark innovation and ignite a clean energy sector where American workers are making solar panels and wind towers and cutting-edge batteries, because the nation that leads the clean energy economy will be the nation that leads the global economy.

We're going to keep fighting to give every American the best education possible. That's why we launched the Race to the Top program, to make sure every school lives up to its potential so that every child lives up to their potential. That's why we're strengthening our community colleges. That's why we're making higher education more affordable, because nobody should go broke because they chose to go to college.

That's why we're going to keep fighting for commonsense rules of the road for Wall Street. Look, let me be clear: We need a strong financial sector. I want our banks to thrive in loaning money to businesses who are hiring workers and investing in plants and equipment and making things. Without a stable, strong financial sector, businesses can't get the capital they need to grow and create jobs, and families can't finance a home loan or education.

And the truth is, is that not every person on Wall Street was engaging in shenanigans. [*Laughter*] Not all of them. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Just most!

The President. And the truth is, is that the—I want to hear ideas about how we can strengthen the financial sector in a responsible way. But surely we can all agree that we have to ensure our economy is never again brought to its knees by outdated and inadequate financial rules or by the irresponsibility of the few. So we're going to keep on fighting for that.

I would think this is going to be a bipartisan effort—[*laughter*]—I would think—because everybody has been harmed by what's happened. And every voter out there—Democrat, Republican, Independent—is furious about what happened. So I—my hope would be that Washington would respond.

And yes, we are going to keep fighting to fix a health system that too often works better for the insurance industry than it does for the American people.

Audience member. Yes we can!

The President. Now, I—you heard me at the State of the Union—I didn't take this on because it was good politics. I love how the pundits on these cable shows, they all announce, "Oh, boy, this was really tough politically for the President." Well, I've got my own pollsters; I know—[*laughter*]—I knew this was hard. I knew seven Presidents had failed. I knew seven Congresses hadn't gotten it done. You don't think I got warnings, "Don't try to take this on"? [*Laughter*] I got those back in December of last year.

Audience member. You can do it. We're proud of you.

The President. So yes, we knew this was hard. But I took it on because families were at the mercy of skyrocketing premiums, soaring out-of-pocket costs, insurance companies that routinely deny coverage because of preexisting conditions, or see their insurance dropped altogether because they get sick.

We took it on because costs were closing small businesses. They were keeping larger ones from competing on a level playing field. They were eating into workers' take-home pay. They were canceling raises.

We took it on because it's the single best way to bring down our deficits. By the way, nobody has disputed that. When I was before the Republican caucus, it was very clear. I said, look, you say you're concerned about deficit reduction. Nobody can dispute the fact that if we don't tackle surging health care costs, that we can't get control of our budget. And by the way, the approach that we put forward would reduce our deficit by as much as a trillion dollars over the next two decades.

We took it on because every single day, 15,000 Americans join the tens of millions who don't have health insurance, and every single year, 18,000 Americans die because of it.

I got a letter—I got a note today from one of my staff—they forwarded it to me—from a woman in St. Louis who had been part of our campaign, very active, who had passed away from breast cancer. She didn't have insurance. She couldn't afford it. So she had put off having the kind of exams that she needed. And she had fought a tough battle for 4 years. All through the campaign, she was fighting it, but finally, she succumbed to it. And she insisted she's going to be buried in an Obama T-shirt. [*Laughter*]

But think about this: She was fighting that whole time not just to get me elected, not even to get herself health insurance, but because she understood that there were others coming behind her who were going to find themselves in the same situation and she didn't want somebody else going through that same thing. How can I say to her: "You know what? We're giving up"? How can I say to her family, "This is too hard"? How can Democrats on the Hill say, "This is politically too risky"? How can Republicans on the Hill say, "We're better off just blocking anything from happening"?

That can't be the message that the American people are delivering. Yes, they're nervous; they're anxious; they're in a tough time right now. The thing they want most are jobs. They really don't like the process in Washington, the sausage-making. That part I understand. But I know that they don't—but I know they don't want to just offer nothing to the millions of people in America who are in the situation that that woman was in. That's what we campaigned on. And we are going to keep on working to get it done, with Democrats and I hope with Republicans and everybody else in between, to bring down costs, to end the worst practices of the insurance industry, to finally give every American the chance to choose quality, affordable health care. We are going to keep on working to get it done.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. I am not going to walk away from these fights. And I know you won't, because you didn't before. You didn't when folks were slamming doors in your faces—[*laughter*]—"Barama who?" [*Laughter*] You didn't quit when you heard voices saying we should scale back and throttle down and accept less. You remember that. When folks were saying our sights were set too high, that our faith in this country was misplaced, that our hope was naïve, that you couldn't change Washington, that you had to accommodate yourself to the political realities. You've all heard that. You didn't listen to those voices then; your voice proved them wrong. You proved that nothing can withstand the power of millions of voices that are calling for change.

That is what you did. That's what I'm asking you to do again now. And it's even tougher now than it was, because governing, delivering for the American people, is harder than campaigning. It's going to—and you guys——

Audience member. We need campaign finance reform!

The President. I heard you the first time, sister. [*Laughter*] We're fighting for that too.

You guys, I just want to remind you, this is an extraordinary moment in our history. We have been given the opportunity to change our country for the better. That change begins with each of you in this room and all of you watching all across America. It begins when you refuse to settle for the status quo, when you reject the cynicism and the skepticism that we can no longer do big things in America, when you believe

that people who love their country can change it. That's how we're going to finish what we started, because we do not back down; we don't quit; I don't quit. I'm still fired up. I'm still ready to go, and it's because of you.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

Audience members. We don't quit! We don't quit! We don't quit!

The President. Hello, hello, hello. Now, my understanding—everybody know Mitch?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Mitch has, I believe, four questions that he has drawn from the list of questions that were sent from all across the country, and I'm going to try to answer them. So with that, Mitch.

Health Care Reform/Bipartisan Cooperation

Organizing for America Director Mitch Stewart. Great. Thank you, sir. Our first question comes, Mr. President, from one of OFA's dedicated community organizers, Dream Gunther in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It's a question that's on a lot of folks' minds within OFA and, I think, across the country: "How can we help pass health care reform, and what is the strategy to move it forward?"

The President. It is a good question. We are closer to a health care reform system that works for all Americans than we have ever been. Never before have you seen a bill pass through the House and then a bill pass through the Senate and where 90 percent of those bills—those two bills overlap. Democrats in the House and the Senate have been in discussions over the last several weeks to finalize a package that represents the best ideas of both the House and the Senate.

Here's what we know will be in it. It provides coverage to at least 30 million Americans who don't have it. Many of those are small-business owners or workers for small businesses. It creates an exchange, a marketplace, where people who don't have health insurance or small businesses that want to get a better deal can pool their purchasing power and then negotiate with insurance companies to drive down costs and drive down premiums—the same way, by the way, that Federal workers and Members of Congress, by the way, and people who work for big companies are able to get a better deal because they're part of a bigger pool.

It has insurance reforms that benefit everybody, potentially, who has health insurance or currently doesn't have health insurance so that we put an end to, for example, the practice of not being able to get health insurance because of a preexisting condition. We make sure that they can't just drop you when you get sick and you need insurance the most.

And we've got a whole series of measures for cost reductions in the health care system over the long term, by reducing waste and unnecessary tests that are duplicative and end up wasting money, by ensuring that there's strong prevention funding so that children are getting regular checkups and they can go to see a doctor instead of going to the emergency room.

So—and by the way, all of it is paid for. And not only is it deficit neutral, but the Congressional Budget Office, which is the bipartisan office that's the scorekeeper for how much things cost in Congress, says it's going to reduce our costs by a trillion dollars.

Now, those two bills weren't identical, so it was important for folks in both the House and the Senate to sit down and figure out what's the final bill that the Democrats believe in and want to move forward. The next step is what I announced at the State of the Union, which is to call on our Republican friends to present their ideas. What I'd like to do is have a meeting whereby I'm sitting with the Republicans, sitting with the Democrats, sitting with health care experts, and let's just go through these bills—their ideas, our ideas—let's walk through them in a methodical way so that the American people can see and compare what makes the most sense.

And then I think that we've got to go ahead and move forward on a vote. We've got to move forward on a vote. But as I said at the State of the Union, I think we should be very deliberate, take our time. We're going to be moving a jobs package forward over the next several weeks; that's the thing that's most urgent right now in the minds of Americans all across the country. And that will allow everybody to get the real facts, both about the

health care crisis that we face, why it's so important for deficit reduction, why it's so important for families all across the country. It allows us to see, are there, in fact, some better ideas out there?

I mean, when I was at the Republican caucus, somebody told me they had an idea to provide universal coverage and it wouldn't cost anything. [*Laughter*] Which, to my mind—I thought, that's great—[*laughter*]—I want to see that. Now, I did say I want to make sure that there are some independent health care experts and economists and doctors who would confirm this. But if they can confirm it, why wouldn't I want to take that? I wish I'd thought of that before. [*Laughter*]

But here's the key, is to not let the moment slip away. And I have to say that part of what makes health care so hard and why we are the only advanced nation on Earth that doesn't have some form of universal health care is because even when the system doesn't work, people still want to kind of cling on to the devil they know because they're worried about the devil they don't. It's very easy to scare folks. I mean, if you go out there right now and you ask the average person—and some of you have done this, talked to your friends, talked to your neighbors—they are certain that they would have to go into a Government plan, which isn't true, but that's still a perception a lot of people have. They're still pretty sure that they'd have to give up their doctor. They're still pretty sure that if they're happy with their health care plan, that it's bad for them. They're still positive that this is going to add to the deficit.

So there's a lot of information out there that people, understandably, are concerned about. And that's why I think it's very important for us to have a methodical, open process over the next several weeks, and then let's go ahead and make a decision. And it may be that, you know, if Congress decides we're not going to do it, even after all the facts are laid out, all the options are clear, then the American people can make a judgment as to whether this Congress has done the right thing for them or not. And that's how democracy works. And there will be elections coming up, and they'll be able to make a determination and register their concerns one way or the other during election time. All right?

Bank Lending/Loans for Small Businesses

Mr. Stewart. Mr. President, the second question comes to us via e-mail from El Paso, Texas. Rebecca Harris writes: "What can be done to get money to small businesses? I keep hearing that banks are still not loaning because of lack of confidence. Do smaller banks have the ability to get money, with the stipulation that they loan it out, so that we can get the economy moving again?"

The President. This is a really important question. I've been traveling a lot lately, doing town hall meetings and then talking to small-business owners as I'm traveling around the country. And everywhere I go, I hear the same thing, which is: "We feel like the economy is starting to improve, and we're starting to get orders again. We want to expand." Or, "We need to replenish our inventory." Or, "We are interested in maybe hiring another two or three workers because we can't just keep on putting all our current workers on overtime." So they're on the brink of wanting to expand, move, hire, but what they're saying is, we still can't get financing.

Now, credit is now available for the biggest companies, and they are actually starting to make investments. Every indicator out there is that the economy, across the board, including in manufacturing, is starting to make investments again.

But the big companies may be able to get credit; small companies still can't. And when you talk to the smaller banks, what they'll say is, "Well, on the one hand, the regulators are looking over our shoulder. They used to say it was fine for us to make these loans. Now they're saying we shouldn't."

So that's one concern. And another concern is, some of them still have pretty tough liabilities on their books because a lot of them lent into commercial real estate or other loans that they're not sure are going to get repaid.

So what we've done is twofold. One is, we've said, how can we get some money directly out there through the Small Business Administration? And we've ramped up lending through the

Small Business Administration by 70 percent, and we have eliminated fees, and we have increased guarantees so that you're seeing a huge increase in the volume of small-business loans.

The problem is, the SBA can't cover all the need out there. And there are 30,000 community banks out there that are serving their communities and small businesses, so we've got to get money to them. That's why what we've said is, let's get $30 billion that's been repaid as a consequence of the big banks getting well and having to repay their TARP money, let's take that money and set up a fund whereby we can start lending that money through small banks.

Now, the last thing I'd say is—I was asked, is there a way of stipulating that this will go to particular loans? We don't want the Government to be in the business of saying, you have to give this loan or deny that loan, because we're not on the ground and we can't review each and every one of those loans. But we are very confident that the most efficient way for us to get money to small businesses is to make sure that the community banks are getting these financing facilities that allow them to get money out. And if they do, we think that that's going to be a major job creator right now.

Education/Energy

Mr. Stewart. Mr. President, as you might know, Gen44 is the newest program at the DNC aimed at empowering young leadership across this country. A Gen44 member, Eric Casher, sent along our third question: "As young people, we've always been taught that America leads the world, both by the strength of our ideals and the might of our economy. We're frustrated and worried, though, that other nations—in particular, China—are moving ahead of the U.S. in investing in new industries to create the jobs of the 21st century. What are you doing, and what can we do, to make sure we're not left behind?"

The President. Well, I had lunch with some corporate CEOs—big companies—we want to increase exports; we want to start selling overseas. We've been an economy that just is consuming; that's not good for our long-term economic growth. We want to produce and sell. So I talked to them about this, and every one of them was concerned about us falling behind in some key areas relative not just to China but countries like South Korea and other Asian countries, in some cases, in some sectors, European countries.

Number one, we have to revamp our education system. That's why I'm so proud of what we've done with—[*applause*]—that's why I'm so proud with what we've done with Race to the Top. We want to reward excellence.

Now, the Federal Government doesn't provide the majority of funding for schools. Mostly it comes from local school districts. But the money that we do give, let's make sure we're incentivizing best practices, getting the best teachers in front of the classroom, making sure that we've got the best data on how to improve school performance, making sure that we're targeting some of those low-performing schools, because we can't just look at the schools that are in the middle; we've got to bring schools that are at the bottom up to snuff because that's going to be our future workforce. So that's number one.

That includes, by the way, making sure that we meet our 2020 goal of once again having the highest rate of college graduation in the world. We used to be number one; we're not number one any longer. We've got to produce more math and science graduates. Those are all going to be top priorities.

The second thing: Everybody sees energy as a prime source of growth in the future, and we're already slipping behind. We're slipping behind in some traditional industries like the nuclear industry. That, I think, is a mistake. If you care about greenhouse gases, we've got to look at a safe and secure nuclear industry.

But we have to look at new, alternative energy sources of the future. And I'm proud that the Recovery Act gave the biggest investment of clean energy—made the biggest investment of clean energy both in research and development, but also actual construction and commercial application in history.

And we've got to build on that investment from last year. We've got to push hard this year so that we are once again the leaders in

solar and wind and high-efficiency batteries that can lead to the plug-in automobiles of the future.

We've got to finally set up an infrastructure that spurs on that kind of long-term growth. And that means having a smart electricity grid that can take all that good energy from solar and wind and take it from a place like South Dakota down to Chicago, into a garage, where somebody is then plugging in that plug-in hybrid that's getting 150 miles per gallon of gas, which will lead us to energy independence; it will lead to jobs right here in the United States of America. But it requires leadership, and it requires us to build for the future and not just look backwards.

And the most important thing right now, I think, for our economic growth is for the American people to feel confident about our future. You know, we've gone through these periods before. Some of you are old enough—not all of you—but remember back in the eighties how everybody was saying, "Oh, Japan is taking over, and they're buying everything here, and we're on decline"? This happens periodically, every 30, 40 years or so, maybe every 25. Suddenly everybody announces, "Oh, America is on decline," and there's some new competitor out there. It was Japan; now it's China.

We have the best workers in the world, we got the best universities in the world, we've got the most dynamic economy in the world, but we can't be afraid of the future. And we've got to have a government, a political system, that works not as an impediment to business, but one that works to lay the conditions for business success. That's how we grew in the past. We built an interstate railroad system; that was not just done on its own. We built an Interstate Highway System; that wasn't—that didn't just happen overnight. The Internet didn't just, you know, suddenly appear. Those were all investments in which Government helped to seed and catalyze growth, and then it moved forward. And that's what we've got to do today.

All right, last question.

Education/Tuition and Student Loan Assistance

Mr. Stewart. Last question, sir, comes from an OFA community organizer, Brandon Fureigh in southern California. Brandon writes: "I'm a 28-year-old volunteer with OFA. Even with a full-tuition scholarship, I had to work three part-time jobs. I barely could afford food and had little time to study. As my grades started to drop, I decided to drop out rather than ruin my hopes of doing well in school. I would like to go back to school full time. How are you going to help people like me to make it easier to go back to school and make a lasting contribution to our country?"

The President. Here's what we've already done. We've significantly increased Pell grants, made them more accessible to more people, and increased the level so that they would actually pay for a community college education or a 4-year college education. The next step is to relieve the burden that so many young people are feeling in terms of the amount of debt that they're taking out just to go to school.

So what we've said is this—and there's legislation pending right now that we want to get passed this year that says to every young person in America, you go to college, you will not have to pay more than 10 percent of your income in repaying student loans. So you are assured not to go broke—you will not go broke when you choose to go to college. Not only that, after 20 years, assuming you've been making regular payments, your debt is forgiven. And if you go into public service, if you're a teacher or a firefighter or some other—or you're working for NASA or any other public service out there, then we will see your loans forgiven after 10 years, because you're probably not going to be making as much money.

Not only is the legislation pending, but we know how it can be paid for, which is to stop providing subsidies to banks and financial institutions that are serving as middlemen on student loans. Let's have those loans go directly to the students. That will save us billions of dollars; that will pay for every single dime of the program that I just talked about.

That's the kind of change you can believe in. That's what we've got to do, but I'm going to need all of you to work.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:15 p.m. at the Capital Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Timothy M. Kaine, chairman, Democratic National Committee. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 5.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser
February 4, 2010

Hello, everybody! Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat, especially Tom McMillen and Dikembe Mutombo. [*Laughter*] Every time I stand next to them I look like a little kid. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank three people who are just extraordinarily important to the project of rebuilding our country and have just been great friends of mine, great friends of the Democratic Party—you already heard from one—please give it up for Governor Tim Kaine; our DNC finance chair, Jane Stetson, who's racking up a lot of frequent flier miles; and Andy Tobias, our DNC treasurer—hey, Andy.

It is great to see all of you here tonight, wonderful to see so many good friends, many of you who were there from the beginning of this campaign. And I want you to all know that I appreciate everything that you've done, not just for the campaign, but also what you've done for the country and what you've done for the party.

Many of you were invested in this campaign at the very beginning when nobody could pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] And you'd tell your friends, "There's this young guy, I really think he's got something." "What's his name?" "Barack Obama?" [*Laughter*] Yes. So you had to confront a lot of skepticism, a lot of confusion. Some of you were involved in a campaign for the first time, and some of you got involved for the very first time in a very long time, because you believed that we were in a defining moment in our history and that your voice could make a difference.

Not a single day goes by where I don't think about all the time and the energy, the money, the commitment, the unyielding faith that you put into our campaign, because it wasn't just about winning an election, it was about changing a country.

Last year, we asked you to take on something new. We asked you to help us keep the promises that we made in the campaign, help to bring about the changes that we had talked about together. And a lot of you have worked hard to do that. You've continued to be engaged in education policy, in foreign policy, and helping us at a grassroots level and continuing to finance our ability to get our message out. And it matters. It's made the successes of the last year possible.

Sometimes I think we got so many things done so quick that people forgot. But let's just think about this: We upheld the principle of equal pay for equal work. We lifted the ban on stem cell research and restored science to its rightful place in America. We provided health care to 4 million children who now have it who didn't have it before. We passed the strongest veterans budget in decades. We protected families from getting ripped off by credit card companies and children from being targeted by big tobacco, and helped consumers deal with the twin plagues of mortgage fraud and predatory lending.

We appointed Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court. We passed a service bill named for Ted Kennedy that's giving young and old a chance to serve their country and their communities. We're working with Congress to finally repeal the law that denies gay Americans the right to serve the country they love because of who they are.

Oh, by the way, and in the meantime, we prevented the worst financial crisis from getting even worse, turned the economy from contraction to expansion, made the largest investment in clean energy in history, the largest investment in education in decades, expanded the Pell grant program, dealt with a H1N1 virus on the side. [*Laughter*]

That's what your support has helped us do at home. Abroad, we've begun a new era of en-

gagement. We're working with our partners to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, seeking a world free of them. We're working with other nations to confront climate change. We are now a leader and not a follower in that critical mission. We banned torture. We're rebuilding our military. We're reaffirming our alliances. We've begun to leave Iraq to its own people, as I committed to doing in the campaign. And we've charted a new way forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan. We're making progress every single day in taking the fight to Al Qaida and across the globe. And I went to Cairo on behalf of the American people to begin a new dialogue with the Muslim world.

We're living up to our obligations as a wealthy nation, helping to promote food security around the world, helping to deal with diseases around the world. We're living up to a moment that demands American leadership by standing with the people of Haiti as we speak.

So in ways large and small, we've begun to deliver on the change that we talked about, the change that you believed in and that you campaigned hard for. But the reason that you and I are here tonight is because we're not done. We've got a lot more work to do.

As I said, the day we took office, we confronted a financial system on the verge of collapse; we were losing 700,000 jobs per month; a $1.3 trillion deficit; two wars that frankly had not been paid for and were costly in every sense of the word. A lot of the solutions we proposed, the decisions we took, they weren't quick, they weren't easy, and they weren't popular. But we decided we were going to go govern, we were going to put politicking on hold to get this country out of the mess it was in.

I mentioned this to a group I spoke to earlier. You know, pundits act surprised about the fact that we spent so much political capital. Well, you know, I didn't get elected to play it safe. And I didn't govern, and I don't govern, by checking the polls every few days. I know that's the habit in Washington, but that's not the obligation I owe the American people, that's not the promise I made to you. And because we took bold and swift and coordinated action, we can stand here today and say we averted another depression. We broke the back of the recession. The economy is growing again.

So the worst of the storm has passed. But, as all of you know, the devastation remains. We've got 10 percent unemployment. Many of you watching at home, as you go around the country and your individual communities, you see the stores shuttered and the foreclosed businesses; friends and neighbors, family members who still can't find work. This is on top of a decade that had been tough for middle class families all across the country. They hadn't seen their incomes go up in years. Their costs skyrocketing at the same time as their wages were stagnant.

For 2 years, I heard stories all across the country, everywhere I go. I heard stories about people trying their best to hold on; a family sitting around the kitchen table wondering if they were going to be able to retire on schedule, if they were going to be able to finance a college education for their kids, wondering when would health care costs stop climbing, when would their premiums start stabilizing. And people started expressing doubts about whether the dream that generations built and defended, the American Dream, was slipping away.

That's the reason I ran for President. That's the reason you supported me. And that's why we are going to continue to do everything we can to create an economy that hasn't just recovered back to the status quo, but an economy where hard work is valued and responsibility is rewarded, and where businesses are hiring and wages are rising, and where our middle class is getting stronger and more secure.

Now, our most urgent task is job creation. That was our number-one priority last year and our number-one priority this year. And the first task was to make sure the economy is growing. It is growing. But we've got to do more. So we're going to give tax breaks and loans to small businesses to help them hire new workers and raise their wages and invest in new plants and equipment. We're going to put even more Americans to work on clean energy facilities and upgrading our infrastructure to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

We're going to create incentives for consumers to make their homes more energy efficient, creating jobs and saving families money. And

we're going to look at our Tax Code, because it's time we ended practices like giving tax breaks to companies that ship jobs overseas instead of investing in companies that are creating jobs right here in the United States of America.

But the truth is, these steps alone won't make up for 7 million jobs that have been lost over the last 2 years. They're not going to, alone, provide the economic security that's been dwindling for middle class families over the last decade. The only way we do that is to lay a strong foundation for growth over the long term. And the things that we talked about during the campaign are the things that still need to be done. They've been put off by Washington for too long.

And this is where change gets hard. Change is easy if you're just talking about tinkering around the edges. Change is harder when you actually dig in and try to deal with the structural problems that have impeded our progress for too long. This is where we run headlong into the lobbyists and the special interests and the bitterness and misinformation that characterizes so much of our politics, which means that some of you may be feeling discouraged, because it feels like things have taken longer than you might have expected.

Well, don't be discouraged. I'm not discouraged. I knew this was going to take a long time, but I knew the fight was worth it. And we've got to keep up on this fight. The forces of the status quo, they may not give an inch, but I don't give an inch either. And you shouldn't give an inch either. We're not—[*applause*]. We didn't come this far to put things off, or to play it safe, or to take the easy road. That wasn't why we were elected. We came here to solve problems for the next generation, not for the next election.

That means opening up this Government to the people. That's why we post all our visitors online. That's why we've excluded lobbyists from policymaking jobs and seats on boards and commissions. That's why I've called on Congress to put their earmarks online so everybody can see what's going on. That's part of the change that we promised.

We've got to change the tone of Government and politics here in Washington and all across America. I'm not going to give up on that either. You know, the American people are right to be frustrated about a Washington where every day is election day and the basic theory is, "If you lose, I win," where we're not measuring success by what we're doing for the American people, but how we look in the latest Gallup. No wonder people are frustrated.

That's why I went to the House Republican caucus the other day. We had a good discussion—[*laughter*]—about the challenges that are facing the American people, our ideas to solve them. That was good for the country. It's good for our democracy. I had fun. [*Laughter*]

Now, there are some issues that Democrats and Republicans aren't going to agree on, and that's okay. Vigorous debate is healthy. We're going to tussle from time to time. And you know what? There may be some issues that we do agree on, or at least we say we agree on. And we have to test whether or not people are serious. So I told my Republican friends I want to work together with them where I can, and I meant it, because I don't want to just score political points. I've got time to campaign down the road. In the meantime, there's a lot of work that we've got to get done together. And we can get a lot done together.

And I told them I will also call them out if they say they want to work on something and then when I offer a hand I get nothing in return. The American people have to understand that. The old playbook of just blocking everything, I understand that's easier than actually doing something, and sometimes it may be more politically effective, but that's not what's going to move our country forward.

That's why I'm here. That's why you joined our campaign. That's what you've helped deliver over the last year. That's why I need your help now. That's why Tim and everybody in the party needs your help now, because you know as well as anyone that change doesn't come without a fight. We've got some fights to wage.

We've got some fights to make sure that we're sparking innovation and igniting a clean energy sector where American workers are

making solar panels and wind turbines and cutting-edge batteries for the new plug-in hybrid that leads on clean energy, because the economy that leads on clean energy, I believe, is going to lead the global economy. And I want America to be that nation.

We're going to keep fighting to make sure that America has the best education possible for every child. And we're going to reward success through our Race to the Top program. We want every child to meet their potential, and that's why we're going to make sure that young people all across America can afford college without going broke. That's a priority. We can do that. And we could do it this year.

We're going to keep fighting for commonsense rules of the road for Wall Street. And I want to be clear—there's a lot of talk about Wall Street, Main Street—we need a financial sector that works. That's a priority. We need businesses that are thriving, and they've got to raise capital; that will help them hire workers. So there's no separation between our financial system and the real economy. That's part of what this crisis has reminded us. But we've got to ensure that our economy isn't brought to its knees by outdated and antiquated financial rules and the irresponsibility of a few.

And that's why I expect Democrats and Republicans to want to make sure that we don't find ourselves in this same situation again. That's why we have to have financial regulatory reform. And yes, that is why we're going to fix the health care system, a health care system that too often works for insurance companies better than it does for individual Americans.

And again, I didn't take this on because it was easy. I got David Axelrod; he does all the polls. He whispers in my ear, "Man, this health care thing is hard." [*Laughter*] I am a amateur historian, so I know that seven Presidents, starting with Teddy Roosevelt, couldn't get this done. We understood this was going to be hard.

But I took it on not for its political value; I took it on because families are dealing with skyrocketing premiums and skyrocketing out-of-pocket costs and insurance companies that routinely deny coverage because of preexisting conditions, or drop people altogether when they get sick. We took it on because the costs were killing small businesses and creating an uneven playing field for our international companies, and it was eating into workers' take-home pay and canceling raises. And we took it on because it's the single best way—in fact, the only way—that we are actually going to get control of our Federal budget.

So when I hear "deficit hawks"—quote, unquote—out there who say they want to control the Federal budget and aren't willing to do a darn thing about the skyrocketing costs of health care, I get a sense they're not entirely on the level. Because our proposal for health care reform, according to the Congressional Budget Office, would bring it down by $1 trillion over the next two decades. And even in Washington that's a lot of money.

I took it on because every single day, 15,000 Americans join the tens of millions who don't have health insurance, and 18 million—18,000 Americans die because of the lack of health insurance.

That's what we campaigned on. That's what we're working to get it done, with Democrats and with Independents and with Republicans. We want to bring down costs and end the worst insurance practices and finally give every American a chance to have the security of quality, affordable health care.

I am not going to walk away from those fights, and I don't expect you will either. You've come this far. I mean, the odds were a lot less that I'd ever be standing here than they are that we can solve some of these big problems. I mean, think about it. Tim was—when Tim endorsed me in Richmond, first endorsement I got outside of Illinois of any elected official—here he is, newly minted Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia—there was one thing that was clear, and that is he was term limited. [*Laughter*]

But don't you guys—you remember this. Nobody gave us a chance. This campaign was declared dead—what?—10 times. [*Laughter*] You know, the same folks who are now writing about "what next," and "what's happened to the Obama," these are the same folks who were writing about how he doesn't stand a chance; how after New Hampshire, that was it; after Pennsylvania, that was it, right? We went

through this. And they were saying your faith was misplaced and that you've set your sights too high and your hope is naive and Washington won't change. And now all of them are feeling like, "See, we told you, Washington doesn't change." And they're feeling kind of self-satisfied about the fact that we haven't yet gotten health care done.

Well, let me tell you something. You didn't listen to those voices then. Your voice proved them wrong. You proved that nothing can stop the power of millions of people who want to see an America that's living up to its values and its ideals. That's what you did. And that's what I'm asking you to do again.

This is an extraordinary moment. I want to remind you, we don't quit. And I don't quit. And we are going to bring about the changes that you believe in and I believe in, and that, ultimately, will help our children and grandchildren believe as they grow up an America in which everybody's got a decent shot at life, in which we're leading in innovation, in which we're proud of our foreign policy.

That's what we were fighting for then. That's what we're fighting for now. We've taken some good steps. We got many miles to go on this journey. I hope you join me.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:05 p.m. at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. In his remarks, he referred to former Rep. C. Thomas McMillen; Dikembe Mutombo, former center, National Basketball Association's Houston Rockets; and Timothy M. Kaine, chairman, Democratic National Committee. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 5.

Remarks at a Memorial Service for Central Intelligence Agency Officers in Langley, Virginia

February 5, 2010

America's intelligence agencies are a community, and the CIA is a family. That is how we gather here today. I speak as a grateful Commander in Chief who relies on you. There are Members of Congress here who support you, leaders—Leon Panetta, Steve Kappes—who guide you, and most of all, family, friends, and colleagues who love you and grieve with you.

For more than 60 years, the security of our Nation has demanded that the work of this Agency remain largely unknown. But today our gratitude as citizens demands that we speak of seven American patriots who loved their country and gave their lives to defend it.

[*At this point, the President read the names of the officers.*]

They came from different corners of our country, men and women, and each walked their own path to that rugged base in the mountains. Some had come to this work after a lifetime of protecting others in law enforcement, in the military; one was just a few years out of college.

Some had devoted years, decades even, to unraveling the dark web of terrorists that threatened us; others, like so many of you, joined these ranks when 9/11 called a new generation to service. Some had spent years on dangerous tours around the globe; others had just arrived in harm's way.

But there, at the remote outpost, they were bound by a common spirit. They heard their country's call and answered it. They served in the shadows and took pride in it. They were doing their job, and they loved it. They saw the danger and accepted it. They knew that the price of freedom is high, and in an awful instant, they paid that price.

There are no words that can ease the ache in your hearts. But to their colleagues and all who served with them—those here today, those still recovering, those watching around the world—I say: Let their sacrifice be a summons to carry on their work, to complete this mission, to win this war, and to keep our country safe.

To their parents: It is against the natural order of life for parents to lay their children to rest. Yet these weeks of solemn tribute have revealed for all to see that you raised remarkable sons and daughters. Everything you instilled in them—the virtues of service and decency and duty—were on display that December day. That is what you gave them. That is what you gave to America. And our Nation will be forever in your debt.

To the spouses: Your husbands and wives raised their hand and took an oath to protect and defend the country that they loved. They fulfilled that oath with their life. But they also took your hand and made a vow to you. And that bond of love endures from this world to the next. Amidst grief that is sometimes unbearable, may you find some comfort in our vow to you that this Agency and this country will stand with you and support you always.

And to the beautiful children: I know that this must be so hard and confusing, but please always remember this. It wasn't always easy for your mom or dad to leave home. But they went to another country to defend our country, and they gave their lives to protect yours. And as you grow, the best way to keep their memory alive and the highest tribute you can pay to them is to live as they lived, with honor and dignity and integrity.

They served in secrecy, but today every American can see their legacy. For the record of their service—and of this generation of intelligence professionals—is written all around us. It's written in the extremists who no longer threaten our country because you eliminated them. It's written in the attacks that never occurred because you thwarted them. And it's written in the Americans across this country and around the world who are alive today because you saved them.

And should anyone here ever wonder whether your fellow citizens truly appreciate that service, you need only remember the extraordinary tributes of recent weeks: the thousands of Americans who have sat down at their computers and posted messages to seven heroes they never knew; in the outpouring of generosity to the memorial foundation that will help support these proud families; and along a funeral procession in Massachusetts, in the freezing cold, mile after mile, friends and total strangers paying their respects, small children holding signs saying "thank you," and a woman holding up a large American flag because, she said simply, "He died for me and my family."

As a nation, we pledge to be there for you and your families. We need you more than ever. In an ever-changing world where new dangers emerge suddenly, we need you to be one step ahead of nimble adversaries. In this information age, we need you to sift through vast universes of data to find intelligence that can be acted upon swiftly. And in an era of technology and unmanned systems, we still need men and women like these seven, professionals of skill and talent and courage who are willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to protect our Nation.

Because of them, because of you, a child born in America today is welcomed into a country that is proud and confident, strong and hopeful, just as Molly Roberson welcomed her daughter Piper this week, both of whom join us today. Piper will never know her dad Scott. But thanks to Molly, she will know what her father stood for—a man who served his country, who did his duty, and who gave his life to keep her safe.

And on some distant day, years from now, when she is grown, if Piper—or any of these children—seeks to understand for themselves, they'll need only come here, to Langley, through these doors, and stand before that proud Memorial Wall that honors the fallen.

And perhaps they'll run their fingers over the stars that recall their parents' service. Perhaps they'll walk over to that Book of Honor, turn the pages, and see their parents' names. And at that moment of quiet reflection, they will see what we all know today: that our Nation is blessed to have men and women such as these; that we are humbled by their service; that we give thanks for every day that you keep us safe.

May God bless these seven patriots, may He watch over their families, and may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 10:30 a.m. at CIA Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Molly Roberson, wife,

and Piper Roberson, daughter, of CIA security officer Scott M. Roberson, who was killed in a terrorist attack at Forward Operating Base Chapman in Khost Province, Afghanistan, on December 30, 2009. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at Oasis Mechanical Contractors, Inc., in Lanham, Maryland
February 5, 2010

The President. Good afternoon, and I appreciate the warm welcome from Rick Cummings and Dennis Bean and all the folks at Oasis. Thank you so much. These guys are experts in heating and cooling systems, though, having spent some time in Washington, I actually am already very familiar with hot air I have to say. [*Laughter*]

That, by the way, does not apply to the head of the Small Business Administration, Karen Mills, who's here today. And Karen has focused like a laser on helping small businesses not only survive but to thrive amidst the economic storm of the past 2 years.

We're also joined here by Ruth Gresser, who's the owner and chef at Pizzeria Paradiso. And I'm a little upset with Ruth because she did not bring samples, but Reggie Love has testified that the pizza is outstanding. She's got restaurants in Washington. And also, Will Polak, who's the owner and operator of the Potomac Riverboat Company in Alexandria, Virginia; there's Will.

These folks know, as every living soul in America does, that these have been a rough couple of years for our economy and for our country. The deepest downturn since the Great Depression ripped through our economy, costing more than 8 million jobs and rocking businesses, large and small.

And that's why we took some very tough steps, in some cases some unpopular steps, when I took office to break the back of this recession. And today we received additional news suggesting that we are climbing out of the huge hole that we found ourselves in. Last January, the month I took office, almost 800,000 Americans lost their jobs. Today we learned the job losses for this January were 20,000. The unemployment rate dropped below 10 percent for the first time since the summer. Manufacturing employment grew last month for the first time in 3 years, led by increased activity in the production of cars and trucks and auto parts.

Now, these numbers, while positive, are a cause for hope but not celebration, because far too many of our neighbors and friends and family are still out of work. We can't be satisfied when another 20,000 have joined their ranks and millions more Americans are underemployed, picking up what work they can.

It is encouraging the job loss in January was a small fraction of what it was a year ago and that the unemployment rate last month went down and not up. Understanding that these numbers will continue to fluctuate for months to come, these are welcome, if modest, signs of progress along the road to recovery.

Now, even as we take additional steps to hasten that recovery, we know that there are limits to what government can do to create jobs. The true engine of job creation will always be businesses. What government can do is fuel that engine by giving entrepreneurs and companies the support to open their doors and to expand and to hire more workers. And that's exactly what this administration intends to do and what we've been doing, working with the SBA and Karen Mills.

We're starting with small businesses because that's where most of the new jobs do. Over the past 15 years, small businesses have created roughly 65 percent of new jobs in America. These are companies formed around kitchen tables and family meetings, formed when an entrepreneur takes a chance on a dream, formed when a worker decides it's time she became her own boss. And it's worth remembering, every once in a while a small business becomes a big business and then changes the world.

And that's why last week I proposed a new small-business tax credit, $5,000 for every new

employee you hire this year. And a couple of these folks here, small-business owners that I talked to, said they'd be interested in using that tax credit.

This week, I proposed a new small-business lending fund that would take $30 billion of the fund originally used to rescue big banks on Wall Street and use it to provide lending capital to community banks on Main Street. And I know that we've got Capital One Bank here that's been a lender to Oasis and——

Audience member. Capital Bank, sir.

The President. Capital Bank—excuse me—and we appreciate the good work that you've done supporting this company.

Under Karen Mills, SBA has increased loan guarantees and reduced fees, steps that have increased SBA lending by 86 percent. And we've called for legislation to increase SBA loan limits to allow us to guarantee loans of up to 5 million compared with 2 million now.

And today I'm taking yet another step to assist small-business owners get the capital that they need to grow and to hire. I'm proposing legislation that allows firms to refinance their commercial real estate loans, their mortgages, under the SBA.

Right now even companies with great credit histories are facing challenges refinancing at what are historically low rates. Property values have fallen and lending has dropped. As a result, many businesses that would otherwise survive this downturn are at risk of defaulting, which in turn will lead to even lower property values and less lending, not to mention lost jobs.

In addition, I'm also proposing that we increase the limits for SBA loans used for lines of credit and working capital, something that I know could benefit Ruth's business and countless others.

And the truth is, the economy can be growing like gangbusters for years on end, and it's still not easy to run a small business. It's not easy to stay ahead of your competitors; it's not easy to keep your costs down, to do right by your employees, to constantly innovate and adapt in a changing world. Talking to Ruth, she reminds me it's not easy keeping up with health care costs, and so Ruth is very anxious to see health reform passed so that small businesses can pick up the cost for their employees.

And in this deep and lasting recession, a hard job has been that much harder because for much of the last year, people weren't buying and customers weren't calling and banks were not lending. But even in the face of these obstacles, even in these tough times, all across the country, there are people like Rick and Dennis and Ruth and Will who haven't given up. You guys wake up every day and seek a way to safely navigate these troubled waters to fulfill your obligations to your families and to your employees and your customers. And in that determination, that resolve, you embody what's best in America, and you keep making America stronger.

Next week, Congress will start debating many of the jobs proposals I've outlined today and in recent days—many of the proposals to benefit small business, many of the proposals to spur hiring. If there are additional ideas from either party, I'm happy to consider them as well. But what I hope—what I strongly urge—is that we work quickly and we work together to get this done. America's small businesses are counting on us.

So thank you very much, everybody. And thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:42 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Rick Cummings, president, and Dennis Bean, vice president, Oasis Mechanical Contractors, Inc.; and Personal Aide to the President Reginald L. Love.

The President's Weekly Address
February 6, 2010

Even though our economy is growing again, these are still tough times for America. Too many businesses are still shuttered. Too many families can't make ends meet. And while yesterday we learned that the unemployment rate has dropped below 10 percent for the first time since summer, it's still unacceptably high, and too many Americans still can't find work.

But what we have to remember at a time like this is that we are not helpless in the face of our difficulties. As Americans, we make our own destiny. We forge our own path. And I am confident that if we come together and put aside the politics that keeps holding us back, we can do that again. We can rebuild this economy on a new, stronger foundation that leads to more jobs and greater prosperity.

I believe a key part of that foundation is America's small businesses, the places where most new jobs begin. These companies represent the essence of the American spirit, the promise that anyone can succeed in this country if you have a good idea and the determination to see it through. And every once in a while, these ideas don't just lead to a new business and new jobs, but a new American product that forever changes the world. After all, Hewlett-Packard began in a garage. Google began as a simple research project.

Government can't create these businesses, but it can give entrepreneurs the support they need to open their doors, expand, or hire more workers. And that's what we've always done in this country. The folks at Southwest Windpower in Flagstaff, Arizona, started their company in a small home. Since getting a loan from the Small Business Administration, they've sold 160,000 wind turbines to about 90 different countries and are hiring even more workers today. When Sam Ko walked into one of the SBA's small-business development centers in Illinois, he didn't have any business experience at all, just a patent for a new metal manufacturing technology. He was given a loan and a business plan, and today, his company is still growing, with offices all over the Midwest.

Last year, the steps we took supported over 47,000 loans to small businesses and delivered billions in tax relief to small-business owners, which helped companies keep their doors open, make payroll, and hire workers. But we can and must do more. That's why I've proposed a series of steps this week to support small-business owners and the jobs they create, to provide more access to credit, more incentives to hire, and more opportunities to grow and sell products all over the world.

Because financing remains difficult for good, creditworthy small businesses across the country, I've proposed that we take $30 billion from the TARP fund originally used for Wall Street and create a new small-business lending fund that will provide capital for community banks on Main Street. These are the small, local banks that will be able to give our small-business owners more of the credit they need to stay afloat. And we should also continue to waive fees, increase guarantees, and expand the size of SBA-backed loans for small businesses. And yesterday I proposed making it easier for small-business owners to refinance their mortgages during these tough times.

To give these companies greater incentives to grow and create jobs, I've proposed a new tax credit for more than 1 million small businesses that hire new workers or raise wages, as well as the elimination of all capital gains taxes on small-business investment.

Finally, we should provide targeted support to the most innovative small businesses, the ones with the greatest potential to export new goods and products all over the world. A lot of these companies, like the wind turbine manufacturer I mentioned, are the foundation on which we can rebuild our economy to compete in the 21st century. They just need a little help securing the financing they need to get off the ground. We have every incentive to help them do that.

Next week, Congress will start debating many of these proposals. And if anyone has additional ideas to support small businesses and create jobs, I'm happy to consider them. My door is always open. But I urge members of both parties: Do not oppose good ideas just because it's good politics to do so. The proposals I've outlined are not Democratic or Republican, liberal or conservative. They are probusiness, they are progrowth, and they are projob. Leaders in both parties have supported similar ideas in the past. So let's come together and pass these measures without delay. Let's put more Americans back to work, and let's give our small-business owners the support to do what they've always done, the freedom to pursue their dreams and build our country's future.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:40 p.m. on February 5 in the Red Room at the White House for broadcast on February 6. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 5, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 6. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks During a Meeting With the Democratic National Committee
February 6, 2010

Thank you, DNC. Everybody have a seat, have a seat. Thank you. Oh, it is good to see you, good to be among friends so committed to the future of this party and this country that they're willing to brave a blizzard. [*Laughter*] "Snowmageddon" here in DC. [*Laughter*] I noticed somebody had "Californians for Obama," and I was thinking, you guys are not used to this. [*Laughter*]

I've got some special thanks to the folks here. First of all I want to thank Eleanor Holmes Norton for fighting the good fight here in the District of Columbia; Ray Buckley, our DNC vice chair from New Hampshire; Alice Germond, DNC secretary; Andy Tobias, DNC treasurer. Thanks for the great work that you guys do.

I want to thank Tim Kaine, who's not only an outstanding former Governor, but an outstanding leader of this party—busy building the best online and infield grassroots organization we've ever had. Give Tim Kaine a big round of applause.

And if I'm not mistaken, we've got a couple of terrific Members of Congress here, Mike Honda, Congressman and DNC vice chair—Mike, are you here? He's on his way; he's still shoveling. [*Laughter*] And how about Barbara Lee, is Barbara here? Well, we love her anyway. So give Barbara and Mike a big round of applause.

I want to thank the Governors, the legislators, the mayors from across this country for working to move their States and local communities forward in extraordinarily challenging times. They've done heroic work. I want to thank the DNC members, State party leaders, and most of all, I want to thank the millions of Americans who've taken up the cause of change at the grassroots level in all 50 States.

Now, Tim alluded to this, but I just want to remind everybody, we knew from the beginning that this would not be easy. Change never is. But that's especially true in these times, when we face an array of challenges as tough as any we have seen in generations. President Kennedy once said: "When we got into office, the thing that surprised me most was to find that things were just as bad as we'd been saying they were." [*Laughter*] Truth was things were worse.

We took office facing a financial crisis that was something we hadn't seen since the Great Depression, an economy that we now know was bleeding 750,000 jobs a month, a $1.3 trillion deficit, and two wars that were costly in every sense of the word. From the specter of terrorism to the impacts of globalization, we face tremendous new challenges in this young century. And all of this comes on top of one of the toughest decades our middle class had ever faced, a decade where jobs grew more slowly than during any prior expansion, where the income of the average American household actually declined, where the costs of everything seemed to keep going up.

Everything we've done over the past year has been not only to right our economy, to break the back of this recession, but also to restore some of the security middle class families have felt slipping away for over a decade now. Some of the steps we took were done without the help of the other party, which made a political decision all too often to jump in the backseat, let us do the driving and then critique whether we were taking the right turns. That's okay. That's part of what it means to govern.

And all the steps we took were necessary. None of us wanted to throw a lifeline to the banks. But the outrage shouldn't be that we did, because it had to happen in order to prevent

millions more from losing their jobs, millions of businesses and homes foreclosed. The real outrage is that we had to do it in the first place in order to fend off the collapse of the financial system. That's the outrage.

Then we passed almost $300 billion in tax relief: tax cuts for small businesses, tax cuts for 95 percent of working Americans. We put Americans to work building the infrastructure of tomorrow, doing the work America needs done. We passed a credit card bill of rights to protect consumers from getting ripped off by credit card companies. We put the law behind the principle of equal pay for equal work. We extended the promise of health care to 4 million more children of working families. We protected every child from being targeted by tobacco companies.

We passed a service bill named for Ted Kennedy that gives young folks and old folks new ways to give back to their communities. We appointed Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court. And we've begun working with Congress and our military to finally repeal the law that denies gay Americans the right to serve the country that they love because of who they are.

Overseas, we've begun a new era of engagement. We're working with our partners to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, and to seek a world free of nuclear weapons. We banned torture. We have begun to leave Iraq to its own people. We've charted a new way forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan and made good progress in taking the fight to Al Qaida across the globe. I went to Cairo on behalf of America to begin a new dialogue with the Muslim world. And we are living up to a moment that demands American leadership by standing side by side with the people of Haiti.

So if you look at a tally of the things we said we would do, even in the midst of this extraordinarily challenging economy, we've kept our promises. We've kept our commitments. We have moved forward on behalf of a more prosperous and more secure future for the American people.

But for all our efforts, we have to acknowledge change can't come fast enough for many Americans. In recent weeks, I've visited Allentown, Pennsylvania; Elyria, Ohio; Tampa, Florida; Nashua, New Hampshire, talking with workers in factories and families in diners. And they want to know, how are they going to find a job when they only know one trade in their life? Or how are they going to afford to send their kids to college? How are they going to pay their medical bills when they get sick? How can they retire with their 401(k) so banged up? And most of all, they're wondering if anyone can or will do anything about it, especially here in Washington.

Now, I understand their frustration; you understand it as well. I was talking to Michelle the other day—Michelle is always a good barometer—and you know, the front page was, oh, what's Obama going to do to get his poll numbers up? And are the Democrats all in a tizzy and this and that? And she said, "You know, listen, if you're the average family, if I'm a mom out there and I'm working and my husband is working, but we're worried about losing our jobs, our hours have been cut back, the cost of our health care premiums just went up 30 percent, the credit card company just jacked up our interest rates 39 percent, and our home values have gone down by $100,000, our 401(k) is all banged up, and suddenly, somebody calls up and says, 'So how do you think President Obama is doing right now?' [*Laughter*] What are they going to say? What are they going to say?"

Of course people are frustrated. And they have every right to be. And I know that during the course of this gathering, you know, some of the press have been running around, well, what do you think we should be doing, and this and that and the other, and what's the strategy?

Look, when unemployment is 9.7 percent, when we are still digging ourselves out of an extraordinary recession, people are going to be frustrated. And they're going to be looking to the party in power to try to fix it. And when you've got another party that says, we don't want to do anything about it, of course people are going to be frustrated.

Folks are out there working hard every day, trying to meet their responsibilities. But all around them during this last "lost decade,"

what they've seen is a wave of irresponsibility from Wall Street to Washington. They see a capital city where every day is treated like election day and every act, every comment, every gesture passes through a political filter. They've seen the outsized influence of lobbyists and special interests, who too often hijack the agenda by leveraging campaign money and connections. Of course, they wonder if their leaders can muster the will to overcome all of that and confront the real problems that touch their lives.

But here's what everybody here has to remember: That's why I ran for President. That's why you worked so hard to elect a Democratic Congress. We knew this stuff was tough. But we stepped up because we decided we were going to take the responsibility of changing it. And it may not be easy, but change is coming.

I believe so strongly, if we're going to deal with the great challenges of our time, if we're going to secure a better future just as past generations did for us, then we're going to have to change the prevailing politics in this town, and it's not going to be easy. We're going to have to care less about scoring points and more about solving problems that are holding us back. At this defining moment, that's never been more important.

We can continue, for example, to be consumed by the politics of energy. But we know that the nation that leads the clean energy revolution will lead the 21st-century global economy. We know that a failure to act will put our planet in deeper peril. We know that China isn't waiting and India isn't waiting and Germany isn't waiting to seize that future, and America can't afford to wait either. And I don't intend to spend all my time taking polls to figure out whether we're going to seize that future or not.

We can continue to spin our wheels with the old education debates, pitting teachers unions against reformers, and meanwhile, our kids keep trailing their counterparts from South Korea to Singapore. But we know that the countries that outeducate us today will outcompete us tomorrow. We know that kids who are consigned to failing schools today will be condemned to lifetimes of lower wages and unfulfilled dreams. America can't afford to wait. And I'm not going to take a poll to figure out whether or not we're going to tackle education.

We can continue to allow the same special interests who stacked the deck in favor of financial speculators in the last decade to block reform again in this decade. But if we've learned anything from the devastating recession, it's that we know that wise regulation actually can enhance the market and make it more stable and make our economy work better. We can't return to the dereliction of duty that helped deliver this recession. We know that to do so would be to put at risk our jobs, our families, our businesses, and our future. America can't afford to wait, and we can't look backwards.

And yes, we could continue to ignore the growing burden of runaway costs of health care. The easiest thing to do right now would be to just say this is too hard; let's just regroup and lick our wounds and try to hang on. We've had a long and difficult debate on health care, and there are some, maybe even the majority in this town, who say perhaps it's time to walk away.

But here's the thing, Democrats, if we walk away, we know what will happen. We know that premiums and out-of-pocket expenses will skyrocket this decade, and the decade after that, and the decade after that, just as they did in the past decade. More small businesses will be priced out of coverage, more big businesses will be unable to compete internationally, more workers will take home less pay and fewer raises. We know that millions more Americans will lose their coverage. We know that our deficits will inexorably continue to grow because health care costs are the single biggest driver.

So just in case there's any confusion out there, let me be clear: I am not going to walk away from health insurance reform. I'm not going to walk away from the American people. I'm not going to walk away on this challenge. I'm not going to walk away on any challenge. We're moving forward. We are moving forward. Sometimes we may be moving forward against the prevailing winds. Sometimes it may be against a blizzard. [*Laughter*] But we're going to live up to our responsibility to lead.

And I'm confident that if we stay steady, if we stay focused on all the people that we meet each and every day who are out there strug-

gling, if we've got them in mind and we are working to deliver on their behalf, that in the end that'll be good politics as well as good policy. It'll be good for America, not just good for Democrats.

But in order to get any of these battles done, we're going to have to change the way that Washington works. Now, we may not get a lot of attention for it, but we've actually already begun to do that. We've reined in the power of the special interests with the toughest ethics and transparency rules of any administration in the modern era. We're the first White House ever to post our visitors online. We've excluded lobbyists from policymaking jobs or seats on Federal boards and commissions. I've called on Congress to make all earmark requests public on one central web site before they come up for a vote, so that you know how the money is spent. We have—we're going to have to confront the gaping loophole that the Supreme Court recently opened in our campaign finance laws that allows special interests to spend without limit to influence American elections.

We also said that as we worked to change the ways of Washington, we'd also change the way we do things as a party. This committee is the first to ban contributions from political action committees and lobbyists. And I'm pleased to see the recommendations submitted by the Change Commission aimed at improving our nominating process, because I believe that the more Americans that get involved in this party, the stronger this party will be.

And yes, we need to change the way we work with the other party as well. Now, I'm proud to be a Democrat. I'm proud to be a leader of this great party. But I also know that we can't solve all of our problems alone. So we need to extend our hands to the other side. We've been working on it—[*laughter*]—because if we're going to change the ways of Washington, we're going to have to change its tone.

Now, as a step in that direction, I went and visited with the House Republican caucus last Friday. [*Laughter*] And we had a good discussion about the challenges facing the American people and our ideas to solve them. It was good for the country to see a robust debate. I had fun. [*Laughter*]

And we have to acknowledge there are going to be some issues that Democrats and Republicans just don't see eye to eye on, and that's how it should be. That's how our democracy works. But there have to be some issues on which we can find some common ground. It's one thing to disagree out of principle; it's another to simply stand in the way because of politics.

Now is not the time for sitting on the sidelines or blocking progress or pointing figures or assigning blame. Now is not the time to do just what's right for your party or your poll numbers. Now is the time to do what's right for the country. Now is the time to do what's necessary to see us through these difficult times. Now is the time to do everything in our power to keep the American Dream alive for the next generation. And that's our mission, Democrats.

I know we've gone through a tough year, but we've gone through tougher years. We're the party of Thomas Jefferson, who declared that all men are created equal. And we had to work long and hard to ensure that those words meant something.

We're the party of Franklin Roosevelt, who, in the midst of depression, said all we had to fear was fear itself, who saved freedom and democracy from being extinguished here on Earth. And that was hard because the natural impulse was to fear. But we as a party helped to lead the country out of that fear.

We're the party of John F. Kennedy, who summoned us to serve, who called us to pay any price and bear any burden.

And we're the party of Edward M. Kennedy, whose cause endures; who said that here, in the United States of America, the promise of health care should not be a privilege, but a fundamental right.

That is who we are, Democrats. That's who we've got to be today. For all the stories we've heard, after all the campaigns we've waged, after all the promises we've made, this is our best chance to deliver change that the American people need.

And if we do that, if we speak to the hopes of the American people instead of their fears, if we inspire them instead of divide them, if we respond to their challenges with the same sense of urgency they feel in their own lives, we're not just going to win elections—elections will take care of themselves—we will once again be the party that turns around the economy and moves this country forward and secures the American Dream for another generation.

Thanks very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:26 a.m. at the Capital Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Timothy M. Kaine, chairman, Democratic National Committee.

Statement on the Death of Representative John P. Murtha, Jr.
February 8, 2010

Michelle and I were deeply saddened today to hear about the passing of Congressman John Murtha. Jack was a devoted husband, a loving father, and a steadfast advocate for the people of Pennsylvania for nearly 40 years. His passion for service was born during his decorated career in the United States Marine Corps, and he went on to earn the distinction of being the first Vietnam war combat veteran elected to Congress. Jack's tough-as-nails reputation carried over to Congress, where he became a respected voice on issues of national security.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife of nearly 55 years, Joyce, their three children, and the entire Murtha family.

Joint Statement by the United States of America and the European Union Calling on the Iranian Government to Fulfill Its Human Rights Obligations
February 8, 2010

The United States and the European Union condemn the continuing human rights violations in Iran since the June 12 election. The large scale detentions and mass trials, the threatened execution of protestors, the intimidation of family members of those detained and the continuing denial to its citizens of the right to peaceful expression are contrary to human rights norms.

Our concerns are based on our commitment to universal respect for human rights. We are particularly concerned by the potential for further violence and repression during the coming days, especially around the anniversary of the Islamic Republic's founding on 11 February. We call on the Government of Iran to live up to its international human rights obligations, to end its abuses against its own people, to hold accountable those who have committed the abuses and to release those who are exercising their rights.

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

Remarks on Signing a Memorandum Establishing a Task Force on Childhood Obesity
February 9, 2010

The President. Good morning, everybody. I am so proud of the work that the First Lady, along with the Cabinet Secretaries behind me, have done in trying to tackle one of the most urgent health issues that we face in this country, and that is the increase in childhood obesity.

And because of the outstanding planning that they've done, they are going to be rolling out a

terrific plan of action that involves the private sector as well as Government agencies coordinating much more effectively a lot of public information out there to help parents make good decisions about allowing their children to be active and eating healthier.

And what the Executive order I'm going to be signing today does is to create a 90-day plan that allows optimal coordination as we move forward, in addition to the coordination that we're doing with private sector companies and not-for-profits and other organizations out there that are interested in this issue.

So we think that this has enormous promise in improving the health of our children, in giving support to parents to make the kinds of healthy choices that oftentimes are very difficult in this kind of environment. And so I just want to say how proud I am of the First Lady for her outstanding work, and I will now sign this order.

[*At this point, the President signed the memorandum.*]

The President. There you go.

The First Lady. Good job.

The President. It's done, honey. Thanks.

The First Lady. Now we work.

The President. Now they get to work. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:16 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. The memorandum is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders
February 9, 2010

Well, I want to thank both Democratic and Senate leaders—Democratic Senate leaders and Democratic House leaders as well as Republican leaders from the House and Senate for joining us.

As I said in my State of the Union, part of what we'd like to see is the ability of Congress to move forward in a more bipartisan fashion on some of the key challenges that the country is facing right now. I think it's fair to say that the American people are frustrated with the lack of progress on some key issues. And although the parties are not going to agree on every single item, there should be some areas where we can agree and we can get some things done, even as we have vigorous debates on some of those issues that we don't agree on.

A good place to start, and what I hope to spend a lot of time on in these discussions today, is how we can move forward on a jobs package that encourages small business to hire, that is helping to create the kind of environment where, now that we have economic growth, people actually are starting to add to their payroll. I think there are some ideas on both the Republican and Democrat side that allow us to potentially, for example, lower rates for small businesses on their taxes to help spur on some growth. And my hope is, is that both in the House and the Senate, we'll see some packages moving over the next several weeks that can provide a jumpstart to hiring and start lowering the unemployment rate.

Another area where I hope we can find some agreement is on the issue of getting our deficits and debt under control. Both parties have stated their concerns about it; I think both parties recognize that it's going to take a lot of work. I have put forward the idea of a fiscal commission, and I'm going to be discussing both with my Democratic and Republican colleagues how we can get that moving as quickly as possible so that we can start taking some concrete action. I think the American people want to see that concrete action.

I'm also going to just be talking about some more mundane matters, things like making sure that we have our Government personnel in place on critical positions—in critical positions that involve our basic Government functioning and seeing if we can accelerate that and try to find some agreement in those areas. And then I'm going to spend some time listening, because there may be some priorities that both the Republican and Democratic leaders have that they want to raise at this meeting.

My hope is this is not going to be a rare situation; we're going to be doing these on a regular basis. And I'm very thankful that everybody here has taken the time to come. I'm confident that if we move forward in a spirit of keeping in mind what's best for the American people that we should be able to accomplish a lot.

All right? Thank you very much everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:21 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

The President's News Conference
February 9, 2010

The President. Hello, everybody. I am glad to see that all of you braved the weather to be here. A little while ago, I had a meeting with the Democratic and Republican congressional leaders, and it went very well. In fact, I understand that McConnell and Reid are out doing snow angels on the South Lawn together. [*Laughter*] Can you picture that, Chuck [Chuck Todd, NBC News]? Not really?

The meeting did go well, and I appreciate them making the trek. We had a good and frank conversation, and it's one that I hope we can continue on a more regular basis.

We all understand that there are legitimate and genuine differences between the parties, but despite the political posturing that often paralyzes this town, there are many issues upon which we can and should agree. That's what the American people are demanding of us. I think they're tired of every day being election day in Washington. And at this critical time in our country, the people sent us here expect a seriousness of purpose that transcends petty politics.

That's why I'm going to continue to seek the best ideas from either party as we work to tackle the pressing challenges ahead. I am confident, for example, that when 1 in 10 of our fellow citizens can't work, we should be able to come together and help business create more jobs. We ought to be able to agree on providing small businesses with additional tax credits and much-needed lines of credit, and we ought to agree on investments in crumbling roads and bridges, and we should agree on tax breaks for making homes more energy efficient, all of which will put more Americans to work. Many of the jobs proposals that I've laid out have passed the House and are soon going to be debated in the Senate. We spent a lot of time in this meeting discussing a jobs package and how we could move forward on that. And if there are additional ideas, I will consider them as well. What I won't consider is doing nothing in the face of a lot of hardship across the country.

We also talked about restoring fiscal responsibility. There are few matters on which there is as much vigorous bipartisan agreement, at least in public, but unfortunately, there's also a lot of partisan wrangling behind closed doors. This is what we know for sure: For us to solve this extraordinary problem that is so many years in the making, it's going to take the cooperation of both parties. It's not going to happen in any other way.

I'm pleased that Congress supported my request to restore the pay-as-you-go rule, which was instrumental in turning deficits into surpluses during the 1990s. I've also called for a bipartisan fiscal commission. Unfortunately, this measure, which originally had received the support of a bipartisan majority in the Senate and was cosponsored by Senators Conrad and Gregg, Democrats and Republicans, was blocked there. So I'm going to be creating this commission by Executive order. And during our meeting, I asked the leadership of both parties to join in this serious effort to address our long-term deficits, because when the politics is put aside, the reality of our fiscal challenge is not subject to interpretation. Math is not partisan. There ought to be a debate about how to close our deficits. What we can't accept is business as usual, and we can't afford grandstanding at the expense of actually getting something done.

During our meeting, we also touched briefly on how we can move forward on health reform. I've already announced that in 2 weeks, I'll be holding a meeting with people from both parties, and as I told the congressional leadership,

I'm looking forward to a constructive debate, with plans that need to be measured against this test: Does it bring down costs for all Americans as well as for the Federal Government, which spends a huge amount on health care? Does it provide adequate protection against abuses by the insurance industry? Does it make coverage affordable and available to the tens of millions of working Americans who don't have it right now? And does it help us get on a path of fiscal sustainability?

We also talked about why this is so urgent. Just this week, there was a report that Anthem BlueCross, which is the largest insurer in the largest State, California, is planning on raising premiums for many individual policyholders by as much as 39 percent. If we don't act, this is just a preview of coming attractions. Premiums will continue to rise for folks with insurance; millions more will lose their coverage altogether; our deficits will continue to grow larger. And we have an obligation—both parties—to tackle this issue in a serious way.

Now, bipartisanship depends on a willingness among both Democrats and Republicans to put aside matters of party for the good of the country. I won't hesitate to embrace a good idea from my friends in the minority party, but I also won't hesitate to condemn what I consider to be obstinacy that's rooted not in substantive disagreements but in political expedience. We talked about this as well, particularly when it comes to the confirmation process. I respect the Senate's role to advise and consent, but for months, qualified, noncontroversial nominees for critical positions in Government, often positions related to our national security, have been held up despite having overwhelming support. My nominee for one important job, the head of General Services Administration, which helps run the Government, was denied a vote for 9 months. When she finally got a vote on her nomination, she was confirmed 96 to nothing. That's not advise and consent, that's delay and obstruct.

One Senator, as you all are aware, had put a hold on every single nominee that we had put forward due to a dispute over a couple of earmarks in his State. In our meeting, I asked the congressional leadership to put a stop to these holds in which nominees for critical jobs are denied a vote for months. Surely we can set aside partisanship and do what's traditionally been done to confirm these nominations. If the Senate does not act—and I made this very clear—if the Senate does not act to confirm these nominees, I will consider making several recess appointments during the upcoming recess, because we can't afford to allow politics to stand in the way of a well-functioning Government.

My hope is that this will be the first of a series of meetings that I have with leadership of both parties in Congress. We've got to get past the tired debates that have plagued our politics and left behind nothing but soaring debt and mounting challenges, greater hardships among the American people and extraordinary frustrations among the American people. Those frustrations are what led me to run for President, and as long as I'm here in Washington, I intend to try to make this Government work on their behalf.

So, you know, I'm going to take a couple of questions, guys.

Major [Major Garrett, FOX News].

Health Care Reform/Cooperation With Congress

Q. After meeting with you, John Boehner came out and told us: "The House can't pass the health care bill it once passed; the Senate can't pass the health care bill it once passed. Why would we have a conversation about legislation that can't pass?" As a part of that, he said you and your White House and congressional Democrats should start over entirely from scratch on health care reform. How do you respond? Are you willing to do that?

The President. Well, here's how I responded to John in the meeting, and I've said this publicly before: There are some core goals that have to be met. We've got to control costs, both for families and businesses, but also for our Government. Everybody out there who talks about deficits has to acknowledge that the single biggest driver of our deficits is health care spending. We cannot deal with our deficits and debt long term unless we get a

handle on that. So that has to be part of a package.

Number two, we've got to deal with insurance abuses that affect millions of Americans who've got health insurance. And number three, we've got to make health insurance more available to folks in the individual market, as I just mentioned, in California, who are suddenly seeing their premiums go up 39 percent. That applies to the majority of small businesses as well as sole proprietors. They are struggling.

So I've got these goals. Now, we have a package, as we work through the differences between the House and the Senate—and we'll put it up on a web site for all to see over a long period of time—that meets those criteria, meets those goals. But when I was in Baltimore talking to the House Republicans, they indicated, we can accomplish some of these goals at no cost. And I said, great, let me see it. And I have no interest in doing something that's more expensive and harder to accomplish if somebody else has an easier way to do it.

So I'm going to be starting from scratch in the sense that I will be open to any ideas that help promote these goals. What I will not do, what I don't think makes sense and I don't think the American people want to see, would be another year of partisan wrangling around these issues, another 6 months' or 8 months' or 9 months' worth of hearings in every single committee in the House and the Senate in which there's a lot of posturing. Let's get the relevant parties together. Let's put the best ideas on the table. My hope is that we can find enough overlap that we can say this is the right way to move forward, even if I don't get every single thing that I want.

But here's the point that I made to John Boehner and Mitch McConnell: Bipartisanship can't be that I agree to all the things that they believe in or want and they agree to none of the things I believe in and want. And that's the price of bipartisanship, right? But that's sometimes the way it gets presented. Mitch McConnell said something very nice in the meeting about how he supports our goals on nuclear energy and clean coal technology and more drilling to increase oil production. Well, of course he likes that; that's part of the Republican agenda for energy, which I accept. And I'm willing to move off some of the preferences of my party in order to meet them halfway. But there's got to be some give from their side as well. That's true on health care; that's true on energy; that's true on financial reform. That's what I'm hoping gets accomplished at the summit.

Q. Do you agree the House and Senate bills can't pass anymore?

The President. What I agree with is that the public has soured on the process that they saw over the last year. I think that actually contaminates how they view the substance of the bills. I think it is important for all of these issues to be aired so that people have confidence, if we're moving forward on such a significant part of the economy as health care, that there is complete transparency and all these issues have been adequately vetted and adequately debated.

And this gives an opportunity not just for Democrats to say, here's what we think we should do, but it also gives Republicans a showcase before the entire country to say, here's our plan, here's why we think this will work. And one of the things that John Boehner and Mitch McConnell both said is they didn't think that the status quo was acceptable, and that's, right there, promising. That indicates that if all sides agree that we can't just continue with business as usual, then maybe we can actually get something done.

All right. Jake [Jake Tapper, ABC News].

National Economy

Q. Mr. President, one of the reasons Anthem said—Anthem BlueCross says that it's raising its premiums is because so many people are dropping out of individual coverage because the economy is so bad, and that leaves the people in the pool who are people who need medical care driving up costs. One of the reasons why businesses are not expanding right now, in addition to some of the credit issues you've talked about, at least according to business leaders, is they say there's an uncertainty of what they need to plan for because of the energy bill, because of health care. That's what they say. I'm not saying it's true or not, but that's what they say. What do you say when you hear that?

The President. Well, I think that the biggest uncertainty has been we just went through the worst recession since the Great Depression, and people weren't sure whether the financial system was going to melt down and whether we were going to tip into a endless recession. So let's be clear about the sources of uncertainty in terms of business investment over the last several years: a huge contraction, trillions of dollars of losses in people's 401(k)s, people have a lot of debt coming out of the previous decade that they still haven't worked out, the housing market losing a whole bunch of value.

So the good news is that where we were contracting by 6 percent, the economy is now growing by 6 percent. The CEOs I talked to are saying they are now making investments, and I anticipate that they're going to start hiring at a more rapid clip. What I've also heard is them saying that we would like to feel like Washington is working and able to get some things done.

There are two ways of interpreting the issue of uncertainty. One way would be to say, well, you know what, we'll just go back to what we were doing before on, let's say, the financial markets. We won't have the regulations that we need; we won't make any changes in terms of "too big to fail." That will provide certainty, until the next financial crisis.

That's not the kind of certainty, I think, that the financial markets need. The kind of certainty they need is for us to go ahead and agree on a bipartisan effort to put some rules of the road in place so that consumers are protected in the financial markets, so that we don't have banks that are too big to fail, that we have ways of winding them down and protecting the overall system without taxpayer bailouts. That requires legislation. The sooner we can get that done, the better.

The same would be true when it comes to health care. A lot of CEOs I hear from will say, "Boy, we'd like you to get health care settled one way or another," but they will acknowledge that when they open up their latest invoice for their premiums, and they find out that those premiums have gone up 20 percent or 25 percent, that's the kind of uncertainty that also tamps down business investment.

So I guess my answer would be this: The sooner the business community has a sense that we've got our act together here in Washington and can move forward on big, serious issues in a substantive way without a lot of posturing and partisan wrangling, I think the better off the entire country is going to be. I absolutely agree on that.

What I think is important is not to buy into this notion that is perpetrated by some of the business interests that got a stake in this who are fighting financial reform, for example, to say, boy, we'd be doing fine if we just didn't try to regulate the banks. That, I think, would be a mistake. All right?

Small Businesses

Q. But just to play devil's advocate on that. A small business, let's say, not somebody who's going to be affected by the regulatory reform, small business—you have proposed, you would acknowledge, a bold agenda. And a small business might wonder, "I don't know how the energy bill is going to affect me. I don't know how the health care reform bill is going to affect me. I'd better hold off on hiring."

The President. Yes, what the small businesses I talk to—and I've been talking to a lot of them as I've been traveling around the country over the last several months—their biggest problem is, right now they can't get credit out of their banks, so they're uncertain about that. And they're still uncertain about orders: Do they just have enough customers to justify them doing more?

It's looking better at this point. But that's not the rationale for people saying, "I'm not hiring." Let me put it this way. Most small businesses right now, if they've got enough customers to make a profit and they can get the bank loans required to boost their payroll, boost their inventory, and sell to those customers, they will do so. Okay?

Let's see, let's get a print guy here. David [David Jackson, USA Today].

Energy

Q. You heard McConnell talk about nuclear power, offshore drilling, free trade. That's a lot of Republican stuff. Is your party going to go for that if you decide to support that kind of thing?

The President. You know, I think that on energy, there should be a bipartisan agreement that we have to take a both-and approach rather than an either-or approach. What do I mean by that? I am very firm in my conviction that the country that leads the way in clean energy—solar, wind, biodiesel, geothermal—that country is going to win the race in the 21st-century global economy. So we have to move in that direction.

What is also true is that given our energy needs in order to continue economic growth, produce jobs, make sure our businesses are competitive around the world, that we're going to need some of the old, traditional energy sources as we're developing these new ones and ramping them up. All right? So we can't overnight convert to an all-solar or an all-wind economy. That just can't happen. We're going to have needs in these traditional sources.

And so the question then is, are we going to be able to put together a package that includes safe, secure nuclear power, that includes new technologies so that we can use coal, which we have in abundance and is very cheap but often is adding to our greenhouse gases? Can we find sequestration technologies that clean that up? Can we identify opportunities to increase our oil and natural gas production in a way that is environmentally sustainable? And that should be part of a package with our development of clean energy.

And you know, my hope is that my Republican friends, but also Democrats, say to themselves, let's be practical and let's do both. Let's not just do one or the other, let's do both. Over time, I think the transition is going to be more and more clean energy, and over time, fossil fuels become less prominent in our overall energy mix. But we've got to do both.

Bipartisanship in Congress

Q. How confident are you there will be that kind of consensus for that double-edged approach?

The President. I am just a eternal optimist—[*laughter*]—and so—it's the right thing to do. And all I can do is just to keep on making the argument about what's right for the country and assume that over time, people, regardless of party, regardless of their particular political positions, are going to gravitate towards the truth. Okay?

I'm going to take two more. Let's see——

Q. How about the back? [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, I just want to make sure that I was getting a balance here, so—look—go ahead, Chuck.

Iran

Q. Aww!

The President. Why is everybody moaning about Todd?

Q. He's too good. His questions are too precise. [*Laughter*]

Q. Iran—we've got the news today that they're doing more of these—or trying to enhance this uranium even more. Obviously, Secretary Gates today in Paris was quoted as saying basically the dialogue seems to be over and now the question is sanctions. Where are we on sanctions? How close is this? I know you had sort of an end-of-the-year deadline when you stood up there with Sarkozy and Brown. It's now February. How quickly is this moving along?

The President. Well, it's moving along fairly quickly. I think that we have bent over backwards to say to the Islamic Republic of Iran that we are willing to have a constructive conversation about how they can align themselves with international norms and rules and reenter as full members of the international community.

The most obvious attempt was when we gave them an offer that said we are going to provide the conversion of some of the low-enriched uranium that they already have into the isotopes that they need for their medical research and

for hospitals that would serve up to a million Iranian citizens. They rejected it; although, one of the difficulties in dealing with Iran over the last several months is it's not always clear who's speaking on behalf of the Government, and we get a lot of different, mixed signals. But what's clear is, is that they have not said yes to an agreement that Russia, China, Germany, France, Great Britain, and the United States all said was a good deal and that the Director of the IAEA said was the right thing to do and that Iran should accept.

That indicates to us that despite their posturing that their nuclear power is only for civilian use, that they, in fact, continue to pursue a course that would lead to weaponization. And that is not acceptable to the international community, not just to the United States. So what we've said from the start was we're moving on dual tracks. If you want to accept the kinds of agreements with the international community that lead you down a path of being a member of good standing, then we welcome you. If not——

Q. Haven't they responded, though? I mean, by deciding to do what they did, with these——

The President. Well, I'm getting to that.

Q. Okay.

The President. And if not, then the next step is sanctions. They have made their choice so far, although the door is still open. And what we are going to be working on over the next several weeks is developing a significant regime of sanctions that will indicate to them how isolated they are from the international community as a whole.

Q. What do you mean by "regime of sanctions"?

The President. Well, meaning that there's going to be a whole——

Q. Some will be U.N. and some will be——

The President. We are going to be looking at a variety of ways in which countries indicate to Iran that their approach is unacceptable. And it will—the U.N. will be one aspect of that broader effort.

Q. China will be there? You're confident?

The President. Well, the—we are confident right now that the international community is unified around Iran's misbehavior in this area. How China operates at the Security Council as we pursue sanctions is something that we're going to have to see. One thing I'm pleased about is to see how forward leaning the Russians have been on this issue. I think they clearly have seen that Iran hasn't been serious about solving what is a solvable dispute between Iran and the international community.

All right? I'm going to make this the last question, and I'll take somebody from the back. Yes.

Health Care Reform/Congressional Debate on Health Care Reform

Q. Me?

The President. Yes.

Q. Thanks for doing this. It's been a while. [*Laughter*] On health care, the Republicans are asking whether the February 25 session will include economists and public interest groups and people supporting your side, or will it just be the Members of Congress? And on Anthem BlueCross, do you have the authority to go in and tell a private company they can't charge that? How will you stop them?

The President. Well, I don't have the authority as I understand it. I can't simply issue an Executive order lowering everybody's rates. If I could, I would have done that already and saved myself a lot of grief on Capitol Hill. That's why reform is so important. That's why the status quo is unacceptable.

But there is no shortcut in dealing with this issue. I know the American people get frustrated in debating something like health care, because you get a whole bunch of different claims being made by different groups and different interests. It is a big, complicated, tough issue. But what is also true is that without some action on the part of Congress, it is very unlikely that we see any improvement over the current trajectory. And the current trajectory is premiums keep on going up 10, 15, 20, 30 percent. The current trajectory is more and more people are losing health care.

I don't know if people noted—because during the health care debate, everybody was saying the President is trying to take over—a Government takeover of health care. I don't

know if anybody noticed that for the first time this year, you saw more people getting health care from Government than you did from the private sector, not because of anything we did, but because more and more people are losing their health care from their employers. It's becoming unaffordable. That's what we're trying to prevent.

We want people to be able to get health care from their employers. But we also understand that you've got to fix the system so that people are able to get it at affordable rates and small businesses can afford to give their employees insurance at an affordable rate. And that's not happening right now.

To your question about the 25th, my hope is that this doesn't end up being political theater, as I think some of you have phrased it. I want a substantive discussion. We haven't refined exactly how the agenda is going to go that day. We want to talk with both the Democratic and Republican leaders to find out what they think would be most useful. I do want to make sure that there's some people like the Congressional Budget Office, for example, that are considered nonpartisan, who can answer questions.

In this whole health care debate, I'm reminded of the story that was told about Senator Moynihan, who was, I guess, in an argument with one of his colleagues, and his colleague was losing the argument so he got a little flustered and said to Senator Moynihan, "Well, I'm entitled to my own opinion." And Senator Moynihan said, "Well, you're entitled to your own opinion, but you're not entitled to your own facts." I think that's the key to a successful dialogue on the 25th or on health care.

Let's establish some common facts. Let's establish what the issues are, what the problems are, and let's test out in front of the American people what ideas work and what ideas don't. And you know, if we can establish that factual accuracy about how different approaches would work, then I think we can make some progress. And it may be that some of the facts that come up are ones that make my party a little bit uncomfortable. So if it's established that by working seriously on medical malpractice and tort reform that we can reduce some of those costs, I've said from the beginning of this debate I'd be willing to work on that. On the other hand, if I'm told that that is only a fraction of the problem and that is not the biggest driver of health care costs, then I'm also going to insist, okay, let's look at that as one aspect of it, but what else are we willing to do?

And this is where it gets back to the point I was making earlier. Bipartisanship cannot mean simply that Democrats give up everything that they believe in, find the handful of things that Republicans have been advocating for and we do those things, and then we have bipartisanship. That's not how it works in any other realm of life. That's certainly not how it works in my marriage with Michelle, although I usually do give in most of the time. [*Laughter*] But the—there's got to be some give and take, and that's what I'm hoping can be accomplished. And I'm confident that's what the American people are looking for.

So all right?

Job Growth Legislation

Q. Jobs question?

The President. Okay, since there wasn't a jobs question——

Q. Well, I just——

The President. I'll make this the last one, jobs question.

Q. At the stakeout, the Republicans were saying: "Well, the jobs package we've seen, it's not really ready yet. We're a little worried about the cost." Are you satisfied that there is something that can be quickly moved through Congress on jobs?

The President. Well, my understanding is—first of all, the House has moved forward a jobs package that has some good elements in it. My understanding is, is that there is bipartisan talks taking place as we speak on the Senate side about some elements of a package.

I think there are some things that a lot of people agree on. Just to give you an example, the idea of eliminating capital gains for small businesses—something we can all agree on. I talked about it at the State of the Union Address. My hope would be that we would all agree on a mechanism to get community banks who are lending to small businesses more capital, because that is something that I keep on

hearing is one of the biggest problems that small businesses have out there.

So I think that it's realistic for us to get a package moving quickly that may not include all the things I think need to be done, and it may be that that first package builds some trust and confidence that Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill can work together, and then we move on to the next aspect of the package, and so forth. It may take a series of incremental steps, but the one thing I'm absolutely clear about is, is that we've got an economy that's growing right now, a huge boost in productivity. That's the good news. The bad news is, is that companies still haven't taken that final step in actually putting people on their payroll full time. We're seeing an increase in temporary workers, but they haven't yet taken on that full-time worker. And so providing some additional impetus to them right as the economy is moving in a positive direction, I think, can end up yielding some good results.

All right? Thank you, guys. That was pretty good. Thanks.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 1:30 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred Martha N. Johnson, Administrator-designate, General Services Administration; and former Director General Mohamed ElBaradei of the International Atomic Energy Agency. A reporter referred to President Nicolas Sarkozy of France; and Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom.

Remarks at PBS's "A Celebration of Music From the Civil Rights Movement: In Performance at the White House"

February 9, 2010

Welcome to the White House, everybody, and thank you for braving the storm. I am thrilled to see all of you here today—friends, guests, members of my Cabinet, Members of Congress, our Vice President and Dr. Jill Biden, and everyone watching at home—for the fifth in a series of evenings celebrating the music that tells the story of America.

Tonight we celebrate the music of the movement. To help us do that, Michelle and I are thrilled to welcome a tremendous group of artists who influenced that music and artists who were influenced by it: Yolanda Adams, Joan Baez, Natalie Cole, Morgan Freeman, Jennifer Hudson, John Mellencamp, Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon, Smokey Robinson, the Blind Boys of Alabama, the Howard University Choir, and a man who was good enough to take a night off from his never-ending tour, Mr. Bob Dylan.

I want to thank some of them for spending some time earlier here today leading a workshop of high school students, perhaps even inspiring the next generation of civil rights leaders.

Let me also just acknowledge a good friend to us all, Dr. Joseph Lowery, who was here—or who couldn't be here with us today, but he is recuperating after an illness, and we want to keep him in our thoughts and prayers tonight.

Now, the civil rights movement was a movement sustained by music. It was lifted by spirituals inspired by the Bible. It was sharpened by protest songs about wrongs that needed righting. It was broadened by folk artists like a New York-born daughter of immigrants and a young storyteller from Minnesota who captured the hardships and hopes of people who were worlds different from them, in ways that only song can do.

It was a movement with a soundtrack, diverse strains of music that coalesced when the movement was right. But that soundtrack wasn't just inspired by the movement; it gave strength in return, a fact not lost on the movement's leaders.

It's been said that when Dr. King and his associates were looking for communities to organize and mobilize, they'd know which were

disciplined enough and serious enough when they saw folks singing freedom songs. Dr. King himself once acknowledged that he didn't see "the real meaning of the movement" until he saw young people singing in the face of hostility.

You see, it's easy to sing when you're happy. It's easy to sing when you're among friends. It's easy to sing when times are good. But it is hard to sing when times are rough. It's hard to sing in the face of taunts and fear and the constant threat of violence. It's hard to sing when folks are being beaten, when leaders are being jailed, when churches are being bombed.

It's hard to sing in times like that. But times like that are precisely when the power of song is most potent. Above the din of hatred, amidst the deafening silence of inaction, the hymns of the civil rights movement helped carry the cause of a people and advance the ideals of a nation.

Bernice Johnson Reagon knew this. One day when she was young, she was sitting in church when a local sheriff and his deputies showed up to intimidate the congregation. "They stood at the door," Bernice wrote, "making sure everyone knew they were there." "And then," she said, "a song began. And the song made sure that the sheriff and his deputies knew that we were there."

Joan Baez and Bob Dylan knew this. One day in 1963, they joined hundreds of thousands on the National Mall and sang of a day when the time would come, when the winds would stop, when a ship would come in. They sang of a day when a righteous journey would reach its destination.

And Congressman John Lewis—a man of that Moses generation, a man who couldn't be here tonight, but whose sacrifices helped make it possible for me to be here tonight—he knew this too. For in the darkest hour, he said, "The songs fed our spirits and gave us hope."

So to everyone here or watching at home, let us enjoy the music we hear tonight. Let the music feed our spirits, give us hope, and carry us forward as one people and as one Nation. Enjoy.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:08 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to civil rights activist Joseph E. Lowery. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 10.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Presidential Nominees
February 11, 2010

Today the United States Senate confirmed 27 of my high-level nominees, many of whom had been awaiting a vote for months.

At the beginning of the week, a staggering 63 nominees had been stalled in the Senate because one or more Senators placed a hold on their nomination. In most cases, these holds have had nothing to do with the nominee's qualifications or even political views, and these nominees have already received broad, bipartisan support in the committee process. Instead, many holds were motivated by a desire to leverage projects for a Senator's State or simply to frustrate progress. It is precisely these kinds of tactics that enrage the American people.

And so on Tuesday, I told Senator McConnell that if Republican Senators did not release these holds, I would exercise my authority to fill critically needed positions in the Federal Government temporarily through the use of recess appointments. This is a rare but not unprecedented step that many other Presidents have taken. Since that meeting, I am gratified that Republican Senators have responded by releasing many of these holds and allowing 29 nominees to receive a vote in the Senate.

While this is a good first step, there are still dozens of nominees on hold who deserve a similar vote, and I will be looking for action from the Senate when it returns from recess. If they do not act, I reserve the right to use my recess appointment authority in the future.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Amendments
February 12, 2010

Dear Madam Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 Budget amendments for the Departments of Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, the Treasury, and Veterans Affairs, as well as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. These amendments will increase by $155 million the overall discretionary budget authority in my FY 2011 Budget.

These amendments are necessary to reflect correctly policies assumed in the FY 2011 Budget. The details of these amendments are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Budget Amendments
February 12, 2010

Dear Madam Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed amendments to Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 proposals in my FY 2011 Budget.

Included is an amendment for the Department of Homeland Security, Disaster Relief, for the continued response and recovery efforts associated with prior large events, such as Hurricane Katrina and the Midwest Floods. The proposed total for FY 2010 in my FY 2011 Budget would increase by $1.5 billion as a result of this amendment.

Also included are amendments to general provisions that would provide authorization and funding for FY 2010 to implement the settlement of a case involving the management of individual Indian trust accounts related to Indian lands and to settle claims of prior discrimination brought by black farmers against the Department of Agriculture.

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

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

The President's Weekly Address
February 13, 2010

All across America, people work hard to meet their responsibilities. You do your job, take care of your family, pay your bills. Sometimes, particularly in tough times like these, you have to make hard choices about where to spend and where to save. That's what being responsible means. It's a bedrock value of our country. And that ought to be a value that our Government lives up to as well.

Yet over the past decade, this hasn't always been the case. Ten years ago, we had a big budget surplus with projected surpluses far into the future. Ten years later, those surpluses are gone. In fact, when I first walked through the door, the Government's budget deficit stood at $1.3 trillion, with the budget gap over the next decade projected to be 8 trillion.

Now, partly, the recession is to blame. With millions of people out of work and millions of families facing hardship, folks are paying less in taxes while seeking more services, like unemployment benefits. Rising health care costs

are also to blame. Each year, more and more tax dollars are devoted to Medicare and Medicaid.

But what also has made these large deficits possible was the end of a commonsense rule called pay as you go. It's pretty simple. It says to Congress, you have to pay as you go. You can't spend a dollar unless you cut a dollar elsewhere. This is how a responsible family or business manages a budget. This is how a responsible government manages a budget as well.

It was this rule that helped lead to balanced budgets in the 1990s by making clear that we could not increase entitlement spending or cut taxes simply by borrowing more money. And it was the abandonment of this rule that allowed the previous administration and previous Congresses to pass massive tax cuts for the wealthy and create an expensive new drug program without paying for any of it. Now, in a perfect world, Congress would not have needed a law to act responsibly, to remember that every dollar spent would come from taxpayers today or our children tomorrow.

But this isn't a perfect world. This is Washington. And while in theory, there is bipartisan agreement on moving forward on balanced budgets, in practice, this responsibility for the future is often overwhelmed by the politics of the moment. It falls prey to the pressures of special interest groups, to the pull of local concerns, and to a reality familiar to every single American: the fact that it's a lot easier to spend a dollar than save one.

That's why this rule is necessary. And that's why I'm pleased that Congress fulfilled my request to restore it. Last night I signed the pay-as-you-go rule into law. Now Congress will have to pay for what it spends, just like everybody else.

But that's not all we must do. Even as we make critical investments to create jobs today and lay a foundation for growth tomorrow—by cutting taxes for small businesses or investing in education or promoting clean energy and modernizing our roads and railways—we have to continue to go through the budget line by line, looking for ways to save. We have to cut where we can to afford what we need.

This year, I've proposed another $20 billion in budget cuts. And I've also called for a freeze in Government spending for 3 years. It won't affect benefits through Medicare, Medicaid, or Social Security. And it will not affect national security, including benefits for veterans. But it will affect the rest of the budget.

Finally, I've proposed a bipartisan fiscal commission to provide recommendations for long-term deficit reduction. Because in the end, solving our fiscal challenge, so many years in the making, will take both parties coming together, putting politics aside, and making some hard choices about what we need to spend and what we don't. It will not happen any other way. Unfortunately, this proposal, which received the support of a bipartisan majority in the Senate, was recently blocked. So I will be creating this commission by Executive order.

After a decade of profligacy, the American people are tired of politicians who talk the talk but don't walk the walk when it comes to fiscal responsibility. It's easy to get up in front of the cameras and rant against exploding deficits. What's hard is actually getting deficits under control. But that's what we must do. Like families across the country, we have to take responsibility for every dollar we spend. And with the return of pay as you go, as well as other steps we've begun to take, that is exactly what we are doing.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 1:30 p.m. on February 12 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for broadcast on February 13. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 12, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 13. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on Serbian National Day
February 15, 2010

On behalf of the American people, I send my congratulations and best wishes to all those who are observing Serbian National Day. The United States and Serbia are strong partners, and here in America, those of Serbian descent enrich our national diversity and identity. I look forward to a continued friendship and strengthened partnership between our two countries.

Statement on Senator Evan Bayh's Decision Not To Seek Reelection
February 15, 2010

For more than two decades, Evan Bayh has devoted his career and his life to serving his fellow Hoosiers. During that time, he has fought tirelessly for Indiana's working families, reaching across the aisle on issues ranging from job creation and economic growth to fiscal responsibility and national security. I look forward to continuing to work with him on these critical challenges throughout the rest of the year.

Michelle and I thank Senator Bayh for his leadership and service and wish him and his family all the best in their future endeavors.

Remarks to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in Lanham, Maryland
February 16, 2010

Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Please have a seat. Have a seat. Good morning, everybody. Before I begin, let me just acknowledge some of the people who are standing behind me here. First of all, two people who have been working really hard to make this day happen: Secretary Steven Chu—my Energy Secretary, Steven Chu, and my White House adviser on everything having to do with energy, Carol Browner.

I want to acknowledge the outstanding Governor of Maryland, Martin O'Malley, as well as his Lieutenant Governor, Anthony Brown. We've got Mark Ayers from the building trades and Billy Hite from the UA Plumbers and Pipefitters—give them a big round of applause. Gregory Jaczko, who's—the nuclear energy commission—is here. Where is he? Ed Hill, president of the IBEW International; and I want to thank Chuck Graham and everybody here at Local 26 for their great hospitality.

Thank you for the warm welcome. Thanks for showing me around. I was just mentioning that I got a chance to pull the first fire alarm since I was in junior high. [*Laughter*] And I didn't get in trouble for it.

This is an extraordinarily impressive facility, where workers are instructed on everything from the installation of sophisticated energy hardware and software to the basics of current and resistance. And we need to look no further than the workers and apprentices who are standing behind me to see the future that's possible when it comes to clean energy.

It's a future in which skilled laborers are helping us lead in burgeoning industries. It's a future in which renewable electricity is fueling plug-in hybrid cars and energy-efficient homes and businesses. It's a future in which we're exporting homegrown energy technology instead of importing foreign oil. And it's a future in which our economy is powered not by what we borrow and spend, but what we invent and what we build.

That's the bright future that lies ahead for America. And it's one of—it's a future that my administration is striving to achieve each and every day. We've already made the largest investment in clean energy in history as part of

the Recovery Act, an investment that is expected to create more than 700,000 jobs across America, manufacturing advanced batteries for more fuel-efficient vehicles, upgrading the power grid so that it's smarter and it's stronger, doubling our Nation's capacity to generate renewable energy. And after decades in which we have done little to increase the efficiency of cars and trucks, we've raised fuel economy standards to reduce our dependence on foreign oil while helping folks save money at the pump.

But in order to truly harness our potential in clean energy, we're going to have to do more, and that's why we're here. In the near term, as we transition to cleaner energy sources, we're going to have to make some tough decisions about opening up new offshore areas for oil and gas development. We'll need to make continued investments in advanced biofuels and clean coal technologies, even as we build greater capacity in renewables like wind and solar. And we're going to have to build a new generation of safe, clean nuclear power plants in America.

That's what brings us here. Through the Department of Energy, under the leadership of Nobel Prize-winning physicist Steven Chu—although, just a quick side note. When he was talking to some of the instructors here, and they were talking about currents and this and that and the other, I indicated to him that he could have saved a lot of money; instead of getting a Ph.D., he could have come here and learned some of the same stuff, but—[*laughter*]. You know, the instructors here were just keeping up—they were right there with him.

But through the Department of Energy and Secretary Chu's leadership, we are announcing roughly $8 billion in loan guarantees to break ground on the first new nuclear plant in our country in three decades—the first new nuclear power plant in nearly three decades.

It's a plant that will create thousands of construction jobs in the next few years and some 800 permanent jobs—well-paying permanent jobs—in the years to come. And this is only the beginning. My budget proposes tripling the loan guarantees we provide to help finance safe, clean nuclear facilities, and we'll continue to provide financing for clean energy projects here in Maryland and across America.

Now, there will be those that welcome this announcement, those who think it's been long overdue. But there are also going to be those who strongly disagree with this announcement. The same has been true in other areas of our energy debate, from offshore drilling to putting a price on carbon pollution. But what I want to emphasize is this: Even when we have differences, we cannot allow those differences to prevent us from making progress. On an issue that affects our economy, our security, and the future of our planet, we can't keep on being mired in the same old stale debates between the left and the right, between environmentalists and entrepreneurs.

See, our competitors are racing to create jobs and command growing energy industries. And nuclear energy is no exception. Japan and France have long invested heavily in this industry. Meanwhile, there are 56 nuclear reactors under construction around the world: 21 in China alone, 6 in South Korea, 5 in India. And the commitment of these countries is not just generating the jobs in those plants; it's generating demand for expertise and new technologies.

So make no mistake: Whether it's nuclear energy, or solar or wind energy, if we fail to invest in the technologies of tomorrow, then we're going to be importing those technologies instead of exporting them. We will fall behind. Jobs will be produced overseas instead of here in the United States of America. And that's not a future that I accept.

Now, I know it's been long assumed that those who champion the environment are opposed to nuclear power. But the fact is, even though we've not broken ground on a new power plant—new nuclear power plant in 30 years, nuclear energy remains our largest source of fuel that produces no carbon emissions. To meet our growing energy needs and prevent the worst consequences of climate change, we'll need to increase our supply of nuclear power. It's that simple. This one plant, for example, will cut carbon pollution by 16 million tons each year when compared to a similar coal plant. That's like taking 3.5 million cars off the road.

On the other side, there are those who have long advocated for nuclear power, including many Republicans, who have to recognize that

we're not going to achieve a big boost in nuclear capacity unless we also create a system of incentives to make clean energy profitable. That's not just my personal conclusion, it's the conclusion of many in the energy industry itself, including CEOs of the Nation's largest utility companies. Energy leaders and experts recognize that as long as producing carbon pollution carries no cost, traditional plants that use fossil fuels will be more cost effective than plants that use nuclear fuel.

That's why we need comprehensive energy and climate legislation and why this legislation has drawn support from across the ideological spectrum. I raised this just last week with congressional Republican leaders. I believe there's real common ground here. And my administration will be working to build on areas of agreement so that we can pass a bipartisan energy and climate bill through the Senate.

Now, none of this is to say that there aren't some serious drawbacks with respect to nuclear energy that have to be addressed. As the CEOs standing behind me will tell you, nuclear power generates waste, and we need to accelerate our efforts to find ways of storing this waste safely and disposing of it. That's why we've asked a bipartisan group of leaders and nuclear experts to examine this challenge. And these plants also have to be held to the highest and strictest safety standards to answer the legitimate concerns of Americans who live near and far from these facilities. That's going to be an imperative.

But investing in nuclear energy remains a necessary step. What I hope is that with this announcement, we're underscoring both our seriousness in meeting the energy challenge and our willingness to look at this challenge not as a partisan issue but as a matter that's far more important than politics, because the choices we make will affect not just the next generation but many generations to come.

The fact is, changing the ways we produce and use energy requires us to think anew, it requires us to act anew, and it demands of us a willingness to extend our hand across some of the old divides, to act in good faith, and to move beyond the broken politics of the past. That's what we must do; that's what we will do.

Thank you very much, everybody. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:05 a.m. at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 26 Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Mark H. Ayers, president, Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL–CIO; William P. Hite, general president, United Association; Gregory B. Jaczko, chairman, Nuclear Regulatory Commission; and Charles E. Graham, business manager, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 26.

Statement on Lithuanian National Day
February 16, 2010

On behalf of the American people, I want to extend my sincerest congratulations to those that are observing Lithuania's national day. Here in America, in cities across the country, we see the love and commitment Lithuanian Americans have for the country of their heritage and for the United States. The people of Lithuania have a strong commitment to the alliance between our two nations through NATO and our partnership to advance international security. May all those who trace their roots to Lithuania enjoy this day of celebration.

Remarks on the First Anniversary of the Signing of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

February 17, 2010

Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Please, have a seat. Thank you very much. Thank you to Blake and Chuck, and thank you to my outstanding Vice President and his extraordinary team that have done just a great job managing this program.

I want to begin by recalling where we were 1 year ago. Millions of jobs had already been lost to the recession before I was sworn into office. Another 800,000 would be lost in the month of January. We'd later learn that our economy had shrunk by an astounding 6.4 percent in the first quarter of 2009. And economists from across the political spectrum warned that if dramatic action was not taken to break the back of the recession, the United States could spiral into another depression.

That was the backdrop against which I signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in Denver, with Blake alongside. It certainly wasn't a politically easy decision to make for me or for the Members of Congress who supported it, because let's face it, no large expenditure is ever that popular, particularly at a time when we're also facing a massive deficit. But we acted because failure to do so would have led to catastrophe. We acted because we had a larger responsibility than simply winning the next election. We had a responsibility to do what was right for the U.S. economy and for the American people.

And 1 year later, it is largely thanks to the Recovery Act that a second depression is no longer a possibility. It's one of the main reasons the economy has gone from shrinking by 6 percent to growing at about 6 percent. And this morning we learned that manufacturing production posted a strong gain. So far, the Recovery Act is responsible for the jobs of about 2 million Americans who would otherwise be unemployed. These aren't just our numbers, these are the estimates of independent, nonpartisan economists across the spectrum.

Now, despite all this, the bill still generates some controversy. And part of that is because there are those, let's face it, across the aisle who have tried to score political points by attacking what we did, even as many of them show up at ribbon-cutting ceremonies for projects in their districts. [*Laughter*] But if we're honest, part of the controversy also is, is that despite the extraordinary work that has been done through the Recovery Act, millions of Americans are still without jobs. Millions more are struggling to make ends meet. So it doesn't yet feel like much of a recovery. And I understand that. It's why we're going to continue to do everything in our power to turn this economy around.

Now, the truth is, the Recovery Act was never intended to save every job or restore our economy to full strength. No bill or Government program can do that. Businesses are the true engines of growth; businesses are the engines of job creation in this country. They always will be. But during a recession, when businesses pull back and people stop spending, what Government can do is provide a temporary boost that puts money in people's pockets and keeps workers on the job, cuts taxes for small businesses, generates more demand, gives confidence to entrepreneurs that maybe they don't have to cut back right now, maybe they can hold steady in their plans and in their dreams. That's exactly what we've been able to do with the Recovery Act.

And I just want to point this out: There has never been a program of this scale, moved at this speed, that has been enacted as effectively and as transparently as the Recovery Act. I'm grateful that Congress agreed to my request that the bill include no earmarks, that all projects receive funding based solely on their merits. And despite that, I was still concerned—Joe and I were just talking in the back—when this thing passed, we said $787 billion—somewhere there's going to be some story of some money that ended up being misspent; $787 billion spent out over 18 months, that's a lot of money. And it is a testimony to Vice President Biden and his team that, as Joe puts it, the dog, so far at least, hasn't barked. [*Laughter*]

This team has done an outstanding job overseeing the Recovery Act. It doesn't mean that everything's been perfect, but when you think about the scope, the magnitude of this thing, this program has run cleanly, smoothly, transparently. We brought in one of the toughest Inspector Generals in Washington as well as professionals from private industry to help run the implementation. And every American can see how and where this money has been spent just by going on www.recovery.gov.

Now, just to review: One-third of the money in this bill—one-third was made up of tax cuts—I talked about this at the State of the Union—tax cuts for 95 percent of working Americans. I just want to say to the American people—because we see some polling where about twice as many people think we've raised taxes as lowered taxes—95 percent of you got a tax cut. Tax cuts for 95 percent of working Americans: tax cuts for small businesses, tax cuts for first-time home buyers, tax cuts for parents trying to care for their kids, tax cuts for 8 million Americans paying for college. So far, we've provided $120 billion in tax relief to families and small businesses.

Now, up until this point, I've never met a Republican who didn't like a good tax cut—[*laughter*]—but you remember when I mentioned this at the State of the Union, Joe, they were all kind of squirming in their seats. They weren't sure whether to clap or—[*laughter*]—or not, because most of them had voted against all these tax cuts, which I thought was—it was interesting to watch. [*Laughter*]

The second third of this bill was made up of relief for those who have been most affected by this recession. We've extended or increased unemployment benefits for more than 19 million Americans. We made health insurance 65 percent cheaper for families who lost their jobs and had to get temporary coverage through COBRA. And we gave relief to States that were struggling to balance their budgets, relief that has allowed 300,000 teachers and education workers to keep their jobs, as well as tens of thousands of cops and firefighters and first-responders and correctional officers. And Joe Biden will tell you that not one of the 50 Governors we've spoken to, Democrat or Republican, has failed to show appreciation for this relief.

And I also have to tell you that I am concerned because State budgets have not yet recovered, and you're now seeing a whole bunch of State and local governments who were able to put off layoffs last year, as the recovery money is running out, having to make some very tough decisions. And we could potentially see layoffs taking place this year because we haven't reupped in terms of providing some help to those States and local governments. That's something that we're watching and we're concerned about.

Now, the last third of the Recovery Act is what I want to talk a little bit about more today. It's the reason Blake and Doug [Chuck]* are here. That third is about rebuilding our economy on a new and stronger foundation for growth over the long term. See, we knew when we came into office that it wasn't enough simply to solve the immediate crisis before us. We knew that even before the crisis hit, we had come through what some people are calling the "lost decade," a period where there was barely any job growth and where the income of the average American household declined. This is before the recession. Over the course of the decade, the average American household, they saw their incomes decline even as the cost of health care and college tuition were skyrocketing, had reached record highs. The prosperity was built on little more than a housing bubble and on financial speculation, people maxing out on their credit cards, taking out home equity loans.

We can't go back to that kind of economy. That's not where the jobs are. The jobs of the 21st century are in areas like clean energy and technology, advanced manufacturing, new infrastructure. That kind of economy requires us to consume less and produce more, to import less and export more. Instead of sending jobs overseas, we need to send more products overseas that are made by American workers and American businesses. And we need to train

* White House correction.

our workers for those jobs with new skills and a world-class education.

Other countries already realize this. They're putting more emphasis on math and science. They're building high-speed railroads and expanding broadband. They're making serious investments in clean energy because they want those jobs.

And America cannot stand still in the face of this challenge. We can't afford to put our future on hold. So that's why a big part of the Recovery Act has been about investing in that future. Yes, it created jobs now. Yes, it created business opportunities now. But more importantly, it's laying the foundation for where we need to go.

So instead of just pouring more money into America's schools, regardless of their performance, we launched a national competition between States that only rewards success and reform, reform that raises student achievement and inspires students to excel in math and science and turns around failing schools, failing schools that steal the future of too many young Americans.

We're also making sure that our Nation has an infrastructure that's built to compete in the 21st century. So we now have projects in 31 States that are laying the ground for the first high-speed rail network in the United States of America. I mean, for years, Japan, Europe have had high-speed rail. China's got about 40 times as many projects that have been going on, on this front. We're playing catch up; we shouldn't be.

The Recovery Act has made possible over 12,500 transportation construction projects, from rebuilding highways to improving our airports. And today we announced funding for over 50 innovative transportation projects across America, everything from railroads in Appalachia to a new passenger terminal in New Orleans.

These projects will put hundreds of thousands of Americans to work. And in many cases, they already have. That's part of the reason that Chuck's here today. He's the president of a construction company in Pennsylvania, and the Recovery Act will fund about a third of the work his paving company will do this year. That's allowed him to hire two engineers and about a hundred employees. So in case people are wondering whether or not the Recovery Act's created jobs and opportunity for businesses, talk to Chuck. [*Laughter*] The new equipment he's ordered to help pave these roads will save an additional 40 jobs on an assembly line out in California. These are well-paying, long-lasting, private sector jobs that wouldn't be possible without the Recovery Act. They'll be doing the work that America needs done to stay competitive in a global economy.

In no area is this more important than in energy. Because of the Recovery Act, we have finally jump-started the clean energy industry in America and made possible 200,000 jobs in the clean energy and construction sectors.

Just take one example: Consider the investment that we've made in the kind of batteries used in hybrid and electric cars. You've heard about these, right? Before the Recovery Act was signed, 98 percent of the world's advanced battery production was done in Asian countries. The United States did less than 2 percent of this advanced battery manufacturing that's going to be the key to these high-mileage, low-emission cars.

Then we invested in new research and battery technologies and supported the construction of 20 battery factories that will employ tens of thousands of Americans—batteries that can make enough—factories that can make enough batteries each year to power half a million plug-in hybrid vehicles. So as a result, next year—next year, 2 years after the Recovery Act—the United States will have the capacity to produce nearly 20 percent of the world's advanced batteries, from less than 2 percent to 20 percent. And we'll be able to make 40 percent of these advanced batteries by 2015, an entire new industry because of the Recovery Act.

Now, this kind of progress is happening throughout our clean energy sector. Yesterday I announced loan guarantees to break ground on America's first new nuclear power plant in nearly three decades, a plant that will create thousands of construction jobs and 800 permanent jobs in years to come. There's the manufacturer in Philadelphia who makes energy-efficient windows. He used to be skeptical about the Recovery Act until he had to add two more shifts

just to keep up with the new business it's created.

And Blake at Namaste Solar—it's based in Boulder, Colorado. One year ago, Blake gave us a tour of one of his company's solar installations on top of a museum in Denver, right before I signed the Recovery Act into law. And at the time, Blake was pretty sure that the recession would force him to lay off about half of his staff. One year later, because of the clean energy investments in the Recovery Act, he has instead added about a dozen new workers and expects to hire about a dozen more by year's end. His company continues to install solar panels all over Colorado, from the Governor's Mansion to the Denver Museum of Natural—Nature and Science.

So that's our future. That's what's possible in America. And you can argue, rightly, that we haven't made as much progress as we need to make when it comes to spurring job creation. That's part of the reason why the Recovery Act is on track to save or create another 1.5 million jobs in 2010. That's part of the reason why I expect Congress to pass additional measures as quickly as possible that will help our small-business owners create new jobs, give them more of an incentive to hire.

But for those skeptics who refuse to believe the Recovery Act has done any good, who continue to insist that the bill didn't work, I'd ask you to take that argument up with Blake and his employees. Take that argument up with Chuck and his construction workers. Take it up with the Americans who are working in those battery plants or building those new highways or teaching our children new skills, all because the Recovery Act made it possible.

So our work is far from over, but we have rescued this economy from the worst of this crisis. And slowly, in new factories and research facilities and small businesses, the American people are rebuilding a better future. And we will continue to support their efforts. We will leave our children an economy that is stronger and more prosperous than it was before.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:26 a.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Blake Jones, president, Namaste Solar Electric, Inc.; Charles J. Niederriter, chief operating officer, Golden Triangle Construction Co.; and Interior Department Inspector General Earl E. Devaney, in his capacity as Chair of the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden.

Question-and-Answer Session With Crewmembers of the International Space Station and Space Shuttle *Endeavour*
February 17, 2010

The President. Hey, guys.

[*At this point, several seconds went by without a response. The President then placed his hand over the receiver of the telephone and addressed the event participants.*]

The President. There's a little bit of a delay, guys. They told you that, that there's a little bit of a delay?

Commander George D. Zamka. Good morning from the International Space Station and from the Space Shuttle *Endeavour*, Mr. President.

The President. Well, it's great to talk to you guys. I wanted to, first of all, just say that we've got a bunch of very excited young people here with us, along with a bunch of somewhat excited teachers. [*Laughter*] We have one engineer and one Member of Congress, so you've got a—and a whole bunch of press here, so it's a pretty motley crew—and one President.

But I just wanted to let you guys know how proud we are of all of you and what you guys have been accomplishing. I've had a chance to take a look at what the Tranquility module is doing. Everybody here back home is excited

about this bay on the world that you guys are opening up, and Stephen Colbert, at least, is excited about his treadmill. [*Laughter*]

And so we just wanted to let you know that the amazing work that's being done on the International Space Station, the—not only by our American astronauts, but also our colleagues from Japan and Russia, is just a testimony to human ingenuity, a testimony to extraordinary skill and courage that you guys bring to bear, and is also a testimony to why continued space exploration is so important, and is part of the reason why my commitment to NASA is unwavering.

But instead of me doing all the talking, I wanted you guys to maybe let us know what this new Tranquility module will help you accomplish. One of the things that we've done with our NASA vision for the future is to extend the life of the—our participation in the space station. And so we just want to get a sense of the kind of research that you guys are doing, and then maybe I'll turn it over to some young people to see if they've got any questions.

Commander Zamka. Well, thank you very much, Mr. President. It is a large team effort. In front of you, you have the joint crew of *Endeavour* and the space station, and we are the ones that are fortunate enough to be able to accomplish this great mission together in space. But there are many thousands of people around the world that gave the best of themselves over many years in order to have the days that we've been having up here.

For your question, I'm going to turn it over to ISS Commander Jeff Williams.

International Space Station's Tranquility Module

Commander Jeffrey N. Williams. Well, Mr. President, as you know, the ISS has been under assembly for many years, over a decade now. And as George said, it's because of the efforts of thousands of people around the world among the international partnerships.

And we're—this—the arrival of this module means several things. It means, of course, that we—everybody's aware of this new grand view that we have of the world below us, and that brings a special significance. But the Tranquility module also is going to serve as a gym, as a hygiene area, as a place a crew can maintain themselves for a long duration. And a long duration living and working in space is what the space station is all about, to do the research and the science necessary to take us beyond Earth orbit.

That was the ultimate purpose of the space station, and the arrival of this module will enable us to do that. And it really marks the end of the major assembly of at least the U.S. orbiting segment to—as we transition into full utilization of this magnificent orbiting laboratory.

Experiments in Space

The President. Do you guys want to just mention some of the research and experiments that you can conduct in—on the space station that you could not be doing back here at home?

Flight Engineer Timothy J. Creamer. That's a great question, Mr. President. Let me start off by saying, one of the nice things about where we physically are right now is that we remove the effects of gravity, so we're able to do experiments that involve the effect of gravity, basically, on Earth as we look at what happens with the absence of it.

For instance, when you do combustion studies, flames on Earth burn in a teardrop fashion because the air comes in from underneath it and feeds the flame, but we can't do that here since the air doesn't know where up is, there's no convection. So the flames burn very purely in a ball.

In a similar sense, when we do cellular research for even, like for cancer research, for instance, on Earth, the cells actually collapse under their own weight, and so it—their growth on Earth are a little bit distorted. Here, without the gravity effect, we can grow cells very purely and understand the mechanisms by which that—they are replicating.

We're also doing metallic research and materials research to help us understand how to make materials on Earth better, but also to find out what materials are better for long-duration missions and traveling beyond Earth's orbit.

Some of the other experiments involve biological, where we actually have, for instance, butterflies up here, and we watch the life process of the butterflies. Many, many experiments

up and down the stack are quite exciting when we are able to remove the variable of gravity.

The President. Well, the—some of the things that you talked about are in line with where we want to see NASA going increasingly: What are those transformational technologies that would allow us to potentially see space travel of longer durations? If we want to get to Mars, if we want to get beyond that, what kinds of technologies are going to be necessary in order for us to make sure that folks can get there in one piece and get back in one piece and that the kinds of fuels that we use and the technologies we use are going to facilitate something that is actually feasible? And we're very excited about the possibilities of putting more research dollars into the—some of these transformational technologies.

So we're excited about what you're doing and what folks back on Earth as part of NASA's engineering teams and scientific teams are doing.

What I want to do is give some of these young people a chance to ask a couple of questions. I'm—but I'm not sure I've got any volunteers, so I'm going to have to turn around—oh, look, I—[*laughter*]—this is a serious bunch here, I can tell. So I'm going to hand the phone over to the first one—hold on—what's your name?

Q. Ruth.

The President. This is Ruth, coming from North Carolina.

Importance of Space Exploration

Q. What are some of the benefits of exploring space as opposed to exploring other places on Earth?

The President. Okay. That's a pretty serious question, guys. You better have a good answer. The NASA folks are sitting here listening. [*Laughter*]

Mission Specialist Stephen K. Robinson. Ruth, I can tell you your curiosity reaches far, and so does ours. And that's sort of the human spirit, to find out what can humans really do.

And one thing that's always been, I think, amazing to every person who travels in space is that the human body is adaptable to this environment. But adaptable in what way, and how does the human body and even the human brain adapt to this very, very different environment? Learning about how we, ourselves, work and how we can handle changes if we go somewhere very different than what we're used to is something that's valuable also on Earth, because our environment changes on Earth too; and in terms of health and medicine, we understand better how our own bodies work. So there's a lot to be learned.

The President. All right, who's next?

Q. Mary.

The President. All right, this is Mary coming at you.

Inspiration to Become an Astronaut

Q. What inspired you to become an astronaut?

The President. Got any takers on that one?

Mission Specialist Nicholas J.M. Patrick. Mary, hello, this is Nick Patrick. The thing that inspired me to become an astronaut was watching the Apollo moon landings many, many years ago with my parents. I thought I wanted to be a space explorer then, and I stuck to my dream. I stayed in school and I studied hard, and through schoolwork and also an interest in things like sailing and flying I was able to realize my dream.

So I would have some advice to all of you there, which is, study really hard in school, listen to your teachers. They're full of knowledge and experience that you really can use in whatever path your future life takes you along, whether it be engineering, science, a job in business, or even space exploration.

The President. All right, let's get—we've one of our young people from——

Q. From Nebraska.

The President. From Nebraska. And what's your name?

Q. Jordan.

The President. This is Jordan from Nebraska.

Artificial Gravity

Q. Do you think it would ever be possible to create artificial gravity in space?

The President. That's a big physics question there, guys. Anybody want to tackle that one?

Pilot Terry W. Virts, Jr. Hi, Jordan, this is Terry Virts here. And that's a great question, because one of the hard things about long-duration space flight is the human body dealing with weightlessness and a lack of gravity.

And one way you can create gravity is to spin things. If you take a bucket of water or paint you can spin it around, and you'll notice that the water stays pressed up against the bucket because you're accelerating it. And so you can artificially create that acceleration that makes you feel like you're in gravity just by rotating something like a centrifuge.

So it is possible, but to do that it requires a really large structure. And so that's something that we haven't done here on the space station, but that's one way you could do it.

The President. That was a great question. All right, we've got—we need a Michigan; we got to make sure every State is represented here. What's your name?

Q. Shanae.

The President. Okay, go ahead and introduce yourself, Shanae.

Training to Become an Astronaut

Q. I was just wondering, what kind of training did you have to go through before you were able to get into space?

The President. That was Shanae from Michigan.

Mission Specialist Kathryn P. Hire. Well, that's a great question. You know, it takes a lot of experience to be an astronaut, and it's not just in one field. We've all been through many, many years of school, but also experience in our own fields. So we have engineers, scientists, mathematicians, medical doctors, and physicists. We have quite a range of experience that become astronauts.

And the important thing is that you have a good, solid background in the technical fields—the science, the technology, the engineering, and the math—to build on that, because once everyone comes and is selected as an astronaut, we all train generically for space flight, and then we train specifically for our mission.

For the International Space Station, it's a very complicated and very large spacecraft, so the training is over multiple years just for a specific flight. For the space shuttle, being a shorter duration flight of just a couple of weeks, we still train for over 1 year just specifically on the tasks that we'll accomplish on our mission.

So it's quite a bit of time, but it certainly is worth it. It's quite rewarding to us to be able to execute the mission that we've been training for for so long.

The President. And I think we need to have at least one Floridian; is that right?

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. We already had a Floridian? Do we have every State covered so far here?

All right, we've got time for a couple more questions. We were going to get a little gender balance here. [*Laughter*] This young man back here, what's your name?

Q. Joseph.

The President. Joseph. Hold on one second. You've got a question from Joseph from Nebraska.

Viewing Earth's Landmarks From Space

Q. Are there any recognizable landmarks that you can see from space?

The President. Yes, the rumor was, is that you can see the Great Wall from space, but I'm not sure that's true. So are there at least—if there aren't manmade landmarks, are there some natural landmarks other than continents that you can see?

Flight Engineer Soichi Noguchi. Yes, Mr. President and Joseph, that's a great question. Actually, the—one of the great achievement in this mission, we have a great window, big window, that we are really fascinated by the great view of the Earth. And, yes, we can see a lot of great landmarks. We can see the Golden Gate Bridge, the great skyscrapers in New York, and the Grand Canyon is just breathtaking. And also while in the night pass we can see all the lights. That means that the humans are active even in the night. And this is a great benefits that we all benefit from, being in space.

The President. Well, there you go.

All right, we've got—looks like I've got a couple more questions. Hold on. What's your name?

Q. Barbara.

The President. This is Barbara. From?

Q. Florida.

The President. From Florida. Hold on.

Living in Space

Q. Hi, I'm curious about the thoughts and emotions that you guys feel when you're in space.

The President. There you go. Do you start getting lonely? Do you feel a little claustrophobic? Vertigo?

Mission Specialist Robert L. Behnken. Well, that's an excellent question, and I think that probably it ranges quite a bit over the period of a space shuttle mission, and I expect it probably varies quite a bit over the range of a long-duration mission.

Kind of starting off, for the shuttle mission, at least for me—I've done that twice now—you kind of get into orbit, and you're just kind of finding the equivalent of your sea legs, if you will. And so you're—you've arrived on orbit, and you kind of have a feeling of joy, having accomplished it. Your body has just gone through kind of a little bit of a violent experience through the launch, and you have a little bit of adrenaline probably getting out of your system. So it's a little bit of a joyous, giddy moment at the same time that you're disoriented as you deal with the first couple of hours of actually being on orbit.

After that passes, after a couple of days, it—for me it was kind of a sense of wonder as you explore what you can do in zero gravity and the things that you can see out the window and just how the entire complex works together to make it happen. So it's just a sense of wonder.

After—a little while after that, I think you start to think a little bit about the people who are back on Earth that are most precious to you, and then that little bit of loneliness can kick in. And one of the really nice things that we have and the long-duration crews have is the opportunity to use a telephone or to perform a videoconference, similar to like we're doing with you guys, with our families. And I think that's really important for folks to maintain that contact when you're up here on orbit.

Of course, you have your crewmembers, but you do really want to maintain those precious relationships with all your family members and friends that are on the ground. And they do a remarkable job actually supporting us while we're in space to make sure that we can still speak with our families and that our families are informed and able to stay in contact with us.

But all those emotions kind of wrap up together. Kind of the final one is kind of when you do return to Earth and kick off all those relationships that, whether they were 2 weeks or 6 months later, have—time has passed, and you have to kind of rebuild them a little bit. But it's a very joyous experience and a—something that you can share with both the people on the ground and the people who are part of your crew throughout the entire mission.

Great question.

The President. All right. All right, so I think we're going to make this the last question. Have we been keeping you guys overtime? So what's your name?

Q. Alex.

The President. This is Alex. Hold on one sec.

View of Earth's Weather From Space

Q. Does being up in space allow you to see things such as the weather? Like, could you see the storm over Washington?

The President. That's a good point. Obviously, we're using a lot of satellite imagery these days, and this is going to be a major focus of some of the work NASA's doing here at home, thinking about how we can get better information about our own climate. Is that something that you guys are tracking from the space station?

Commander Williams. Well, we view a lot of the weather phenomena. We've seen many hurricanes and typhoons and whatnot around the world. We can see fronts crossing continents. We see the whole variety of cloud formations. We sometimes can see the aftermath

of a storm or other major impact on the Earth after the sky clears.

So there's a whole lot of details that we can see here from the space station and observe every day. We can see things—we pass over the same portion of the Earth every day, so it's a regular observation that we can make over a period—a long period of time as well.

The President. Well, listen, you guys have been extraordinarily generous with your time. I just want to repeat—and I think I speak for all the young people here and everybody back home—how proud we are of you, how excited we are about the work that's being done on the space station, and how committed we are to continuing human space exploration in the future.

So you guys continue to be great pioneers and great role models for all of us, and we thank you for your courage. And tell your families we appreciate them letting you float up into space like this. [*Laughter*] All right?

Bye-bye, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:20 p.m. via satellite in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Stephen T. Colbert, host, Comedy Central's "The Colbert Report" program.

Statement on the Observance of Ash Wednesday
February 17, 2010

Michelle and I join Christians here in America and around the world in observing Ash Wednesday. We mark this solemn day of repentance and promise knowing that Lent is a time for millions to renew faith and also deepen a commitment to loving and serving one another.

Remarks on Signing an Executive Order Establishing the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform and an Exchange With Reporters
February 18, 2010

The President. Hello, everybody. All right. Good morning, everybody. When I took office, America faced three closely linked challenges. One was a financial crisis brought on by reckless speculation that threatened to choke off all lending. And this helped to spark the deepest recession since the Great Depression, from which we're still recovering. That recession, in turn, helped to aggravate an already severe fiscal crisis brought on by years of bad habits in Washington.

Now, the economic crisis required the Government to make immediate emergency investments that added to our accumulated debt, critical investments that have helped to break the back of the recession and lay the groundwork for growth and job creation. But now, with so many Americans still out of work, the task of recovery is far from complete. So in the short term, we're going to be taking steps to encourage business to create jobs. That will continue to be my top priority. Still there's no doubt that we're going to have to also address the long-term quandary of a Government that routinely and extravagantly spends more than it takes in. When I walked into the door of the White House, our Government was spending about 25 percent of GDP, but taking in only about 16 percent of GDP. Without action, the accumulated weight of that structural deficit, of ever-increasing debt, will hobble our economy, it will cloud our future, and it will saddle every child in America with an intolerable burden.

Now, this isn't news. Since the budget surpluses at the end of the 1990s, Federal debt has exploded. The trajectory is clear, and it is disturbing. But the politics of dealing with chronic deficits is fraught with hard choices, and therefore, it's treacherous to officeholders here in Washington. As a consequence, nobody's been too eager to deal with it.

That's where these two gentlemen come in. Alan Simpson and Erskine Bowles are taking on the impossible: They're going to try to restore

reason to the fiscal debate and come up with answers as Cochairs of the new National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform. I'm asking them to produce clear recommendations on how to cover the costs of all Federal programs by 2015 and to meaningfully improve our long-term fiscal picture. I've every confidence that they'll do that because nobody's better qualified than these two.

Now, Alan Simpson is a flinty, Wyoming truthteller. [*Laughter*] If you look in the dictionary, it says "flinty," and then it's got Simpson's picture. [*Laughter*] Through nearly two decades in the United States Senate, he earned a reputation for putting common sense and the people's welfare ahead of petty politics. As the number-two Republican in the Senate, he made the tough choices necessary to close deficits and he played an important role in bipartisan deficit reduction agreements.

Erskine Bowles understands the importance of managing money responsibly in the public sector, where he ran the Small Business Administration and served as President Clinton's Chief of Staff. In that capacity, he brokered the 1997 budget agreement with Republicans that helped produce the first balanced budget in nearly 30 years.

One's a good Republican, the other a good Democrat, but above all, both are patriotic Americans who are answering their country's call to free our future from the stranglehold of debt.

The Commission they'll lead was structured in such a way as to rise above partisanship. There's going to be 18 members. In addition to the two Cochairs, four others will be appointed by me; six will be appointed by Republican leaders, six by Democratic leaders. Their recommendations will require the approval of 14 of the Commission's 18 members, and that ensures that any recommendation coming out of this effort and sent forward to Congress has to be bipartisan in nature.

This Commission is patterned on a bill that I supported for a binding commission that was proposed by Democratic Senator Kent Conrad and Republican Senator Judd Gregg. Their proposal failed recently in the Senate. But I hope congressional leaders in both parties can step away from the partisan bickering and join this effort to serve the national interest.

Now, as important as this Commission is, our fiscal challenge is too great to be solved with any one step alone, and we can't wait to act. And that's why last week, I signed into law the PAYGO bill—says very simply that the United States of America should pay as we go and live within our means again, just like responsible families and businesses do. This law is what helped get deficits under control in the 1990s and produced surpluses by the end of the decade. It was suspended in the last decade, and during that period, we saw deficits explode again. By reinstituting it, we're taking an important step towards addressing the deficit problem in this decade and in decades to come.

That's also why, after taking steps to cut taxes and increase access to credit for small businesses to jump-start job creation this year, I've called for a 3-year freeze on discretionary spending starting next year. This freeze won't affect Medicare, Medicaid, or Social Security spending, and it won't affect national security spending, including veterans' benefits, but all other discretionary spending will be subject to this freeze.

These are tough times, and we can't keep spending like they're not. And that's why we're seeking to reform our health insurance system, because if we don't, soaring health care costs will eventually become the single largest driver of our Federal deficits. Reform legislation in the House and the Senate would bring down deficits, and I'm looking forward to meeting with members of both parties and both Chambers next week to try to get this done.

And that's also why this year, we're proposing a responsible budget that cuts what we don't need to pay for what we do. We've proposed budget reductions and terminations that would yield about $20 billion in savings. We're ending loopholes and tax giveaways for oil and gas companies and for the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans. So taken together, these and other steps would provide more than $1 trillion in deficit reduction over the coming de-

cade. That's more savings than any administration's budget in the past 10 years.

I know the issue of deficits has stirred debate. And there's some on the left who believe that this issue can be deferred. There are some on the right who won't enter into serious discussions about deficits without preconditions. But those who preach fiscal discipline have to be willing to take the hard steps necessary to achieve it. And those who believe Government has a responsibility to meet these urgent challenges have a great stake in bringing our deficits under control, because if we don't, we won't be able to meet our most basic obligations to one another.

So America's fiscal problems won't be solved overnight. They've been growing for years. They're going to take time to wind down. But with the Commission that I'm establishing today and the other steps we're pursuing, I believe we are finally putting America on the path towards fiscal reform and fiscal responsibility.

And I want to again thank Alan and Erskine for taking on what is a difficult and, perhaps, thankless task. I'm grateful to them for their willingness to sacrifice their time and their energy in this cause. I know that they're going to take up their work with a sense of integrity and a sense of commitment that America's people deserve and America's future demands.

And I think part of the reason they're going to be effective is, although one's a strong Democrat and one's a strong Republican, these are examples of people who put country first. And they know how to disagree without being disagreeable, and there's a sense of civility and a sense that there are moments where you set politics aside to do what's right.

That's the kind of spirit that we need. And I am confident that the product that they put forward is going to be honest, it's going to be clear, it's going to give a path to both parties in terms of how we have to address these challenges.

All right. Thank you very much. Come on, let's sign this thing.

[*At this point, the President signed the Executive order.*]

The President. There you go.

Fiscal Commission's Scope

Q. Sir, is everything on the table for this?

The President. Everything's on the table. That's how this thing's going to work.

Q. Where's "Erskine" in the dictionary? [*Laughter*]

The President. He's under "smart." [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Fundraiser for Senator Michael F. Bennet in Denver, Colorado
February 18, 2010

The President. Hello, Denver! I'm fired up. What a great crowd.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. Yes we can.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Listen, let me first of all say I am thrilled to be back in Denver. I've got some good friends here who I want to make sure I acknowledge, in addition to the guy standing beside me here.

First of all, your outstanding Governor is in the house, Bill Ritter. Where is Bill? There he is. Lieutenant Governor Barbara O'Brien is here. A great partner for this guy, Senator Mark Udall is in the house. Congressman Jared Polis is here. And an outstanding mayor, who I think actually might make a pretty good Governor, John Hickenlooper in the house.

It is great to be back in Colorado.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back. [*Laughter*] I know this State is the training ground for a few Winter Olympians who are doing us so proud. I

know Shaun White's secret training facility up on Silverton Mountain paid off. I don't know how those guys do that, though. [*Laughter*] How do you start doing that? [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Practice!

The President. But how do you get up the guts the first time to start practicing doing that? [*Laughter*]

Gold medal for snowboarding—Colorado is the home of several Olympians, including Lindsey Vonn, who brought home the gold yesterday, Johnny Spillane, who won the silver medal in Nordic combined, the first American medal in that event. So I just want all of our Olympians to know that the United States of America is proud of you; we are cheering for you every day. I am checking my BlackBerry—[*laughter*]—every half hour to see how things turned out.

I've got some good memories of Denver, including one just down the road at Mile High Stadium. Some of you may have been there. You know, that night I talked about the promise of America. And I want you to know that not a single day goes by that I don't think about the obligation that I have to keep that promise alive for every single American and every single Coloradan.

Audience member. Thank you!

The President. You're welcome. [*Laughter*] Thank you for giving me the privilege of every single day thinking about how can we make that American Dream live for everybody, not just for some. And I'm thrilled to be here in support of a leader who shares our commitment to that priority, Senator Michael Bennet.

Now, some of you may support him just because he's got an adorable family. [*Laughter*] They are adorable. But for those of you who need additional reasons—[*laughter*]—let me testify about this guy. He's been an agent of change in these parts for a very long time. As a businessman, he turned struggling companies around and got them to work better. He knows how to make the private sector work. Then he put his talents to use making Denver work better. And Mayor Hickenlooper, one of America's finest mayors, soon to be one of America's best Governors, knows how valuable Michael can be.

Michael closed a budget deficit and balanced two budgets in a row by finding innovative ways to get the job of city government done. Then he took over the public school system, where progress was stalled and budgets were shrinking, and he turned that around too. He invested in your schools and your classrooms; he expanded early childhood education for your kids, finished with graduation rates up and student achievement climbing faster than in any other district in the State. In just a few short years, Michael proved himself to be one of America's great education reformers.

Audience member. That's right!

The President. That's right. [*Laughter*] I got an "Amen" over here. [*Laughter*]

So when I heard that he'd be joining your other extraordinary Senator, Mark Udall, I was thrilled because I knew that Michael is a different kind of leader, one who's unafraid to bring a fresh approach to tough challenges because he knows the old ways of doing business just won't do, not anymore. And Colorado, that is precisely the kind of leader that he has been in Washington. That's precisely the kind of leader he's going to continue to be when you reelect him as Senator from the great State of Colorado.

Now, keep in mind, Michael answered the call to service at an extraordinarily challenging time for Colorado and for America. He took office just over a year ago, 2 days after I did, and thinking about what we were facing then: a financial crisis unlike any that we had seen in generations; an economy that was bleeding 700,000 jobs a month; a $1.3 trillion deficit; two wars; challenges that ranged from the specter of terrorism to the impacts of globalization; and on top of that, one of the toughest decades America's middle class has ever faced, with stagnant job growth and declining incomes and rising costs.

So when he was asked to serve, he could have said, "I don't think so." [*Laughter*] "I—you know, let me put this off for a while." And especially when you think about the sacrifice he has to make with respect to a young family. Nobody would have blamed Michael if he had declined the challenge. He could have blinked in the face of these difficulties and

shied away from an economy in turmoil. And he could have scanned the political landscape and seen the pain and anger that Americans were feelings and said: "You know what? Let me just point fingers at somebody else and wait till things got better."

But that's not what Michael did because that's not his style. He has always thrived in taking on the tough job. And he knew it would be a tough time to serve, but he knew that's when you can make the greatest difference. He knew that he might take a few licks as a politician, but he also knew it would be nothing compared to the licks that working families all across this State and all across this country have been taking every day. And so he stepped up. And he has been a tremendous ally for middle class families, not just here in this State but all across the country.

He was here by my side in Denver a year ago when we signed the Recovery Act into law. It wasn't a politically easy decision to make for any of us because we knew that we were already facing big deficits that had been run up over the last decade. But we had a responsibility to do what was right for the American people and break the back of this recession that was slipping into a depression.

One year later, thanks largely to the Recovery Act, we can stand here again and say that a second depression is no longer a possibility. An economy that was shrinking by 6 percent a year ago is now growing by nearly 6 percent. According to independent, nonpartisan economists, there are about 2 million Americans who are at work today who would otherwise be unemployed.

We cut taxes for 95 percent of working families, for small businesses, for first-time home buyers, for parents trying to care for their kids. For 8 million Americans paying for college, we made it less expensive. We extended and increased unemployment insurance for more than 19 million Americans. We made COBRA 65 percent cheaper for families who had suffered a job lost. We gave relief to States to help them through these tough times. And every Governor, Republican and Democrat, will acknowledge that if it hadn't been for that Recovery Act, we would have seen police officers and firefighters and teachers laid off.

And we began building the infrastructure, investing not just in roads and bridges, in airports and railways, but in the infrastructure of the future—something that John Hickenlooper knows a lot about—making sure that we've got high-speed rail in this country, making sure that we've got broadband lines in this country, making sure that we're investing in science and technology and education and clean energy in America that is going to assure long-term growth and prosperity.

Now, you wouldn't know any of this if you just listened to those who are trying to score political points by attacking me or attacking Michael or what we did, despite the fact that a lot of these guys, when it comes to the ribbon cuttings for the projects, they show up. [*Laughter*] They were holding up those big checks—[*laughter*]—"Look what I did for you." [*Laughter*] You know, I'm not going to give them hell. I'm going to tell the truth, and they'll think it's hell. That's what Harry Truman said.

But that's politics as usual. We've become accustomed to it. We've become numb to it. We're just accustomed to falsehoods and exaggerations and slash-and-burn politics.

But Michael and I, we don't have time for that nonsense. We're going to keep doing everything in our power to turn this economy around. We won't rest as long as millions are still without work or millions are still working harder and harder for less. Until they begin to feel recovery in their own lives, we're going to keep on working, because for years, Americans just doing their best to live up to their responsibilities have seen their leaders fail to live up to their responsibilities.

We've got a Washington where every day is election day. On Wall Street, they've seen failure rewarded. In the hallways of both cities, you see lobbyists and special interests using money and connections to stack the deck and pundits who all they're interested in is the political game—is the red team winning, is the blue team winning—instead of, are the American people winning.

And so people are fed up because it's not a game. It's not a game. And when I get out and I

talk with workers in factories and families in diners, nobody is asking, who's up, who's down, what's the latest poll number look like? No one is asking me, hey, you know, who won the media cycle today? [*Laughter*] They're interested in how are we going to help them find a job when they've only known one trade in their whole life; how are they going to send their kids to college; how are they going to pay the bills if they get sick; how are they going to retire when their savings are so beat up; and who, if anybody, is going to confront the real problems that touch their lives?

That's why I ran for President. That's why I was in Mile High Stadium. That's why Michael Bennet signed up to be your Senator. That's why we are not going to quit. We do not quit, because we believe if we're going to secure a better future for the people of this State and the American people, as Michael so eloquently spoke about, we're going to have to change the ways of Washington. We're going to have to solve problems that keep holding us back, and we've got no time to waste.

Now, look, this is a problem that transcends party, what's happening in Washington right now. A couple weeks ago, I went to the Capitol to speak with Democratic Senators. And Michael stood up—and he's new, so he's still kind of puzzled—[*laughter*]—as to why are—why is nothing getting done. [*Laughter*] So Michael stood up, he challenged everybody in the room, including me. He said, "This place looks broken to the American people. What can we do differently? What do we need to do differently, Democrats and Republicans, so that democracy can meet the test that we're facing right now?" That's what Michael asked me, and that's what the American people are asking.

Now, the first thing I'll say is, you've got to have more leaders like Michael Bennet, because he's determined to break through partisan gridlock to get the tough stuff done. He's fearless when it comes to challenging the old assumptions and the tired debates and the entrenched special interests that have stymied progress for too long.

He told me about a woman he met from Glenwood Springs. She asked him where could she get her lobbyist in Washington. [*Laughter*] Now, I don't know what he told her, but I—if she were here, I would tell her, you don't need a lobbyist because you've got Michael Bennet as Senator and you've got Mark Udall as Senator, and they are going to be looking out for your interests.

The only agenda Michael has is yours. He understands that there's something more important than pursuing power or clinging on to your seat or scoring points, and that's breaking free from the politics of the past and moving America forward at this defining moment in our history.

I mean, look, we can keep on being consumed by the politics of energy, but we know that there are factories to reopen and assembly lines to restart and workers ready to build wind turbines and solar panels and advanced batteries right here in the United States of America. We know that whoever leads the clean energy revolution is going to lead the 21st-century economy. The people of Colorado understand that. Michael Bennet understands that.

And we can't wait. We can't wait, because China is not waiting, India is not waiting, Germany is not waiting. We can't afford to wait.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Exactly. [*Laughter*] We can't continue to spin our wheels in the old education debates. The stale debates, they pit teachers against reformers, meanwhile kids are trailing their counterparts all around the world.

So we need to do what Michael did here in Denver, which is to bring people together, get them talking, build consensus around reform. Because we know that the country that outeducates us today is going to outcompete us tomorrow, and we don't want that future for our young people. We're not going to sentence them to a lifetime of lower wages and unfulfilled dreams.

We can continue to ignore the growing burden of runaway health care costs. And we all know what will happen if we do; it's already happening. Just the other week, one of California's largest insurers sent a letter to a mil-

lion customers saying, your premiums are going to go up by as much as 39 percent.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. It's not just happening there. It's happening in Kansas. It's happening in Missouri. It's happening in Maine. You name it, across the country, it's happening; it's going to be happening here.

Audience member. It already is!

The President. Already happened. Now, after folks found out about this rate hike, they caused a ruckus, and the insurance company said, "Well, we'll put it off for couple months." I'm sure they're going to work on their PR a little more. [*Laughter*]

The reform before Congress that people like Michael and myself have been working on would help prevent such hikes from happening. And if we walk away from it, we know that premiums and out-of-pocket expenses will keep rising this decade, just as they did in the last decade. More small businesses are going to be priced out of the insurance market. More business—more big businesses are going to be unable to compete internationally. More of you will see health care taking a bigger and bigger bite out of your paychecks. Millions will lose their coverage. Our deficits will keep on growing because health care costs, by far, is the biggest driver of deficits.

And that's why we're not going to walk away from it. That's why I've asked leaders of both parties to come meet with me next week. I want to see what their ideas are, because we know we've got ideas that will work for America, and we can't afford to wait.

We can keep on playing games with the deficit. But Michael Bennet refuses to. He was a strong supporter of the PAYGO law that says, surprisingly enough, to Congress, you have to pay as you go, a novel concept—[*laughter*]—that helped produce the budget surpluses of the 1990s. If you want to spend on something new, you've got to cut back somewhere else. Michael was part of a majority in the Senate that supported the creation of an independent, bipartisan fiscal commission to help us find long-term solutions to some of the problems that we're facing.

Audience member. Medicare for all!

The President. There you go.

Now, unfortunately, partisanship blocked that step. Some of you read about this, how there were seven people who were cosponsors of this bill that would create this fiscal commission who, when I decided I was for it, suddenly were against it. [*Laughter*] They were sponsors of the bill. So we said, okay, that's all right, I'll establish one on my own—National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility. We signed it today—Alan Simpson, a Republican; Erskine Bowles, a Democrat—to find real solutions.

Michael held an event out here recently where he was talking about fiscal discipline, and his 10-year-old daughter Caroline came to watch. There she is, wave. Yes, there she is. [*Laughter*] When she was born, America had a surplus. But after two tax cuts, two wars, a prescription drug program, none of which were paid for, we faced a deficit of over $1 trillion and projected deficits of $8 trillion over the next decade. That's all before my administration spent a single dollar. Then you had the recession. That's another $3 billion. And then we did have to make sure that we were stimulating the economy, and that cost about a trillion [dollars],* a fraction of the overall debt.

So that's what we inherited. And as Michael and his daughter walked out of the event—she was listening to all this—I don't know if you were adding all this up in your head, Caroline, but she said, "Dad, just so you know, I'm not paying for all that." [*Laughter*] I—that's a smart kid. [*Laughter*]

Her message was crystal clear. The American people did not send us to Washington to argue; they didn't send us to Washington to obstruct; they sent us there to do what it takes not to win the next election but to help the next generation. You sent us there to work together, to do what's right, to solve our problems once and for all.

Now, you've got a Senator right now who goes to work every single day with that mission in mind. And even though Michael Bennet has

* White House correction.

been serving you for years, believe it or not, this is his first election. He's a heck of a public servant, but he's new to politics, so he hasn't learned the best way to keep your poll numbers up is just to smile and wave and pretend like you're doing something and not really doing anything that might offend anybody. He hasn't perfected the 7-second sound bite. He's never even made a TV ad. Heaven forbid. [*Laughter*] And he's facing reelection in a tough political climate.

Look, something you got to understand: For those who don't believe in government, those who don't believe that we have obligations to each other, it's a lot easier task. If you can gum up the works, if you make things broken, if the Senate doesn't get anything done, well, that's consistent with their philosophy. It's a whole lot easier to say no to everything. It's a whole lot easier to blame somebody else. That politics that feeds on peoples' insecurities, especially during tough political times, that's the easiest kind of politics. There's a long, storied history of that kind of politics.

And so Michael is running in a very tough environment, but he's got one very powerful advantage: He's got you. He's been fighting for each and every one of you in Washington. He needs you to fight for him now. And if you do that, if you're willing to organize and make phone calls and talk to your friends and your neighbors and explain to them what's at stake, if you come out and caucus for Michael on March 16 and then fight for him all the way to November, if you help him finish what we've started, we're not just going to move Colorado forward, we're going to move America forward, and we're going to guarantee that this century is the American century just like the last one is.

Let's get to work, Colorado. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:50 p.m. in the Fillmore Auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to Shaun White, snowboarder, and Lindsey Vonn and Johnny Spillane, skiers, 2010 U.S. Olympic team; and former Sen. Alan K. Simpson and former White House Chief of Staff Erskine B. Bowles, Cochairs, National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform.

Statement on the Settlement of the *Pigford* Class-Action Lawsuit on Discrimination by the Department of Agriculture

February 18, 2010

My administration is dedicated to ensuring that Federal agencies treat all our citizens fairly, and the settlement in the *Pigford* case reflects that commitment. I applaud Secretary Vilsack for his efforts to modernize operations at the USDA, as well as the work of the Justice Department in bringing these long-ignored claims of African American farmers to a rightful conclusion. I look forward to a swift resolution to this issue, so that the families affected can move on with their lives.

Remarks at a Reception for Senator Michael F. Bennet in Denver

February 18, 2010

The President. Hello, Denver. Well, it is good to be back in Denver, good to be in Colorado, and good to be campaigning for one of the finest young Senators we have in the United States Senate, Michael Bennet.

I have to confess the reason I was delayed. I was grabbing one of those little canapes. [*Laughter*] Quite tasty.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. You had one too.

Audience member. Thanks for the snow.

The President. You're welcome. Well, look, it is wonderful to be here. We just came from the Fillmore Auditorium, where we had—what did we have, a couple thousand people?

Senator Bennet. We had more, twenty-four hundred.

The President. Twenty-four hundred people, not that he's counting. Because they understand that at this defining moment in our history, we've got to have people who are willing to fight on behalf of families all across America. And they know that Michael got into this business because he believes in that fight.

Now, before I go on, I think there are a couple people who are still around. I'm not sure if they're out here. But the senior Senator from Colorado, Brother Udall, is right here. Give him a big round of applause. And a great friend and a terrific Governor of California is here. Where's Governor Ritter? Where did he go?

Audience members. Colorado.

The President. Colorado, sorry; what did I say? [*Laughter*] California. Listen, East Coast time, it's past my dinner. That's why I made—give Bill Ritter a big round of applause.

All right, now, back to what I was saying. [*Laughter*] You know, obviously, we know that the country is going through a tough time. But when I was here a year ago at Mile High, and some of you were probably here—some of you were there with me—I made a promise to you, not that I was going to tell you what you wanted to hear, not that I was always going to do what was popular. What—I promised you that I would wake up each and every day thinking about how we can make sure that the American Dream is working for everybody, and more importantly, how we can make sure that it's working for the next generation.

And one of the things throughout my campaign for the Presidency was reminding America that this isn't about a candidate, this is about the people. That change comes from the bottom up, not from the top down; and that the kind of transformation that we needed was not going to happen because you elected me as President, because—but rather because all of us together were willing to join and all of us were willing to take responsibility.

Now, one of the things—the great things that you did was to send two outstanding United States Senators with me on this difficult journey. And we've got to make sure that Michael continues on that journey with me. Because the same things that we fought for in 2008, the same things that I campaigned on, that same spirit, that's what's driven Michael all his life. He knows what it's like to come from humble beginnings. He knows what it's like to make sure that everybody is going to have a chance in life.

And that's why, even though he was successful in business and the private sector, he decided that he could make his biggest contribution by going into public service, and I'm sure taking a really big pay cut. [*Laughter*]

So working with the outstanding mayor and soon-to-be Governor, John Hickenlooper, he helped to balance budgets, he helped to make sure that this city was running as well as it's ever run, a model for cities across the Nation. And then he decided, well, that's not a big enough challenge; let me try to fix the school system. And he took that on. And he did it with the same energy and the same determination and the same capacity to bring discordant voices together and get them to work and think in new ways. And as a consequence, you saw the performance of this school district go up as fast as any school district anywhere in the country.

So he's been a business executive, he's somebody who's run a school system and made it work for children, and then he decided, well, let me try this U.S. Senate thing.

Now, I'm not sure he knew entirely what he was bargaining for. Udall might have warned him a little bit, because Udall had been in Congress for a while. But the truth is, Michael is a pretty bright guy, and he understood this was not going to be an easy year or two to get started in electoral politics.

I mean, think about where we were last year. Michael took his spot about 2 days after I was inaugurated, and at that point, we already understood that we had the worst recession since the Great Depression; we're losing 800,000 jobs per month. We knew that the financial system was on the verge of meltdown. We knew that we were involved in two wars, that we were inheriting a $1.3 trillion deficit. We knew that this was going to be a tough time.

So nobody would have blamed Michael if he had said, "You know, maybe I'll make my maiden race 4 years from now, when things are look-

ing a little bit better." But that's not what he did. He stepped up. And not only did he step up, but since he has been in Washington, there has not been a better champion on behalf of middle class folks and on behalf of the dreams and aspirations that each of you carry for your children and your grandchildren than Michael Bennet. There has not been anybody who's been fighting harder for you and taking the tough votes.

He was with me when we signed the Recovery Act that has provided a tax cut for 95 percent of working families, created an entire new sector of clean energy. Did you know that when we started last year—the Recovery Act—we had about 2 percent of the advanced battery production here in the United States? Almost all of it was coming from Asia. We now have 20 percent capacity, and we're going to go up to 40 percent capacity. That's because of the kind of work that Michael Bennet, working with his partner, Senator Udall, did.

We provided the biggest boost in education from the Federal Government in our history, and not just any kind of money, but rewarding success, rewarding reform, investing in research and development and math and science education, because we understand that whatever country outeducates us today is going to outcompete us tomorrow, and we will not tolerate America being number two or number three in the number of scientists and mathematicians.

We made investments not just in roads and bridges, as important those are, but we made investments in smart grid and high-speed rail and broadband, the infrastructure of the 21st century that's going to make sure that we can compete. All these things were because Michael pushed and Michael supported an agenda that was not only going to deal with the immediate crisis, but looking beyond, trying to figure out what our future was going to be.

And that's just one of the fights he's fought. Alongside me and the rest of the Democrats in the Senate, we've been able to make sure that credit cards were no longer the source of abuse for ordinary consumers. We passed housing fraud legislation to make sure that people weren't taken advantage with predatory loans. We passed the largest expansion of national service that our young people can get involved at an early age in giving back to America. We provided children—4 million children in this country, without passing health care—comprehensive health care yet—we've already provided 4 million children with health care that didn't have it before Michael joined the United States Senate.

So this guy's been fighting for you. Now you need to fight for him. Because the fact of the matter is, is that this is a tough political environment. I'm not telling anything—anybody anything they don't know. As successful as the Recovery Act and our other steps have been in breaking the back of the recession, there are still millions of people out there who are struggling, who are trying to figure out how to pay the mortgage. They're seeing their homes underwater. They're worried about whether they can find a job if they've already lost the one that they had.

And so understandably, people are scared. And sometimes when people are scared, politics can get rough. That's not unique to this period of time; that's been true throughout our history. And it doesn't help when you've got an opposition that is more interested in tearing the other party down than they are in building America up.

But what Michael understands is that as many barriers as there may be in front of us, we've got to keep on going, because just walking away is not an option. Look, he hasn't been in politics long enough to understand that the easiest way to get reelected is just to wave and smile and don't say anything offensive. [*Laughter*] Keep your head down, don't do anything, that's the best way to keep your poll numbers high.

But he understands that we can't afford that. We can't afford to walk away from a clean energy future. We can't afford to walk away from making sure that our education system is producing the kinds of scientists and engineers and entrepreneurs that are going to build our economy in the future. We can't afford to walk away from a health care system that is broken for everybody, for small businesses and large businesses, for families who are seeing their

premiums go up 25 percent, 30 percent, 35 percent, for the millions who don't have health insurance at all, and for future generations who are going to have to carry the bill if we don't get control of health care costs like Medicare and Medicaid. He understands we cannot walk away from it and we will not walk away from it. If I've got Michael Bennet's help, we are going to get health care reform passed in this country.

So yes, it's tough. [*Laughter*] But we're tougher. We've been through tougher times. Our parents, our grandparents, many of you in your own lives, you know what it's like when you hit a barrier. There are times where you feel doubtful. There are times where you get weary. But what has defined America throughout our history is that in fits and starts, we just keep on going forward. And we're driven not just by self-interest; we're driven not just by greed or not just by acquisitiveness. We're driven by a sense of responsibility and obligation to others, to this country, to our community, to our children, to the next generation.

That's what drove Michael into public service. That's what is keeping him going, even when he's away from that gorgeous family of his. And that's why he needs you.

Look, there will continue to be special interests and lobbyists and those in Washington who are going to try to go after a guy like this who plays it straight. They're going to try to take him out. They've got all their pollsters and their—and we got to—this is a rookie here. The guy has never cut a TV ad. [*Laughter*] He doesn't know how to speak in 7-minute—7-second sound bites. [*Laughter*]

So they've got a target on him. And this becomes a test of what kind of government do we want. Do we want the kind of government where an outstanding individual who's in it for all the right reasons and has a track record of success in making systems work for ordinary people—are we going to make sure that this guy has a long and outstanding career in Washington? And are we going to channel that anger and that frustration we feel sometimes, understanding that Michael is not part of the problem, he's part of the solution, and that he's somebody who is going to change Washington if you send him back there and give him the kind of mandate that he deserves?

So my bottom line is this: As hard as you worked in 2008, you've got to work harder in 2010. If you raised money for me, I want you to raise more money for Michael Bennet. If you made more—if you made phone calls for me, I want you to make more phones calls, and I want you to Twitter, too, for Michael Bennet. If you knocked on doors on your block, I want you to go in your whole neighborhood for Michael Bennet.

I want you to work hard, because if you do, then I am absolutely confident that not only is Michael Bennet going to continue to be the United States Senator from Colorado, I am confident that this is going to be one of the most outstanding Senators that we've ever had and a great leader for all of America.

Thank you very much, Denver. Let's get to work. Let's get busy. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:04 p.m. at the Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 19.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report Related to Afghanistan and Pakistan

February 18, 2010

Dear _____:

In response to the requirement of section 1116 of the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2009 (Public Law 111–32), and in order to keep the Congress fully informed, I provide the attached report related to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

My Administration completed a thorough policy review last November, and I announced a new approach at West Point on December 1. We are now in the early weeks of implementing

this policy and therefore do not believe further adjustments are required at this time.

I assure you of my Administration's commitment to the successful implementation of this policy.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Daniel K. Inouye, chairman, and W. Thad Cochran, vice chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Carl Levin, chairman, and John S. McCain III, ranking member, Senate Committee on Armed Services; John F. Kerry, chairman, and Richard G. Lugar, ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; David R. Obey, chairman, and Jerry Lewis, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations; Isaac N. Ike Skelton IV, chairman, and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, ranking member, House Committee on Armed Services; and Howard L. Berman, chairman, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, ranking member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 19.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Henderson, Nevada

February 19, 2010

The President. Hey, how's it going, Henderson! Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much, everybody. Everybody, have a seat, have a seat. I am thrilled to be here.

Audience member. We love you, Mr. President!

The President. I love you back.

We've got some special guests here. Everybody's a special guest, but I just want to acknowledge a few folks here: Secretary of State Ross Miller in the house; two outstanding Members of Congress, Representative Shelley Berkley and your own Dina Titus; Senate Majority Leader Steven Horsford. We've got State Assembly Majority Leader John Oceguera, Clark County Commissioner chairman Rory Reid, Henderson Mayor Andy Hafen, former Governor Bob Miller.

We've got—first, can everybody give a huge round of applause for Tina Long for the great introduction of Harry Reid? Green Valley High School principal Jeff Horn—[*applause*]—there we go. Pump it up! That's good. Obviously not exam time yet. [*Laughter*] Get's a standing "O." [*Laughter*] The Green Valley High School Marching Band that played at my Inauguration—give them a big round of applause. They played "Viva Las Vegas"—[*laughter*]—at the reviewing stand. They did. [*Laughter*] And finally—he may have already been acknowledged—I want to give a special acknowledgment to Greg Koehler, North Las Vegas Fire Department, who just returned from 14 days in Haiti giving medical assistance to orphans injured in the quake. Thank you. We're proud of you. Thank you.

Now, it's good to be back in Nevada, good to be back in Vegas, good to be back in Henderson, and good to be with my good friend, your great Senator, Harry Reid. Now, I understand Henderson is where Harry went to school as a boy and fought in the ring as an amateur boxer. Now, looking at Harry, you wouldn't say that—[*laughter*]—I mean, let's face it—[*laughter*]—but I can personally attest that Harry Reid is one of the toughest people I know. He does not give up. He knows what he cares about. He knows what he believes in, and he's willing to fight for it. And sometimes he takes his licks, but he gets back up. Harry Reid has never stopped fighting. He hasn't stopped fighting for Henderson; he hasn't stopped fighting for Nevada; he has not stopped fighting for the United States of America and middle class families all across this country that need a fair shake.

Now, I'm looking forward to hearing what's on your minds and trying to answer a few questions. But before I do, let me say a few words about the situation that folks are facing right now.

Harry is not one for sugarcoating things; I don't know if you noticed that. He's kind of a blunt guy. [*Laughter*] Neither am I. These are tough times. When President Kennedy was here, he called Henderson a "city of destiny" because he saw its potential as Las Vegas grew. But for too long, I know many of you have felt like your destiny's been slipping beyond your control.

You don't need me to tell you that. All of you in some way have felt this recession. You felt it in the tourism and hospitality industry. You felt it in the construction industry. The unemployment rate here is 13 percent, which is the second highest in the Nation. Foreclosures are also among the highest. Home values have fallen by more than almost anyplace else. And this is after a decade when, for most middle class families, incomes actually shrank and wages flatlined, and the only thing rising faster was medical costs and the cost of education.

So I know it's tough out there. Harry Reid knows it's tough out there. That's why we asked you to send us to Washington. We didn't run for the fancy title or a big desk or a comfy chair. We didn't run because it was fun to get your name in the newspapers—most of the time, it's not. [*Laughter*] Right? We didn't run so a bunch of folks on cable TV could chatter about you. [*Laughter*] And we didn't run to kick our problems down the road. We ran to solve problems that folks like you are facing every single day. That's why we ran for office. That's why Harry wanted to be majority leader and that's why I wanted to be President of the United States, to help you.

Now, when my administration took office, our immediate mission was clear: We needed to stop the great recession from turning into a great depression. And economists of every stripe were warning that was a real possibility. And that meant that we had to make some decisions swiftly, boldly, and not always popular, but decisions that were necessary. It wasn't a time for satisfying the politics of the moment. It wasn't time for just playing to the cameras. It was time for doing what was right.

That's why we helped stabilize our financial system, not because we felt any compassion for big banks, but because not doing so would have endangered the savings and dreams of millions more Americans. And by the way, I was committed to ensuring that if taxpayers were going to provide temporary assistance to keep our financial system afloat, then it actually had to be temporary. And I was determined to get back every single dime, and we are well on our way to doing that, getting back every single dime from those banks.

In fact, one battle we're having right now is, we think the largest banks should be assessed a fee so that taxpayers are held harmless for the assistance that you've been giving. As you might imagine, the banks are not enthusiastic about that. [*Laughter*] And it won't surprise you to learn that they've got a few friends in Congress who are willing to go along, but you know Harry Reid's not one of those folks who are willing to go along. We're going to get your money back because Harry Reid's going to make sure you get your money back.

We helped shore up the American auto industry. That wasn't popular. I understood why. Folks felt like these companies should reap the consequences of bad management decisions in the past, just like any other company would. But if we had let GM and Chrysler go under, it would have been hundreds of thousands of hard-working Americans who paid the price, not just folks at those companies themselves, but at suppliers and dealers all across the country.

So we told them, if you're willing to take the tough and painful steps you make that are needed for you to become more competitive, then we're willing to invest in your future. And as a result, auto production in the United States of America is up 69 percent from the first 3 months of 2009. GM's CEO recently said that the company would repay $6.7 billion in loans from taxpayers, with interest, by June of this year.

Now, one of the things you need to know is that the steps we've taken to shore up the banks and the autos, they have nothing to do with the Recovery Act. Those were separate. We had to do those as emergency measures. And I just want to point this out: Harry Reid, he's got his pollsters; I've got my pollsters. We knew that

this wasn't going to be popular. But we did it because it was the right thing to do.

So it's also why we passed the Recovery Act. Now, a lot of people think that the stimulus package, the Recovery Act—if you listen on television, you'd think, well, that's all about giving banks money. That has nothing to do with the banks. The other week, I saw a poll that said Americans, they don't like the Recovery Act; they just like all the individual parts of the Recovery Act. [*Laughter*]

And the reason is, they think the Recovery Act is for banks and auto companies. When you ask folks about what was actually in the Recovery Act, they think it's full of good ideas, like tax cuts, like infrastructure investment, like unemployment relief. That's what the Recovery Act was. It was tax cuts for small-business owners and 95 percent of you. You may not have noticed, 95 percent of you got a tax cut because of Harry Reid and because of the Recovery Act, one million people in the State of Nevada.

We expanded unemployment insurance at a time when it was absolutely vital for people as they were trying to stay afloat, more than a quarter million of your members—of your neighbors. It was jobs for construction workers and jobs for cops and firemen, jobs for almost 2,000 education professionals right here in Nevada.

I haven't talked to the principal, but I guarantee you, we would have seen some very difficult decisions having to be made about maintaining teachers right here at Green Valley if it hadn't been for the help that Harry Reid provided last year. You would have seen some very tough choices.

All of this—from the tax cuts to the unemployment insurance to the jobs—that was only possible because of Harry's leadership. And as a result, our economy is growing again. Almost 2 million Americans who'd otherwise be employed [unemployed]* are working right now because of what Harry Reid did. We're no longer staring into an economic abyss because of what Harry Reid helped to do.

Now, he and I both know that's little comfort to the 7 million Americans who lost their job in this recession. It's little comfort to homeowners who are facing foreclosure or steep declines in their home values, or to students who are having to delay their college plans because they can't afford it, or older folks who are postponing retirement.

That's why I'm not going to rest. That's not—why we're not done. That's why Harry Reid isn't going to rest until all of America's working again, until the dream of home ownership is secure once again, and until our economy is benefiting not just Wall Street, but benefiting hard-working Nevada families, benefiting the middle class, benefiting Americans all across this great country of ours. That's what we are aiming to do.

Now, I've said before that the way I measure our economy's strength—the way you measure it—is by whether jobs and wages and incomes are growing. But the other way we measure it is by whether families have a roof over their heads and whether folks are living out that American Dream of owning a home. That dream's been jeopardized in this recession for a lot of people, especially right here in Nevada.

Now, part of it was—I've got to be blunt here, I got to be honest—part of it was because too many lenders were focused on making a quick buck instead of acting responsibly. All right? And, if we're honest, too many borrowers acted irresponsibly at certain points, taking on mortgages that they knew they couldn't afford. And what happened was the regulators in Washington and legislators too often turned a blind eye to the excesses and the failures on Wall Street that fed a housing bubble. And now that that bubble's burst, it's left devastation that we're still grappling with today.

Now, Government has a responsibility to help deal with this problem. Government can't solve this problem alone. We got to be honest about that. Government alone can't solve this problem, and it shouldn't. But Government can make a difference. It can't stop every fore-

* White House correction.

closure, and tax dollars shouldn't be used to reward the very irresponsible lenders and borrowers who helped bring about the housing crisis. But what we can do is help families who've done everything right stay in their homes whenever possible. What we can do is stabilize the housing market so that home values can begin rising again.

And that's why we're buying up vacant homes and converting them into affordable housing, creating jobs, stemming our housing crisis, growing the local economy. That's why last year we put a tax credit worth thousands of dollars into the pocket of 1.4 million Americans to help them buy their first home: first-time home buyers credit. That's why we're offering over 1 million struggling homeowners lower monthly payments through our loan modification initiative.

And that's why today, thanks to the leadership of Harry Reid, I'm announcing a $1.5 billion fund for housing finance agencies in the States that are hardest hit by this housing crisis, and that means here in Nevada. Right here in Nevada.

So this fund's going to help out-of-work homeowners avoid preventable foreclosures. It will help homeowners who owe more than their homes are worth find a way to pay their mortgages that works for both the borrowers and the lenders alike, and will help folks who've taken out a second mortgage modify their loans.

So yes, we need to strengthen our housing market. And we need to focus on job creation and getting our economy moving again. But one last thing I want to be clear about: We can do all those things, dealing with, sort of, the emergency crisis, and still fall behind in the 21st century, in this global economy, unless we recommit ourselves to solving some of the long-term problems that have been with us for years.

We've got to recognize, just like earlier generations, that our future is what we make of it, and unless we give everything we've got to securing America's success in the 21st century, our children aren't going to have the same opportunities.

Now, I've traveled a lot over the last year, all over the world, and I've got to tell you, countries like China, they're competing to win. And there's nothing wrong with that. We want China to succeed. They've got a lot of poverty, much more poverty than we have here, and it's good for their stability if they're doing well. But I don't know about you, I don't intend to cede the 21st century to anybody else. America's not a nation that follows; America leads. That's what I intend for us to do once again. America leads.

So what does it mean to lead? It means countries that outeducate us today are going to outcompete us tomorrow. And that means America has to lead in education. And that's why we're working with educators to transform our schools and make college more affordable and prepare our kids for science and engineering and technical degrees, because those are going to be the jobs of the future.

And because the future belongs to countries that create the jobs of tomorrow, we've got to lead in energy. That's why we're investing in companies right here in Nevada and across this Nation to produce solar power and wind power and the smart, energy-efficient electric grids and investments that are giving rise to a clean energy economy. It's vital that we do that.

Our Nation can't lead, we can't prosper, if we've got a broken-down health care system that works better for the insurance companies than it does for ordinary Americans. And we can't squander the opportunity to reform our health care system to make it work for everybody.

That's why this coming week, I'm going to be meeting and Harry is going to be meeting with members of both parties and both Chambers. We're going to move forward the Democratic proposal. We hope the Republicans have one too. And we'll sit down, and let's hammer it out, go—we'll go section by section.

Because America can't solve our economic problems until—unless we tackle some of these structural problems, and America can't lead, we can't succeed unless we're also getting a handle on our debt. We've got to confront this fiscal crisis that has been brewing for years. That's why we're cutting what we don't need to pay for what we do. That's why I signed a law that says Americans should pay as we go and live within our means. That's why yesterday I announced a

bipartisan fiscal commission that will help us meet our fiscal challenges once and for all.

Fiscal responsibility, clean energy, a world-class education, a health care system that works, an economy that lifts up all our citizens, that's how America can lead. That's how the future will be won, with all of us coming together to win it, Democrats and Republicans alike, and Independents.

With all the petty partisanship and game-playing in Washington, I know sometimes you guys can feel pretty frustrated.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. I know it can be easy to despair about whether we, as a nation, can come together anymore. But for those who wonder if America can unite, just come to Henderson. You think about it. This is a town that was founded during World War II to supply metal for planes, for guns, for the arsenal of democracy that freed the world from tyranny. This is a town—it wasn't built by liberals or conservatives; it was built by Americans, by patriots who rallied around a common purpose in an hour of need. And I'm certain that if we can reclaim in this country the spirit of unity that built Henderson, Nevada, all those years ago, then we can build cities of destiny across this country, and the future will belong to the United States of America.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

All right, everybody sit down. This is the—here's where I'm on the hot seat, so I've got to take off my jacket—[*laughter*]—answer some questions. Everybody sit down. All right.

Some of you've been to town halls before, so this is pretty straightforward. We've got people in the audience with mikes, and just raise your hand. We're going to go girl, boy, girl, boy—[*laughter*]—make sure it's fair. And I'm going to try to take as many questions as I can in the time remaining. And when you—before you answer [ask]* your question, if you can introduce yourself so that we know who you are, and try to make your question relatively brief so that we can get in as many as possible. All right?

All right, as I said, we're going to go girl, boy, girl, boy. Young lady right there, yes.

Community Health Clinics/Health Insurance Reform

Q. Thank you, President Obama. In Nevada, we have the second——

The President. What's your name?

Q. Oh, my name is Florence Jameson.

The President. Okay. How are you, Florence?

Q. I'm terrific.

The President. Great.

Q. In Nevada, we have the second highest number of medically uninsured, about 325,000 uninsured. More than five working adults are colleagues who are dying each week because of no access to health care. I am the founder of Volunteers in Medicine—Southern Nevada, a free clinic which has been set up to help our sick and dying. There are hundreds of caring Nevadans that have rallied like a corps of angels to come and provide free health care for their struggling neighbors: housekeepers, operators, receptionists, eligibility workers, social workers, nurses, doctors.

In your health reform bill, you have a provision to protect the federally funded subsidized community clinics. It is not clear if they're going to cover the free clinics where volunteers throughout the community have rallied to give support to their struggling neighbors in their great time of need. Can you help us with that?

The President. Well, thank you, first of all, for the great work that you guys are doing. So we appreciate that. But if you're like a lot of free clinics across the country, I know you're getting overwhelmed, because the need is so great.

The bill that Harry and I have been working on would provide assistance to a whole range of community-based efforts—preventive care, wellness care—which is absolutely vital, not only for the people who are receiving services at clinics like yours, but also for reducing the costs of health care overall, because the more that people have access to preventive care, the

* White House correction.

less likely they are to go to the emergency room when things are already out of hand.

Now, let me just speak more broadly about health care, because we're going to have a meeting with the Republicans, as I said, next week. I've got to admit that this has been an issue that I was warned I shouldn't take on. [*Laughter*] No, no, I mean, seriously, when I first came in—and Harry was part of some of these conversations—there were a lot of political advisers who said: "Look, health care is just too hard, it's just too complicated. Everybody says in theory that they want to reform the health care system, but because it's complicated, once you start putting a bill together, you get all kinds of criticism. The insurance lobby will spend millions of dollars on advertising and TV, scaring the heck out of everybody. Your poll numbers will go down. And you're not going to get a lot of cooperation from the other side."

I mean, that was the warning. Plus, because the economy's bad, a lot of people are already feeling kind of anxious, and so they're thinking: "Gosh, we had to do all that stuff to fix the financial system. We had to do this stuff to fix the autos. We had this big recovery package. The deficits are going up, partly because tax revenue's not coming in, and we're having to spend more on unemployment insurance and things like that. This is probably not the time to be too ambitious."

So I want to explain to everybody why I decided to take it on. First of all, I decided to take it on because I get a letter or two or five every day from people who have lost their job and suddenly they don't have health insurance, somebody in their family gets sick, and they lose their house. They were solid middle class folks until they lost their job, and lo and behold, they discovered they couldn't get coverage because something had happened to them before. Maybe a woman had had breast cancer, and it was okay as long as she had her employer-based health care. But once she tried—once she lost her job and tried to get health care, couldn't get it.

I've looked too many parents in the eye who say, "Our children have these chronic diseases, and we found out that our insurance only covered us up to a certain amount"—and then they hit a cap—"and afterwards, we had to hold bake sales and our neighbors had to raise money just to make sure that our kids would live." Too many stories like that. So that was the main reason that I said we had to take it on.

But the second reason was because even if you've got health insurance, what's happened to your premiums lately? Look, if this is a representative sample, I'm assuming that 85 percent of you right now have health care—maybe 90 percent—let's say 85 percent of you have health care. Some of you are getting it through your jobs; some of you are still buying it individually, or you're a small-business owner and you're purchasing it. No matter what your situation, I guarantee you your costs have gone up at least double digits over the last year. They have doubled over the last decade. And they're going to more than double over the next decade if we don't do anything. So even if you're lucky enough to have health care, it is digging deeper and deeper into your pocket.

They just had—some of you saw the news—for people who don't have insurance through a big employer, the individual market, in California, one of the biggest insurance providers, Anthem BlueCross, just announced that they were going to raise rates on these folks by up to 39 percent—up to 39 percent.

That's the future. That's the future, Henderson. That's going to be one of the main things that helps to bankrupt local school districts, because all these teachers, all these employees, those health care costs go up. Universities—those young people who are about to go to college, the—part of the reason your tuition is going up is because every employee at the university, their health care costs are going up. And that gets passed on to you.

And finally, the third reason that I—we had to take this on is because the deficit and the debt that you hear everybody getting in a tizzy about—properly so—the vast majority of our long-term debt is driven by Medicare and Medicaid. It's driven by our rising health care costs. Nothing comes close. You could eliminate every earmark, you could eliminate foreign aid, you could eliminate all that stuff, it would amount to

about 5 percent of the budget. Most of it is health care costs.

And as the population gets older, they use more health care; that drives it up even faster. And pretty soon, the entire Federal budget is going to be gobbled up by these rising health care costs. And you're already seeing it at the State level here in Nevada, right? What's happening with Medicaid? The Governor is starting to talk about having to cut all kinds of aspects of Medicaid because of the cost.

So here's my point: We can't wait to reform the health care system. It is vital for our economy. It is vital for our economy to change how health care works in this country. It's vital.

Now, having said all that, the people who were giving me advice at the beginning of the year were right, health care has been knocking me around pretty good. [*Laughter*] It's been knocking Harry around pretty good. And Harry has shown extraordinary courage because he said, "You know what, Barack, we are going to get this done. I know it's costing me politically, but it's important; it's the right thing to do." That's what he's been saying consistently, and I'm proud of him for it.

So let me—just very quickly, let me describe what it is that we have proposed—and I'm waiting to see what the Republicans propose in turn—because there's been a lot of misinformation here. What we have said is this: If you have health insurance, we are going to pass a series of health reforms so that the insurance companies have to treat you fairly—it's very straightforward—that they can't prevent you from getting health insurance because of a preexisting condition; that they can't put a lifetime cap so in the fine print it turns out that you're not fully covered. So there are a whole series of insurance reforms. That's number one.

Number two, we've got a whole series of cost controls. So what we're saying is, for example, that every insurer, they've got to spend the vast majority of your premiums on actual care, as opposed to profits and overhead. We're saying that we've got to get out some of the waste and abuse, including subsidies to insurance companies in the Medicare system that run in the tens of billions of dollars every year. That's not a good use of your taxpayer dollars. And we're working to improve wellness and prevention, as I said before, so that people aren't going to the emergency room for care.

Now, the third thing, and the thing that's most controversial, sadly, is what we're also saying is we've got to make sure that everybody can have access to coverage. And the way we do that is we set up something called an exchange where, essentially, individuals and small businesses who aren't getting a good deal because they don't have the same negotiating power as the big companies when it comes to the insurance market, they can pool just like Members of Congress and Federal employees do in their health care plan. They can pool so that now they've got the purchasing power of a million people behind them, and they can get a better deal. That can lower their costs. And we'll give subsidies for working families who can't afford it even with lower premium costs.

Now—so I want everybody—pay attention next Thursday when we have this health care summit. You may not want to watch all 6 or 8 hours of it; you got things to do. [*Laughter*] But pay attention to what this debate is about, because there's been so much talk about death panels and adding to the deficit, and this and that and the other. Pay attention, because this is—what we're proposing is—has nothing to do with a Government takeover of your health care. Most of you would have the exact same health care that you've got right now, but you'd be more protected and more secure. And if you don't have health care, you'd have a chance of getting health care.

And by the way, it would actually save us money in the long term, because all those wasteful dollars that we're spending right now, the experts estimate we'd actually save a trillion dollars by passing it.

Now, I think it's the right thing to do. The Republicans say that they've got a better way of doing it, so I want them to put it on the table, because as I told them a while back, look, I mean, I'm not a—I'm not an unreasonable guy. [*Laughter*] If you show me that you can do the things we just talked about—protect

people from insurance problems, make sure that the costs are controlled, and people who don't have health insurance are covered—and you can do it cheaper than me, then why wouldn't I do that? I'll just grab your idea and say, great, and take all the credit. [*Laughter*] I'd be happy to do it.

So show me what you got. But don't let the American people go another year, another 10 years, another 20 years without health insurance reform in this country.

All right. Okay, it's a gentleman's turn. It's a man's turn. This guy over here. This guy with a beard.

Oral Health and Vision Care as Part of Health Care Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Ben Burris, from Jonesboro, Arkansas.

The President. What are you doing all the way here in Vegas?

Q. Everybody comes to Vegas. [*Laughter*]

The President. That's what I'm talking about. There you go. Everybody comes to Vegas. Yes. Now, here's my only question, Ben. Have you spent some money here in Vegas?

Q. Oh, yes, sir.

The President. Oh, he says, "Yes, sir."

Q. Yes, sir.

The President. He's spending some money here in Vegas. All right. That's good. We like to see that. All right, what's your question?

Q. Well, sir, I'm reasonably familiar with the current and proposed legislature as it applies to dentistry and oral health.

The President. Yes.

Q. And my question is, what's your vision for how dentistry will fit into your larger framework for health care reform?

The President. Well, I—are you a dentist yourself?

Q. Yes, sir. So if somebody has a heart attack, you better still call 9–1–1. [*Laughter*] Just a dentist.

The President. The—now, it is interesting that you raised this. It turns out—this is serious—that dental hygiene is actually very important for keeping your heart healthy.

Q. Absolutely.

The President. It turns out that heart disease can be triggered when you've got gum disease. So everybody floss. That's my first—[*laughter*]—am I right? You got to floss.

It is my hope that we can include dental care in the various proposals that we're putting forward. Dental and vision care are very important. Now, I'll tell you that some folks will say we can't afford it. Some States in their Medicaid program cover dental; some States don't.

At minimum, I think it's very important that we've got dental care for our kids. Because what happens is, is that if we can keep our children's teeth healthy, then usually that means that they've got healthy teeth as adults. And if not, oftentimes that actually distracts them and prevents them from learning, because both dental and eye care—a lot of kids end up being distracted. They can't read the blackboard; they've got a cavity that's been untreated. It's a huge problem.

So I would like to see dental care covered. I will tell you that some folks are going to say we can't afford it. At minimum, I'd like to see that our children have the care that they need. All right?

Q. Can I say one more thing, sir? I think most of us in dentistry think that health care is the primary need here in terms of that, and children as well. So we think that if you can take care of health care first and let dentistry—do that kind of thing—could—more important to take care of the health care first.

The President. There you go.

Q. Thank you, sir.

The President. All right, I appreciate that. Thank you.

Okay, it's a young lady's turn. All right. It's so hard to choose. Okay, I'll call on this young lady back here, right over here. Yes, you. [*Laughter*] All right, we got to get the young man with the mike over to you.

National Economy/Job Growth

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank God for this opportunity. I realize that insurance and medical care has been a major issue. This is my problem. I worked for United Airlines for nearly 30 years. I was severely injured during flight. I have a workman comp's case that have fallen

on deaf's ear. The conflict in this city with the lawyers and the doctors and this whole problem has drove my life really to almost not having a life at all.

I don't know where else to turn. I don't know who else to talk to about the problem. I've written you letters. I've written letters to many of the Senators here in Las Vegas. I've talked to the doctors. I've done everything I know how to do. But I am a widow with a special needs child. I have lived in the house that I live in for 19 years. My house is in foreclosure. I have disability insurance. I have Social Security disability. That disability tells me, your insurance is not accepted here. I can't get the medical help that I need to get better.

The President. What's your——

Q. I'd love to be a flight attendant for you on that "U.S. One." I'm trained on that "U.S. One." [*Laughter*]

The President. All right, well, look, the—in terms of your specific issue, come see Harry Reid, and Harry Reid will see if he can help you out here. So—all right? Workman's comp is generally a State issue as opposed to a Federal issue. So—but Harry, he's got a few connections here in Nevada, so I suspect that he can help out.

But look, to the larger point, there are a lot more people who are actually going on disability right now partly because job opportunities have shrunk. And that's why it's so important for us to really focus on jobs.

Now, if you were listening to the Republicans, you'd think that last year we weren't paying any attention to jobs, that we were just kind of—I don't know what we were doing, Harry. I guess we were just sort of sitting around. The truth is, is that everything we did last year was designed around how do we break the back of the recession and move the economic recovery forward in order to promote job growth.

You can't have job growth if the economy is contracting by 6 percent, because businesses look, and they say, "Nobody is spending money, we got no customers, we can't hire." So the first thing we had to do was to make sure that companies were starting to make a profit again and the economy was growing. We are now in that position because of the work that Harry did and a lot of—and that these two outstanding Members of Congress did, Congresswoman Berkley and Titus. The economy is now growing again.

But here is the challenge that we've got. The challenge we have is that after they've laid off 8 million people, now they're growing with fewer people. So they're making profits, but they haven't started hiring yet. Our challenge is, how do we get businesses to start hiring again?

Now, some of the jobs, I'll be honest with you, are probably not going to come back. And the reason is because people have installed new technologies, or they've set up new systems where they can do more with fewer workers. That's why it's so important for us to invest in new industries and new technologies.

I'll give you an example. We were talking about autos before. Do you know that before the Recovery Act was passed, the United States was producing about 2 percent of the advanced batteries that are used in these clean cars, these electric cars? We were producing 2 percent of the batteries—less than 2 percent. What we did as part of the Recovery Act was invest in developing plants for battery production here in the United States. And do you know that in 18 months, we will have the capacity to produce 20 percent of the advanced batteries around the world? And by 2015, we'll have the capacity to produce 40 percent of the batteries around the world. We've created an entire new industry—an entire new industry has been created here in the United States that can produce jobs.

So we've got to constantly look for those opportunities in solar and in wind and in other high-tech areas, because that's going to be the future. The more people have work available to them—there is just a virtuous cycle that happens. When people go to work, they feel good, their health is better, their kids do better in school, right? Every business—they've got money to spend; they come to Vegas, right? Tourism industry starts taking off.

So we're going to be putting—Harry and I are working now on a jobs package for this year that's designed not—it's no longer de-

signed to grow the economy. Now it's designed to give incentives to businesses who are now making a profit to start hiring again and to help small businesses get loans. Because a lot of small businesses are still having trouble getting loans from banks, even if they see an opportunity for business growth, and we want to make sure that they've got access to capital.

Medicare

All right, it's a guy's turn. All right. I'm going to call on this guy, even though he's got a Cubs jacket on. [*Laughter*] Everybody knows I'm a White Sox fan, but I'm going to call—just to show that I'm unbiased——

Q. I know you are.

The President. ——I'm calling on a Cubs guy. [*Laughter*]

Q. You're not a Cub hater. I know that.

The President. I'm not a Cub hater, that's right.

Q. Okay, before I ask my question, I want to say something. I'm enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan. I understand that my benefits will be cut with health reform. I'm all for it.

The President. Well, how about that? Let me—before you ask your actual question, let me just make this point. We're not actually eliminating Medicare Advantage. What Medicare Advantage is, is basically, the previous administration had this idea, instead of traditional Medicare, let's contract out to insurance companies to manage the Medicare program. And the insurance companies can then kind of package and pool providers of dental care or eye wear or what have you, and just—it's a one-stop shop for seniors.

Now, in theory that sounds like a pretty good idea, except as you might imagine, if the insurance companies are involved, that means they've got to make a profit. And what happened was they didn't bid out competitively this Medicare Advantage program. So these insurance companies were just getting a sweet deal.

All we've been saying is, let's make sure that there's a competitive bidding process and that we are getting the absolute best bargain.

But I appreciate your larger concern, which is, let's make sure that everybody has access to health care. And traditional Medicare, by the way, is a great deal. Everybody who is in it is pretty happy with it. But go ahead with your question.

Social Security

Q. I'm going to introduce myself. My name is Norman—[*inaudible*]. I live in North Las Vegas. I'm retired, and my question is about Social Security.

The President. Now, are you a former Chicagoan?

Q. Yes, sir.

The President. Where are you from in Chicago?

Q. Schaumburg last.

The President. Fantastic. Well, the weather is a little bit better here, I got to admit. [*Laughter*]

Q. Well, we can visit snow here. [*Laughter*]

The President. Exactly. All right, go ahead.

Q. Well, my question is about Social Security. Now, I know there are a lot of myths out there, and I know you can dispel them. I saw an interview on "Meet the Press" with Alan Greenspan, who, as you know, was on the Social Security Commission in the eighties.

The President. Right.

Q. And Tim Russert asked him specifically, what about the crisis in Social Security? Alan Greenspan's response was, there is no crisis in Social Security; it's a payroll tax issue. Can you comment on that?

The President. Yes. Here's the situation with Social Security. It is actually true that Social Security is not in crisis the way our health care system is in crisis. I mean, when you think about the big entitlement programs, you've got Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid. All right? These are the big programs that take up a huge portion of the Federal budget. Social Security is in the best shape of any of these, because basically, the cost of Social Security will just go up with ordinary inflation, whereas health care costs are going up much faster than inflation.

It is true that if we continue on the current path with Social Security, if we did nothing on Social Security, that at a certain point, in maybe 20 years or so, what would happen is that you start seeing less money coming into the payroll tax, because the population is getting older so

you've got fewer workers, and more people are collecting Social Security so more money is going out, and so the trust fund starts dropping.

And if we did nothing, then somewhere around 2040 what would happen would be a lot of the young people who would start collecting Social Security around then would find that they only got 75 cents on every dollar that they thought they were going to get. Everybody with me so far?

All right. So slowly, we're running out of money. But the fixes that are required for Social Security are not huge, the way they are with Medicare. Medicare, that is a real problem. If we don't get a handle on it, it will bankrupt us. With Social Security, we could make adjustments to the payroll tax.

Q. Yes.

The President. For example, I'll just give you one example. Right now your Social Security—your payroll tax is capped at $109,000. So what that means is, is that—how many people—I don't mean to pry into your business, but how many people here make less than $109,000 every year? [*Laughter*] All right. This is a pretty rich audience; a lot of people kept their hands down. [*Laughter*] I'm impressed. [*Laughter*]

No, look, what it means is, basically, for 95 percent of Americans, they pay—every dollar you earn, you pay into the payroll tax. But think about that other 5 percent that's making more than $109,000 a year. Warren Buffett, he pays the payroll tax on the first $109,000 he makes, and then for the other 10 billion—[*laughter*]—he doesn't pay payroll tax.

So—yes, somebody said, "What?" [*Laughter*] Yes, that's right. That's the way it works.

So what we've said is, well, don't we—doesn't it make sense to maybe have that payroll tax cut off at a higher level, or have people—maybe you hold people harmless till they make $250,000 a year, but between 250,000 and a million or something, they start paying payroll tax again, just to make sure that the fund overall is solvent.

So that would just be one example. That's not the only way of fixing it, but if you made a slight adjustment like that, then Social Security would be there well into the future and it would be fine. All right?

Okay. It's a woman's turn. Anybody—I'm going to go back here. Nobody's got—these folks haven't had a chance here. Hold on one second. I'm going to let you use my mike. You'll give it back, right? [*Laughter*] Okay.

Job Growth/U.S. Tourism Promotion/Airline Industry

Q. My name is Peggy Durfy, and I'm a native Nevadan. I grew up in Boulder City. There's a few of us here—known this great guy Harry all my life. And my question, which is near and dear to my heart, and there's a few of my coworkers watching right now on television and a few here—is we want to know what is going to be done for tourism in Nevada, particularly airlines. I am a U.S. Airways employee who has been furloughed for 17 months. They furloughed over 500 more just on the 14th, so there's many, many of us now on the unemployment rolls. And we want to see what's going to happen to bring our jobs back to Las Vegas.

The President. Well, first of all, obviously, tourism is directly connected to the state of the economy as a whole. If people have disposable income, then they're going to travel. And if they're going to travel and have fun, they're going to come to Las Vegas. Right? So—but on the other hand, if times are tight, they're having trouble paying the bills, making the mortgage, et cetera, that means tourism declines.

So everything we're doing in terms of improving the economy as a whole will start improving tourism. But what is also true is that we can take some particular steps to help to encourage the tourism industry. And Harry, before we came out, was talking about a bipartisan tourism promotion/travel promotion act.

Harry—I'm going to give the mike to Harry for a second. Harry, do you want to talk just a little bit about what would be in the act?

Senator Harry M. Reid. We're going to try to take that up next week. It will save a half a billion dollars over 10 years and create tens of thousands of jobs. We're the only country in the world, major country in the world, that

doesn't promote itself. You'll see on TV Jamaica does, New Zealand does, Australia does, South Africa does, but not the United States. We hope within 2 or 3 months we'll be promoting ourselves.

The President. Good. Now, that's the kind of leadership that Harry is showing.

Let me make one last point about airlines in particular. There are two things that we can really do to help improve the airline industry.

The first is on energy. Look, part of the reason that airlines are getting squeezed all the time is because their fuel costs are huge. That's the single biggest problem for most airlines, is fuel costs that skyrocket or are unpredictable.

And so if we've got a smart energy policy that is encouraging the use of electric cars and improving gas mileage and making sure that we're looking at alternative fuels like biofuels that can be used for trucks, and all those things will help to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and, as a consequence, will, over time, stabilize fuel prices in a way that is very helpful to the airlines.

The second thing that we need to do is we've got to upgrade our air traffic control system, which is a little creaky. And one of the—don't worry, I mean, it's safe to travel. I'm not—[*laughter*]—I don't want anybody to think, man, creaky, that doesn't sound good. [*Laughter*]

What it is, is that because we don't use the latest technologies, a lot of times the holding patterns for planes, how many planes can land safely at the same time, all those things are—reduce the efficiency of—the overall system is reduced because we're not using the best technologies available.

If we can upgrade those technologies, then we could reduce delays, we could reduce cancellations, we could reduce the amount of time that it takes when there's bad weather for planes to land. And all that would also help improve profitability in the airlines industry, which in turn would mean that they would be able to hire more workers and provide outstanding customer service. Okay?

All right. It's a gentleman's turn. This guy right here. He's a big guy, he stood up and—he stood up, I thought, man, that's a big guy; I better call on him. [*Laughter*] Say you're big too; I agree. [*Laughter*] Don't worry, I'm not saying you're not big. [*Laughter*] All right, go ahead.

Energy/Climate Change

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My name is Dr. Herve Mazzocco. I am originally from France, actually from Africa, moved to France, and now I'm here in America because I believe—I still believe that America is the country of the American Dream. And I came here—I'm a scientist, president of a renewable energy startup, and I came here because I really believe that America can become the first country for clean energy.

One of the comments I wanted to make, coming from Europe where carbon is regulated, I see firsthand—I have a company in France also—that regulation works. It creates jobs. My company has been growing 30 percent every year in France for the past 2 years, and I really want to see that happen here. And I think that even if you don't believe in climate change, there's, like, byproducts that are awesome jobs. The country is going to advance technology-wise. We're going to become once again like we were with the space industry, the most advanced—technologically—country in the world. And so I really want to see this regulations happen because it's going to help all of us in the clean energy business.

The President. Okay. Well, let me just talk about—this is—when the conservatives have their conventions and they yell at me and say how terrible I am—[*laughter*]—along with health care, this is the other thing that they usually point out, which is, is that, "The President wants to create this cap-and-trade system, and it's going to be a job killer, and it's one more step in the Government takeover of the American economy." So this is a good place for me to maybe just spend a little time talking about energy and climate change.

First of all, we just got 5 feet of snow in Washington, and so everybody is like—a lot of the people who are opponents of climate change, they say, "See, look at that, there's all this snow on the ground; this doesn't mean anything." I want to just be clear that the science of climate change doesn't mean that every place is

getting warmer; it means the planet as a whole is getting warmer. But what it may mean is, for example, Vancouver, which is supposed to be getting snow during the Olympics, suddenly is at 55 degrees, and Dallas suddenly is getting 7 inches of snow.

What—the idea is, is that as the planet as a whole gets warmer, you start seeing changing weather patterns, and that creates more violent storm systems, more unpredictable weather. So any single place might end up being warmer; another place might end up being a little bit cooler; there might end up being more precipitation in the air, more monsoons, more hurricanes, more tornadoes, more drought in some places, floods in other places.

So I just—that's one aspect of the science that I think everybody should understand. That's point number one.

Point number two: The best way for us to unleash the free market—the best way for us to unleash the free market and capitalism and innovation and dynamism in the energy sector is for us to fully take into account all the costs that go into producing energy and using energy.

And what do I mean by that? Look, if you tell a company that there are no mileage standards on cars, then people end up making Hummers. Right? And everybody drives Hummers until finally gas gets so crazy, and at a certain point, people start saying, maybe I should get a more fuel-efficient car.

But if you've got a fuel efficiency standard in place that says your car needs to get 20 miles a gallon or 30 miles a gallon, suddenly all these engineers are thinking, well, how do we do that? And all these companies start coming up with new technologies that make your cars more fuel efficient. Ultimately, you end up seeing jobs and businesses thriving in response to the regulation that's been put there.

Now, that's one way to regulate, is just to tell people you got to produce more energy-efficient cars. Another way of doing it is just to send a price signal. You say, it's going to be more expensive for you if you've got a less fuel-efficient car.

Well, that's the only idea that we're trying to talk about when it comes to these greenhouse gases that are causing global warming. If we say that, you know what, the pollution that's being sent into the atmosphere has a cost to all of us—in terms of, in some cases, the air we breathe that's causing asthma, in some cases because it's causing climate change—we just want you to take into account those costs and price energy accordingly. And that means that things like wind energy suddenly become more appealing because they don't produce those pollution—those pollutants, and other sources of energy become less appealing because they do produce those pollutants.

The idea has been that if we put a price on these carbons, then maybe that would be a way that companies would all respond and start inventing new things that would make our planet cleaner. That's the whole idea.

Now, last point I'm going to make on this. What is true is that a lot of us depend on dirty sources of energy and a lot of us depend on really inefficient cars and buildings and et cetera. And so there's got to be a transition. We're not going to suddenly get all our energy from wind or all our energy from sun because we just don't have the technology to do it.

But what we should be doing is planning over the next 20, 30 years to move in that direction. That's what countries like China are doing. That's what countries like France are doing. That's what countries all across Europe are doing and all across Asia are doing. We don't want to be left behind. We're the only ones who have kind of missed the boat. So we're still using 20th-century technologies, and everybody else is producing 21st-century technologies.

Look what happened with the car. We started getting our clock cleaned when consumers decided they wanted a cleaner car, and suddenly everybody was buying their cars from Japan or now South Korea. And we wanted to make sure that that doesn't happen when it comes to wind turbines, it doesn't happen when it comes to solar energy, et cetera.

So the ideas that are being talked about is how do we provide more incentive for clean energy companies like yours to operate profitably, and over time, how do we start shifting away from less efficient ways of using energy?

That's a pretty straightforward thing to do. There's nothing radical about it.

It is true, though, that it's not going to happen overnight; it's going to take some time. And we're still going to be getting our electricity from coal. We're still going to be getting electricity from nuclear energy. We're still going to be getting electricity and power from natural gas and other traditional sources. We just want to make sure that we're also moving into the future even as we do so. And I think that we can. All right?

I think I've got time for one more question. All right, this is the last question. Last question. It's a lady's turn. All right, everybody is pointing at her. Right up there, yes, right there. I couldn't call on anybody. You know I love everybody here, but——

Education Reform

Q. Good morning, Mr. President. My name is Terri Wright, and I teach math right here at Green Valley High School.

The President. Excellent.

Q. And my mom is right behind you in the top row.

The President. Where is Mom? Mom, raise your hand.

Q. Right there.

The President. Oh, hey, Mom. [*Laughter*] You have a very young looking mom.

Q. Thank you. My question is this—and I'm speaking on behalf of all of us math teachers up here—when you were a freshman in high school, specifically, did you have math homework every night? And if you did, did you do it? [*Laughter*]

The President. Oh, wow. [*Laughter*] The answer is yes and sometimes. [*Laughter*] But first of all, let me thank you for being a math teacher, because we need more math teachers. We need more science teachers. We need more teachers generally who are enthusiastic about their work and their jobs. So thanks to all the teachers here. We love teachers.

All right. Now, we are actually—unfortunately, our students are falling behind in math and science internationally. We used to rank at the top, and now we're sort of in the middle of the pack when it comes to math and science performance.

This is why one of the things that I've been emphasizing this year—and this actually hasn't been subject to a lot of controversy; this is an area where we've been able to get good cooperation between Democrats and Republicans—is promoting math and science education, promoting technology education. The more that we are moving our young people into these areas, the better off this economy is going to be, because that means we're producing engineers, we're producing scientists, we're producing computer programmers.

So we want to make sure that we are recruiting more math teachers, we're recruiting more science teachers. We want all outstanding teachers to be getting higher pay. We want to make sure that there's constant professional development when it comes to the teaching profession, so that if you had the best way of teaching math 5 years ago, it might not be the best way of teaching math 5 years from now, and so you should be able to go back and constantly sharpen your skills.

To the students, I want to say this: We're doing a lot of work on education reform. We are doing a lot to bring in new teachers, to improve classrooms, to make sure that they're all connected to the Internet, to make sure that college is more affordable. But let me just say that it won't make any difference if our students aren't working a little bit harder.

Now, I'm not saying all of you aren't working hard. I'm sure many of you feel like you are working very, very hard, because Malia and Sasha always tell me how hard they're working. [*Laughter*] But I really do think that we're going to have to emphasize in the next decade that we're competing around the world, and America will continue to be number one as long as we are just as hungry as other countries.

So if our kids are spending all their time playing video games and somebody else's kids are getting the math and science skills to invent video games—[*laughter*]—we're not going to be number one. I mean, it's as simple as that.

So the need to turn off the TV, put the video games away, buckle down on your work, making sure that parents are checking their kids' home-

work and talking to their teachers—being accountable, being responsible—that's what's going to make sure that we continue to thrive, we continue to excel into the future.

Thank you, Henderson. I had a great time. Bye-bye.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:58 a.m. at Green Valley High School. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of State Ross Miller, State Senate Majority Leader Steven A. Horsford, and Gov. James A. Gibbons of Nevada; Tina R. Long, electrician, Bombard Electric; Gregory Koehler, firefighter and paramedic, North Las Vegas Fire Department; Edward E. Whitacre, Jr., chairman and chief executive officer, General Motors Company; and Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc. A participant referred to former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan.

Remarks to the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce and the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority in Las Vegas, Nevada

February 19, 2010

Hello, everybody. Thank you. Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. Thank you very much.

Well, what a extraordinary introduction from an extraordinary leader. I just want to reiterate something I said at the town hall meeting earlier. You could not have a better fighter on behalf of the people of Nevada than Senator Harry Reid. And I am just proud—I'm proud to call him a friend.

Now, a lot of people in Washington forget where they come from; Harry Reid has not. And that's something that I've always admired about Harry, ever since I first got to the Senate. He retains that honesty and decency and homespun good sense and, yes, sometimes some bluntness that he's carried with him since his boyhood in Searchlight.

We've got a number of other special guests that I just want to acknowledge. First of all, I want to thank Jim for helping to organize this. Thank you so much to Jim Murren. I want to acknowledge Congresswoman Shelley Berkley and Congresswoman Dina Titus, who are here. Assemblyman Joe Hogan is here and State Senator David Parks. I want to thank the Las Vegas Asian, Henderson, Latin, North Las Vegas, and Urban Chambers. Thank you, guys, for helping to organize this—and the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority.

You know, I was mentioning the fact that Harry has retained that sense of who he is, despite the extraordinary journey that he's traveled. Over the past year, under very trying circumstances for the country, I've seen something else in Harry. Harry comes across as soft-spoken, but he's made of very strong stuff. He's never been afraid to make tough decisions—even if they weren't politically popular—if they were the right decisions for his State and the right decisions for America.

And so I just want to reiterate, his leadership has made a tremendous difference, and through these economic storms, he's never lost sight of the struggles and the hardships of the people who sent him to Washington. And every Nevadan should know the strength and the character of a man that I hope and expect to serve in Washington for many years to come.

So thank you, Harry, for the great work you do. Harry also gets embarrassed when you compliment him too much. You know, he kind of—[*laughter*]—see, he looks away. [*Laughter*]

Now, before I go any further, let me set the record straight: I love Vegas! [*Applause*] There you go. Always have. Love Vegas. [*Laughter*] Enjoy myself every time I've gotten an opportunity to visit. In fact, just last night, I drew a flush on the river and cut the budget deficit in half. [*Laughter*] Some of you know I can play some poker. [*Laughter*]

Now, I did receive a little bit of heat, I know, from maybe some in this room, when I said that folks shouldn't blow their college savings in Vegas. That doesn't mean I doesn't love Vegas. It wasn't meant to be a shot. I think everybody here would agree that the only place

where people should spend their college savings is in college. There's no contradiction there.

But look, I understand how hard things have been here. In the worst economic turmoil that we've faced in generations, Las Vegas has been at the eye of the storm. When the economy suffers, the tourism industry is deeply affected. In fact, you've seen perhaps the steepest drop in tourism in the State's history. And I know things are starting to bounce back, but it's been a tough go. When folks are hurting and don't have the money to spend on a night out or a weekend getaway, that hurts the broader economy as well. So what happens in Vegas reflects what's happening across America.

And this area has also been hit by the home mortgage crisis as hard as just about anywhere in America. And this doesn't just affect the families at risk of losing their homes, as devastating as that can be. It also affects the many more families who've lost value in their homes and the equity that makes it possible to finance a business or secure a retirement. From their peak, home prices in Las Vegas have fallen in half. This is something all of you are aware of.

And finally, Nevada has not escaped the wider devastation that's ripped through the financial markets and the economic fabric of our country as a whole, as credit became scarce and consumer spending dropped and businesses were forced to close their doors.

Today, more than one in eight people in Las Vegas can't find work. So no one needs to explain to the members of the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce that we've been through a punishing recession, as bad as anything since 1930. The recession in 1980, '81 doesn't come close to what we've gone through over the last 2 years.

And no one needs to tell you how important it is that we remain absolutely focused on bringing about a strong recovery. Our great challenge as a country is to create the environment in which businesses can expand and hire workers, in which middle class families can find good jobs and save for the future, in which our economy is growing, and that growth is sustained and broadly shared. That's my focus, that's Harry Reid's focus: to not only rebuild this economy, but to rebuild it stronger than it was before the crisis.

At the same time, standing before this group of business leaders, it's important to emphasize that there's only so much that Government can do and only so much that Government should do. Sometime in Washington it sounds a little contradictory when I hear folks say, "Obama wants to—the Government to take over the economy." Then they'll turn around and say, "Why isn't the Government doing more to create jobs?"

Now, Harry and I understand that's politics. But putting politics aside, what I believe—and what I know you believe—is that the true engine of job creation and economic expansion in this country has never been found in the Halls of Congress or in the corridors of the White House. America's economic success begins elsewhere, in more humble settings: in garages and basements and rented storefronts.

It begins when a worker decides to leave her job to be her own boss, when an inventor makes his first sale on the way to his first million, when an innovator sees a product that could be better or a service that could be provided more smartly, when an entrepreneur takes a chance on an idea that just might fail, but might also change the world.

That's the story of America, the land of opportunity, a nation where—at our best—we welcomed all those from around the world who are willing to work hard, all who are willing to take themselves as far as their talents would allow. And what has made it possible to harness the incredible productive capacity of the American people, the greatest economic force in the history of the world, has been a free market where people can pursue their dreams, their goals, and their happiness, and where you can take charge of your own destiny.

So I don't believe my role as President, the role of the Federal Government or the State government or city governments, is to stifle the free market. I think my role is to strengthen its ability to unleash that creativity and ingenuity which still makes this Nation the envy of the world.

Now, there are those who suggest that the only way Government can promote strong mar-

kets is to allow them to operate wholly outside even the most modest rules of the road, even the most sensible reforms. Many of these same folks also suggest—whether in regard to proposed consumer protections in the health insurance industry or proposed rules to prevent another financial crisis—that these kinds of policies run counter to our economic interests. And while I respect those who sincerely hold this view, the facts—and our history—do not favor this argument.

Throughout our past, there have been times when markets have fallen out of balance. And there have been periods of economic transformation and upheaval when prosperity and even basic financial security have eluded far too many citizens. And at those moments, Government has stepped in, not to supplant private enterprise, but to catalyze it, to the—create the conditions for entrepreneurs and new businesses to adapt and ultimately to thrive.

Sometimes it requires Government investment. That's why we laid railroads and highways to spur commerce and industry and stitch this Nation together. Sometimes it means making sure that there's a safety net. That's why we created Social Security while putting in place financial safeguards like the FDIC in the wake of the economic dislocations of the 1930s.

A lot of times it involves investing in our people. That's why we passed a GI bill to nurture the skills and talents of an entire generation. That's why President Kennedy pointed us to the Moon, knowing that the exploration of the skies above would lead to unimagined discoveries here on Earth.

That's how Las Vegas became Las Vegas, a balance of private enterprise, but also a regulatory structure that made sure that people could come here and enjoy themselves and thrive and bring their families in an environment that was safe for them and secure.

At these moments of transformation, such efforts by Government, they don't stifle our economy; just the opposite. They've helped our economy achieve the growth that was not only more robust but more widely shared by our citizens, citizens who were in turn better able to contribute to our economy. And when we've gone without sound rules of the road and sound investments in our future, then we've risked stagnation, or worse, we've risked full-blown economic crises.

And that's where we found ourselves 1 year ago when my administration came through the door. I know sometimes we've got a short-term memory. It's one of the things that makes America great, is we don't brood about the past. But it's worth us just remembering where we were.

Five trillion dollars of Americans' household wealth evaporated in just 12 weeks as the financial markets plummeted—5 trillion. Several of the world's largest financial institutions were on the brink of collapse; some of them disappeared. Home values were in freefall; nobody knew what the floor was. Businesses could not get credit, no matter how creditworthy. Seven hundred and fifty thousand jobs were vanishing each month; more than the entire population of Vermont was losing its job every single month when I was sworn in. And the fear among economists across the political spectrum was that we were rapidly sinking into a second great depression.

So we undertook a series of difficult steps—and frankly, some of them were unpopular, deeply unpopular—to prevent that outcome. And I was at the town hall earlier today, and I pointed out, it's not as if Harry and I don't have pollsters; we got very good pollsters, and they tell us when things are unpopular. [*Laughter*] "Don't do that!" But we thought it was important to do what was right, not what was popular.

So we acted to get lending flowing again so companies like yours could get loans to buy equipment and restock, keep your doors open, make payroll. We thought it was important for ordinary Americans to be able to finance their homes or buying a new car or going to college or starting or running a business.

We passed tax relief for small businesses and 95 percent of working families, for college students, for first-time home buyers. We extended or increased unemployment benefits, not just to help those families, but also to make sure that there was some demand in the econ-

omy at a time when so much demand had been lost. We made health insurance 65 percent cheaper for families relying on COBRA. We acted to close State budget gaps to prevent hundreds of thousands of teachers and public school workers and firefighters and police officers from being laid off all across the country, including right here in Nevada.

And at the same time, we initiated investments to spur hiring while laying a foundation for long-term lasting growth. We doubled our capacity in renewable energy, like wind and solar. We computerized medical records to save money and lives. We provided the largest boost to medical research in history. All across the country, classrooms and school laboratories are being renovated. Roads and railways are being upgraded as part of the largest investment in infrastructure since President Eisenhower half a century ago initiated the Interstate Highway System.

Right here in Nevada, hundreds of entrepreneurs have received small-business loans. One million Nevadans have seen a tax cut. Hundreds of thousands of seniors and veterans have received emergency assistance. A quarter million people in this State have received additional unemployment insurance. And across Nevada, there are dozens of transportation projects and energy projects and construction projects putting people to work doing the work that America needs done.

And you know what? What made all this possible was the Recovery Act, also known as the stimulus bill. Now, there are a bunch of folks out there who would tell you otherwise and would say that the Recovery Act hasn't made a difference and created a job. But, you know, facts are stubborn things. There's a famous story about a former Senator, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who was having an argument with a fellow Senator. And the other guy wasn't doing too well in the argument, so finally, he said, "Well, I'm entitled to my own opinion." And Moynihan said, "Yes, you're entitled to your own opinion; you're not entitled to your own facts." [*Laughter*]

Economists tell us that the Recovery Act has helped stop the freefall in our economy and created or saved as many as 2 million jobs so far. And by the way, the actions of these critics speak louder than words, because many of the Members of Congress who voted against the Recovery Act, called it a boondoggle—funny how they end up making appearances at ribbon cuttings for Recovery Act projects. [*Laughter*] It's a sight to see. They're up there cheesing and grinning. [*Laughter*] They're trying to vote against their cake and eat it too. [*Laughter*]

Now, this is not to say that all of our troubles are over—far from it. We may have kept 2 million people from the unemployment line in this recession, but more than 8 million people have lost their jobs. We may have broken the back of the recession. When I came in, this economy was contracting 6 percent; this past quarter it was growing 6 percent, a huge reversal. So the economy may be growing again, but that growth has not nearly made up for the terrible pain and dislocations that rocked businesses and families over the course of a very difficult 2 years.

So we've got a lot of work to do. And I'm here to tell you, I will not rest—I know Harry will not rest—until we're not just recovering, but we're prospering. I don't want Vegas just to be getting by; I want Vegas to be thriving. And I know that's what you want as well.

So that's why Harry and I are working to provide tax breaks for small businesses to spur hiring. That's why we're fighting for health insurance reforms to address the crushing costs of health insurance for small businesses and families. And that's why we've continued to seek ways to address the home mortgage crisis, which has touched all parts of this country, but has hit Las Vegas particularly hard.

In large part, the broader economic crisis we've experienced began as a home mortgage crisis. And the story is familiar to all of you. A lot of people got in over their heads, from homeowners on Main Street to large firms on Wall Street. And many more Americans found themselves in a terrible situation by no fault of their own, unable to pay a mortgage because of a lost job, but they're unable to sell or refinance because their mortgage debt is now higher than the value of their house; their home is underwater.

Now, Government has a responsibility to help deal with this problem. I've got to again re-

peat: Government can't stop every foreclosure. There's not enough money in the Treasury to stop every foreclosure. And we shouldn't be using tax dollars to reward the same irresponsible lenders or borrowers who helped precipitate the crisis. But what Government can do is to help responsible homeowners to stay in their homes. Government can stop preventable foreclosures. What we can do is stabilize the housing market so home values can begin to rise again.

So over the course of the past year, we've taken a number of steps to do just that. We've provided a tax credit for 1.4 million taxpayers to help them buy their first homes. We've made it possible for more than 1 million struggling homeowners to reduce monthly payments. And combined with our broader efforts to spur growth, stem job losses, and stabilize the financial system, we've helped promote recovery in the housing markets. In fact, in many markets, home values have begun to rebound.

But we've got a ways to go, especially in the hardest hit regions like Las Vegas, where there are just too many blocks littered with brown lawns and "for sale" signs, too many mortgage holders here are underwater, and where job losses continue to exact a terrible toll. So for these communities, recovery depends on continued responsible efforts to stop the downward spiral of defaults, foreclosures, and declining home values.

That's why earlier today I announced a $1.5 billion investment in housing finance agencies in the States hardest hit by this housing crisis. And one of those States is Nevada. So that means that here in Nevada, we're going to be able to help prevent some foreclosures that otherwise would have happened. It's going to allow lenders to help homeowners who are underwater. And it will help folks who've taken out a second mortgage modify their loans.

So the goal is to target communities at the center of the crisis and to empower local agencies who know these communities best to structure and tailor their programs in ways that are most responsive.

Now, these are very difficult times for our country, times that demand we put aside the stale debates and the tired arguments, times that demand of us something more. The fact is, the economic crisis of the past 2 years—indeed the growing economic insecurity of the middle class that's been going on for a decade—was born not just of failures in our economic system. These challenges were also born of failures in our political system.

And while Harry has been fighting for us, too many folks in Washington have been putting off hard decisions. So for decades, we've watched as efforts to solve tough problems fall prey to gamesmanship and partisanship, to the prosaic concerns of politics, the ever-quickening news cycle, to endless campaigns focused on scoring points instead of meeting our common challenges.

Imagine if you had to run a business like this, where the people who are in your office are constantly yelling at you, running ads against you, more interested in you failing than the company succeeding. That's what we've been seeing in Washington.

And it's got to stop, because the challenges have been mounting all around us: a health care system that saddles businesses and families with skyrocketing costs; an economy powered by fuels that are fuels of the 20th century instead of the 21st and endanger our planet and our security. We've got an education system unsuited for a global era and a financial system that has been rewarding reckless risks. And we've got a structural deficit that threatens to leave our children a mountain of debt.

So we've seen the consequences of this failure of responsibility, and the American people have paid a heavy price. The question we'll have to answer now is if we're going to learn from the past or if in the—even in the aftermath of disaster, we're going to repeat it. Because as the alarm bells fade and the din of Washington rises, the danger is, we just forget what happened and we start thinking we should go back to business as usual. That won't work. It will not work in this global economy, not in this environment.

I said this during the State of the Union; I repeated it today in Henderson in my town hall: Other countries are not playing for second, they're playing for first. One of the things that I know is of great interest to Nevada is

tourism and what are we doing for tourism promotion. I can tell you, Harry is going to be championing a tourism promotion bill because, as he points out, why is it that every other country is promoting their tourist industry and America is not doing enough for ours?

But that's just—[*applause*]—he's going to have strong support for that effort. But that's just one example of the competition that we're facing on everything. If China is producing 40 high-speed rail lines and we're producing 1, we're not going to have the infrastructure of the future. If India or South Korea are producing more scientists and engineers than we are, we will not succeed.

So I hope that all of us—Democrats, Republicans, public servants, and leaders in the business community—can keep alive a sense of seriousness, a sense of common purpose. That's how we can rise to this moment and transcend the failures of the past, tackle the challenges before us, and leave behind a nation that is more prosperous than ever before.

But it is going to take work, and I am going to need all of you to be partners with Harry and partners with myself in moving it forward. The days are over where we can keep on organizing ourselves along the lines of, business is here and labor is here and Government's over here. We are all in this together.

If businesses—[*applause*]—and nobody understands that more than Las Vegas. If the MGM's doing well, that means its workers are doing well. And if its workers are doing well, that means that the housing market is doing well. And if the housing market's doing well, then that means that small businesses all across the region are doing well, who in turn are hiring more workers.

That's the model that we've got to achieve. But it also means—in order for us to succeed, it also means that business, labor, Government, Democrats, Republicans, we can't be looking for every single edge or advantage on every single issue. At some points, we've got to be thinking about the larger good.

So if we're serious about reforming the health care system, we've got to be thinking, even if I've got health insurance—and by the way, I've got really good health insurance—[*laughter*]—I've got a doctor who follows me around everywhere—[*laughter*]—I've got to spend some time thinking about the people who don't have health insurance.

And I've also got to be thinking about the next generation that's picking up the bill for the health insurance that's currently being provided to me if I'm getting a benefit from the Government.

If I'm a business leader, I've got to be thinking about my shareholders and my bottom line, but I've also got to be thinking about the people who work for me, and I've got to be thinking about the larger community, and I've got to be thinking about the country.

That kind of leadership can't just come from the White House; it can't just come from the United States Senate; it's got to come from you. In fact, that's where it always comes from in America. The most profound changes, the most dynamic innovations, they don't happen from the top down, they happen from the bottom up.

But they always happen, not just because of some single individual with some great idea—although, a lot of times that's what drives innovation in our economy—it also comes from a culture of trust and mutual regard. America has always been a combination of fierce individualism, but also a sense of community, the sense that we're looking out for one another.

And every single successful business leader here understands that's the kind of culture you've tried to build in your businesses. That's the kind of culture we have to reinvigorate all across America. I'm confident we can do so.

I am looking forward to coming back to Vegas. I think my mother-in-law's going to get here first. [*Laughter*] She comes quite frequently. I maybe shouldn't say that in front of the press. [*Laughter*]

But I want everybody here to have confidence that if we keep on working hard, we don't shy away from these tough challenges, and we're not looking backwards, we're looking forwards, then not only is Las Vegas going to thrive in the 21st century, not only is Nevada going to thrive in the 21st century, but all the United States of America is going to thrive.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:02 p.m. at the Aria Resort and Casino. In his remarks, he referred to James J. Murren, chairman of the board of directors and chief executive officer, MGM Mirage. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson.

The President's Weekly Address
February 20, 2010

The other week, men and women across California opened up their mailboxes to find a letter from Anthem BlueCross. The news inside was jaw-dropping. Anthem was alerting almost a million of its customers that it would be raising premiums by an average of 25 percent, with about a quarter of folks likely to see their rates go up by anywhere from 35 to 39 percent.

Now, after their announcement stirred public outcry, Anthem agreed to delay their rate hike until May 1 while the situation is reviewed by the State of California. But it's not just Californians who are being hit by rate hikes. In Kansas, one insurance company raised premiums by 10 to 20 percent only after asking to raise them by 20 to 30 percent. Last year, Michigan BlueCross BlueShield raised rates by 22 percent after asking to raise them by up to 56 percent. And in Maine, Anthem is asking to raise rates for some folks by about 23 percent.

The bottom line is that the status quo is good for the insurance industry and bad for America. Over the past year, as families and small-business owners have struggled to pay soaring health care costs and as millions of Americans lost their coverage, the five largest insurers made record profits of over $12 billion.

And as bad as things are today, they'll only get worse if we fail to act. We'll see more and more Americans go without the coverage they need. We'll see exploding premiums and out-of-pocket costs burn through more and more family budgets. We'll see more and more small businesses scale back benefits, drop coverage, or close down because they can't keep up with rising rates. And in time, we'll see these skyrocketing health care costs become the single largest driver of our Federal deficits.

That's what the future is on track to look like, but it's not what the future has to look like. The question, then, is whether we will do what it takes, all of us—Democrats and Republicans—to build a better future for ourselves, our children, and our country.

That's why next week, I'm inviting members of both parties to take part in a bipartisan health care meeting, and I hope they come in a spirit of good faith. I don't want to see this meeting turn into political theater, with each side simply reciting talking points and trying to score political points. Instead, I ask members of both parties to seek common ground in an effort to solve a problem that's been with us for generations.

It's in that spirit that I've sought out and supported Republican ideas on reform from the very beginning. Some Republicans want to allow Americans to purchase insurance from a company in another State to give people more choices and bring down costs. Some Republicans have also suggested giving small businesses the power to pool together and offer health care at lower prices, just as big companies and labor unions do. I think both of these are good ideas, so long as we pursue them in a way that protects benefits, protects patients, and protects the American people. I hope Democrats and Republicans can come together next week around these and other ideas.

To Members of Congress, I would simply say this: We know the American people want us to reform our health insurance system, we know where the broad areas of agreement are, and we know where the sources of disagreement lie. After debating this issue exhaustively for a year, let's move forward together. Next week is our chance to finally reform our health insurance system so it works for families and small businesses. It's our chance to finally give Americans the peace of mind of knowing that they'll be able to have affordable coverage when they need it most.

What's being tested here is not just our ability to solve this one problem, but our ability to solve any problem. Right now Americans are understandably despairing about whether partisanship and the undue influence of special interests in Washington will make it impossible for us to deal with the big challenges that face our country. They want to see us focus not on scoring points, but on solving problems; not on the next election, but on the next generation. That's what we can do, and that is what we must do when we come together for this bipartisan health care meeting next week.

Thank you, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 6:05 p.m. on February 17 in the State Dining Room at the White House for broadcast on February 20. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 19, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 20. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Death of Alexander M. Haig, Jr.
February 20, 2010

Today we mourn the loss of Alexander Haig, a great American who served our country with distinction. General Haig exemplified our finest warrior-diplomat tradition of those who dedicate their lives to public service. He enjoyed a remarkable and decorated career, rising to become a four-star general and serving as Supreme Allied Commander of Europe before also serving as Secretary of State. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family.

Remarks at the National Governors Association Dinner
February 21, 2010

Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Please, everybody have a seat. Have a seat.

Good evening, and welcome back to the White House. For some of you, this is the first time; welcome. I want to begin by acknowledging your outstanding chairs of this extraordinary organization: Jim Douglas of Vermont and Joe Manchin of West Virginia. Thank you so much for the great work that you guys do each and every day.

I also want to let everybody know that this is not too stiff of an affair—[*laughter*]—because last year Ed Rendell led a conga line. [*Laughter*] We still have photographs of some of you that we may use at any point. [*Laughter*]

But it's interesting to think about where we were last year. Last year, we were in the midst of what was the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Each of you in your own respective States, I think, saw how brutal it was on so many families: hundreds of thousands of people losing their jobs every month; home foreclosures; small businesses having to shut down, unable to make payroll; and people not sure about the future and unclear about whether or not we were going to be able to pull ourselves out.

And I think that it is worth reminding ourselves of how urgent the situation was, and it's worth this organization taking some extraordinary credit for helping to right the ship, working, I know, with my Vice President, Joe Biden, who's done outstanding work. We took some swift and decisive action, and because of that swift and decisive action, not only were folks in your States able to get unemployment insurance and get COBRA at a much cheaper rate, not only were you able to fill some of those budget holes that I know are still tough and I suspect we'll be talking about tomorrow, but we also started to begin entire new industries and start moving towards a extraordinary future through some of the infrastructure projects and research and development, clean energy projects that are—so many of you have been leaders of.

If you think about it—I was in Newton, Iowa, seeing a plant that had been closed, now reopened building wind turbines. In Michigan—I was just talking to Governor Granholm about the fact that last year, we accounted for 2 percent of the advanced battery technology in the entire world, and by 2015, we are going to account for 40 percent. By the end of this year, we're going to account for 20 percent of that advanced battery technology.

The truth is, the reason it worked is because of some very tough choices that many of you made, but the ability to work across State lines and party lines to try to get people focused not just on the past, but also on the future. And one of the things that I've always said about Governors that Washington could learn from is that it's hard to be overly ideological as a Governor, because the fact of the matter is, the rubber hits the road with you. You guys can have all kinds of abstract thoughts, but when families come to you looking for help, when communities have been devastated, you're the ones they turn to. And so these arguments become a lot less abstract. And I think it's a reflection of that experience as chief executives in each of your State that makes you able to work together so effectively in this organization.

So I want to congratulate you for having worked through a very difficult year. I want you to know that this White House wants to continue to partner with you, and not just in terms of us telling you what we think we can do to help, but more importantly, us listening and finding out from you the kinds of extraordinary ideas that all these States represent. You guys are—continue to be the laboratory for our democracy.

And so we welcome your ideas. We welcome your input. The main thing tonight, though, is we expect you to have a good time. [*Laughter*] So with that, what I'd like to do is to offer a toast. I'd like to offer this toast not only to our constituents, who put up with us and have gone through some extraordinarily difficult times, but I also want to offer a toast to our spouses and families, who make extraordinary sacrifices. Some of them oftentimes don't always—Michelle, she's starting to clank already—[*laughter*]—but our families, our children, all those people who are so supportive of these extraordinary efforts that we're making.

So cheers, everybody.

[*At this point, a toast was offered.*]

Dinner is served.

[*The President began to leave the podium, but then returned.*]

Oh, I'm—wait, wait, wait. [*Laughter*] This is not the waiter—[*laughter*]—although he can read the menu. Jim Douglas has been an extraordinary partner with this White House, always constructive, always thoughtful, and we are so pleased to have him here tonight. And so he's going to offer his own toast. Please.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 7:20 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Joseph Manchin III of West Virginia, in his capacity as vice chair of the National Governors Association; Gov. Edward G. Rendell of Pennsylvania; and Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm of Michigan. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Gov. James H. Douglas of Vermont. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 22.

Remarks to the National Governors Association
February 22, 2010

Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. Thank you.

I hope nobody stayed up too late last night, because I'm looking forward to a productive

challenge and challenging conversation this morning. Joe, thank you very much for your remarks. And I want to again thank Governor Douglas and Governor Manchin for their outstanding leadership with this organization.

I want to spend most of my time exchanging ideas with you and answering questions, but let me just preface this with a few remarks. I want us to begin by remembering where we were just 1 year ago. As I mentioned last night, our economy was in a full-blown crisis, 750,000 Americans were losing their jobs each month, and millions more were hurting at the end of one of the toughest decades for the middle class on record. And just as they turned to you like never before, budget shortfalls threatened your capacity to help.

And that was just a few days before I signed the Recovery Act into law, a plan that many of you were instrumental in devising. That plan cut taxes for small businesses and for 95 percent of working Americans. It gave direct relief to those hardest hit by the recession, including workers who lost their jobs and families who lost their health care because of it. It helped most of you close some of those budget gaps that had developed, which kept 300,000 teachers and education workers in your schools and tens of thousands of first-responders on your streets.

And it began rebuilding our economy on a new and stronger foundation for growth. We helped to jump-start a clean energy industry in places where there were none, as Governor Granholm can attest in Michigan. We followed the gospel of Governors Rendell and Schwarzenegger and invested in our infrastructure, creating private sector jobs rebuilding today's crumbling roads and bridges, but also constructing the smart grids and the high-speed rails that are so critical to our future. And that's helping many of you prepare your States for future growth, like Governor Baldacci, who's accelerating his vision to connect broadband to every corner of Maine, or Governor Barbour, who's boosting plans to bring more commerce into Mississippi ports and out by rail to the rest of America.

Independent economists credit the Recovery Act with growing the economy and for 2 million jobs that otherwise wouldn't exist. Now, I understand that some of you still claim it's not working or wasn't worth it, but I also know that you've used it to close your budget gaps or break ground on new projects. I've seen the photos, and I've read the press releases. [*Laughter*] So it must be doing something right.

Overall, the economy is in a better place than it was a year ago. We were contracting by 6 percent, and we're now growing by 6 percent. But I know that your States are still in a very tough situation, and too many Americans still haven't felt the recovery in their own lives. So we're working to create jobs by all means necessary, be it by cutting taxes for small businesses that create them, to investing more in infrastructure and in energy efficiency, or giving you more help to close budget shortfalls. And I am not going to rest until we see more progress in each and every one of your States.

As Governors, I know you feel the same responsibility to see the people we serve through difficult times. And I know you share my feelings that we've also got a responsibility to think beyond the crisis and build an economy that works for our future, to tackle some of the problems and barriers that have held us back, and to secure our rightful place as the preeminent economy in the 21st century.

And that's why we've taken up the cause of better health care that works for our people, our businesses, and our governments alike. That's why we will continue to fight for the cause of clean energy, an economy that will free ourselves from the grips of foreign oil and generate millions of good jobs and good wages in the process. That's why we've taken up the cause of guaranteeing that Americans have the knowledge and the skills and education they need in this new and changing world.

America's prosperity has always rested on how well we educate our children, but never has that been more true than it is today. And it's true for our workers as well when a college graduate earns over 60 percent more in a lifetime than a high school graduate. This is true for our businesses when, according to one study, 6 in 10 simply cannot find the qualified

workers that they need, are ready and willing to hire.

Unfortunately, we continue to lag in several critical areas. Our 8th grade students are 9th in the world in math and 11th in science. In response to assessments like these, some States have upped their game. I want to point to Massachusetts as an example, where eighth graders now tie for first in science around the world. Some—unfortunately, some States have actually done the opposite, and between 2005 and 2007, under No Child Left Behind, 11 States actually lowered their standards in math.

That may make those States look better relative to other States, but it's not going to help our students keep up with their global competitors. When I visited South Korea last year—and I've told this story before—I had lunch with President Lee, and I asked him, "What's your biggest education challenge?" And he said, "My biggest issue, my toughest fight is that Korean parents are too demanding. They want their kids to learn English in first grade, and so I've had to ship in a whole bunch of foreign-speaking teachers to meet the demand." They want their students learning everything—math, science, foreign languages—all as soon as possible. They want their kids to excel because they understand that whichever country outeducates the other is going to outcompete us in the future. So that's what we're up against. That's what's at stake, nothing less than our primacy in the world.

As I said at the State of the Union Address, I do not accept a United States of America that's second place. And that means that all of us are going to have to work together to make sure that we are taking seriously the investments we make in our children's future. That's the reason that we launched the Race to the Top, a national competition to spur reform and improvements in our schools.

We put $4 billion on the table and challenged States to compete for it, saying that if you embrace reforms that raise achievement, if you track and respond to student needs, if you evaluate and reward great teachers and principals and turn around failing schools, then we're going to help you make those reforms a reality. Now, many of you and your States already have, and that's why we're going to expand the Race to the Top program.

And I want to commend all of you for acting collectively through the National Governors Association to develop common academic standards that will better position our students for success. Many States have already positioned themselves to adopt higher standards, and today I'm announcing steps to encourage and support all States to transition to college- and career-ready standards on behalf of America's students.

And I know that many of you have had a chance to interact with our Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, who's doing a terrific job, and I think you understand when you talk to him that this administration is serious about breaking down some of the barriers to reform that have existed in the past. We are tired of arguments between the left and the right, between reformers and teachers unions. We want to figure out what works, and we want to make sure that we are giving you the support and the resources that you need to implement what works.

Now, of course, lifting achievement and transforming our schools is going to require more than new standards. It's going to require better teaching, better curricula; it's going to require better assessments. So we are calling for a redesigned Elementary and Secondary Education Act that better aligns the Federal approach to your State-led efforts while offering you the support that you need. Now, let me just be specific on some things that we're looking to do this year.

First, as a condition of receiving access to title I funds, we will ask all States to put in place a plan to adopt and certify standards that are college- and career-ready in reading and math. Once you've got those standards in place, you'll be able to better compete for funds to improve teaching and upgrade curricula. If a university, State, or school district begins preparing educators to teach to higher standards, we'll give them the support that they need. And to make sure that we're delivering for our kids, we're launching a competition to reward

States that join together to develop the highest quality, cutting-edge assessments required to measure progress, and we'll help support their implementation.

Now, this all goes hand in hand with our efforts to give every American a complete and competitive education. We are making college more affordable by increasing Pell grants. We're continuing a new $2,500 tax credit for 4 years of college tuition. We are working to ease graduates' debt burdens, because I believe—and I think you do too—that nobody should go broke because they decided to go to college. We're—we've provided the resources to effectively implement the post-9/11 GI bill, because every returning soldier should have the chance to begin a new life prepared for the new economy. We're strengthening our community colleges, because all of you know that they are outstanding career pathways for the children of so many working families. And we're working to reform the student loan program and save tens of billions of dollars that currently go to subsidizing financial intermediaries, because instead of having that money go to middlemen, we think it makes sense to spend that money educating the next generation.

Now, if we can come together and do all this—in Washington, in statehouses, and across party and ideology—we're going to raise the quality of American education, we'll give our students, our workers, and our businesses every chance to succeed, and we are going to secure this next century as another American century.

Let me just close by saying this. We've been trusted with the responsibility to lead at a defining moment in our history. We've been tasked not only to see this country through difficult times but to keep the dream of our founding alive for the next generation. That's not something to shy away from; it's something to live up to. And I intend to work closely with all of you, Democrats and Republicans, to do just that.

So with that, what I'd like to do is start the discussion. I think that what we're going to do is I'm going to call on Jim and Joe first. And then after they've made their opening statements and remarks, then we'll kick the press out, and everybody will roll up their sleeves and we'll get to work. Jim.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Joe Biden, who introduced the President; Gov. James H. Douglas of Vermont, in his capacity as chair, and Gov. Joseph Manchin III of West Virginia, in his capacity as vice chair, of the National Governors Association; Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm of Michigan; Gov. Edward G. Rendell of Pennsylvania; Gov. Arnold A. Schwarzenegger of California; Gov. John E. Baldacci of Maine; Gov. Haley R. Barbour of Mississippi; and President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Biden.

Statement on the Implementation of the Credit Card Accountability Responsibility and Disclosure Act of 2009

February 22, 2010

Today the major reforms of the Credit Card Accountability Responsibility and Disclosure Act that I signed into law last spring take effect, marking a significant turning point for American consumers. For too long, credit card companies have had free rein to employ deceptive, unfair tactics that hit responsible consumers with unreasonable costs. But today we are shifting the balance of power back to the consumer, and we are holding the credit card companies accountable.

The new rules taking effect today mean that credit card companies can no longer retroactively increase rates or increase rates in the first year you open an account, charge misleading late fees, or use over-limit fee traps. They're now required to send ample notification if they plan to make changes to the terms of your card,

and they must employ clear, simple standard payment dates and times. There are new protections for underage consumers, restrictions on double billing, and caps on high-fee cards. The new rules are an unprecedented step in my administration's ongoing efforts to strengthen consumer protections and enact meaningful financial reform.

These new rules don't absolve consumers of their obligation to pay their bills, but they finally level the playing field so that every family and small business using a credit card has the information they need to make responsible financial decisions.

Statement on Senate Cloture Vote on Job Growth Legislation
February 22, 2010

The American people want to see Washington put aside partisan differences and make progress on jobs, and today the Senate took one important step forward in doing that. I'm grateful to the Democratic and Republican Senators who voted to support these investments in infrastructure and small businesses. This is one of many efforts we need to tackle our economic challenges, and we will continue to work with Congress on additional job creation measures. Jobs remain our top priority, and I look forward to working with members from both parties to get legislation signed and the American people back to work.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency Relating to Cuba and of the Emergency Authority Relating to the Regulation of the Anchorage and Movement of Vessels
February 23, 2010

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the national emergency declared with respect to the Government of Cuba's destruction of two unarmed U.S.-registered civilian aircraft in international airspace north of Cuba on February 24, 1996, as amended and expanded on February 26, 2004, is to continue in effect beyond March 1, 2010.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 23, 2010.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks to the Business Roundtable
February 24, 2010

Thank you. Thank you, Ivan, for the terrific introduction, which was short, and that's how I like it. [*Laughter*] I want to thank John for the great work that he's been doing with our team. And thank you all. Welcome to Washington. It is wonderful to be back here with the men and women of the Business Roundtable.

Now, over the last year, we've worked together on a number of issues, from economic recovery and tax policy to education and to

health care. And more often than not, we've found common ground. And this is important, because we meet at a time, as all of you are aware, a time of great economic anxiety and sharp political divisions. We're still emerging from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Eight million Americans have lost their jobs over the last 2 years. Home values in too many parts of the country have plummeted. And too many businesses are still reluctant to invest and expand.

And what's more, this recession follows what some have called the "lost decade," a decade in which the average family income fell while the costs of health care and tuition skyrocketed, a decade in which a continued erosion of America's manufacturing base hollowed out many communities around the country and put too many good jobs out of reach.

It's no wonder, then, that people are frustrated. They're frustrated with Government, and they're frustrated with business. They're angry at a financial sector that took exorbitant risks by some in pursuit of short-term profits, and they're angry at a Government that failed to catch the problem on time. They're angry at the price they've paid to prevent a financial meltdown that they didn't cause, and they're angry that recovery in their own lives seems to be lagging the recovery of bank profitability. They're angry at the lobbyists who use their influence to put their clients' special interests ahead of the public interest. And although both parties are predictably scrambling to align themselves with people's frustrations, neither the usual answers from the left or the right seem to be inspiring much confidence.

So we've got some big challenges ahead. And I think all of us know that we can't meet them by returning to the precrisis status quo: an economy that was too dependent on a housing bubble, on consumer debt, on financial speculation, and on growing deficits. That's not sustainable for American workers, and it's not sustainable for American businesses.

Instead, we need an economy where we borrow less and produce more. We need an economy where we generate more jobs here at home and send more products overseas. We need to invest and nurture the industries of the future, and we need to train our workers to compete for those jobs.

And nations around the world, from Asia to Europe, have already realized this. They're putting more emphasis on math and science. They're building high-speed railroads and expanding broadband access. They're making serious investments in clean energy because they want those jobs. And these countries know what's required to compete in the 21st century. And so do we. As I said in the State of the Union, I do not accept second place for the United States of America.

We did not achieve global leadership in the last century by luck or by happenstance. We earned it by working together to define our own destiny and seize the future. And to maintain our leadership in this new century, we must summon that same resolve.

A thriving, competitive America is within our reach, but only if we move forward as one Nation, only if we move past the old debates and the crippling divides between left and right, between business and labor, between private enterprise and the public sector. Whatever differences we have in this country, all of us have a stake in meeting the same goal, which is an America in which a growing prosperity is shared widely by its people.

So today I want to spend most of my time talking about the specific steps we need to take to build this more competitive America. But before I do, I want to talk a little bit about the relationship between business and Government in promoting economic growth.

Now, contrary to the claims of some of my critics and some of the editorial pages, I am an ardent believer in the free market. I believe businesses like yours are the engines of economic growth in this country. You create jobs, you develop new products and cutting-edge technologies, and you create the supply chains that make it possible for small businesses to open their doors. So I want everyone in this room to succeed. I want your shareholders to do well, I want your workers to do well, I want you to do well, because I firmly believe that America's success in large part depends on your success internationally.

Now, I also believe this: Government has a vital, if limited, role to play in fostering sustained economic growth and creating the foundations for you to succeed. Throughout our history, Government's done so in three ways.

First, Government has set up basic rules of the marketplace, from the enforcement of contracts and managing the money supply to maintaining airline safety standards and creating Federal deposit insurance. And on balance, these rules have been good for business, not bad, for they ensure honest competition and fair dealing and a level playing field.

Second, only Government can make those investments in common goods that serve the general welfare but are too expensive for any individual or firm to purchase on their own. Our Armed Forces is the most obvious example. But Government has also built infrastructure, from roads and ports to railways and highways that enabled commerce and spurred entire industries. Government's invested in basic research that led to new crop yields for farmers and the Internet. Government's invested in our people through land-grant colleges and the GI bill.

And finally, Government has also provided a social safety net to guarantee a basic level of security for all our citizens. Now, this last role's been obviously a source of great controversy over the last several decades. But I think most Americans and most business leaders would agree that programs like Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid and unemployment insurance haven't just saved millions from poverty, they've helped secure broad-based consensus that is so critical to a functioning market economy.

Now, the Business Roundtable has always understood that in each of these instances, Government hasn't stepped in to supplant private enterprise, but to catalyze it, to create the conditions for entrepreneurs and new businesses to adapt and to thrive.

But I take the time to make these points because we've arrived at a juncture in our politics where reasonable efforts to update our regulations or make basic investments in our future are too often greeted with cries of "Government takeover" or even "socialism."

Now, not only does that kind of rhetoric deny our history, but it prevents us from asking hard questions about the right balance between the private and public sectors. Let me give you some examples. Too little investment in a competitive infrastructure or an education system that works for our children, and we risk falling behind countries that are making these investments right now. On the other hand, if we just throw money at poorly planned projects or failing schools, then we'll remain in debt to those same countries for decades to come. If we don't pass financial reform, we can expect more crises in the future of the sort that we just saw. On the other hand, if we design the new rules carelessly, they could choke off the supply of capital to businesses and families. If we allow our safety net to be weakened or lose a sense of fairness in our Tax Code, then we can expect more anger and frustration from citizens across the political spectrum. And at the same time, if an exploding entitlement state is gobbling up more and more of our tax dollars, there's no way we'll retain our competitive edge.

So rather than hurling accusations about big-Government liberals or mean-spirited conservatives, we're going to have to answer those tough questions. And getting that balance right has less to do with big Government or small government than it has to do with smart Government. It's not about being antibusiness or pro-Government, it's about being pro-growth and projobs. And while there are no simple formulas or bumper stickers that can encapsulate all the work that has to be done here, I do want to discuss a few specific areas where we have to get things right.

Now, our first and most immediate task is to complete the economic recovery by taking additional steps to bolster demand and keep credit flowing. Along with our efforts to unfreeze credit and stabilize the housing market, the Recovery Act helped to do this, and it's one of the main reasons our economy has gone from shrinking by 6 percent to growing by nearly 6 percent.

But we need to do more. We should make it easier for small businesses to get loans and give them a tax credit for hiring new workers or raising wages. We should invest in infrastructure projects that lead to new jobs in the construction industry and other hard-hit businesses. And we should provide a tax incentive for large businesses like yours to invest in new plants and equipment. That would make a difference now.

And we need businesses to support these efforts. The Business Roundtable supported the Recovery Act, and for that I'm grateful. But I think one of the reasons businesses haven't been as vocal about their support is a belief that extraordinary measures like the Recovery Act or our financial stability plan somehow represent a lasting increase in Government intervention. So let me assure you, let me be clear: They do not.

One year ago, we were looking at the possible end of General Motors. Today, GM has increased production, is paying us back ahead of schedule. Yesterday we learned they're hiring 1,200 more workers in their Lordstown, Ohio, plant. One year ago, there was a chance we would lose most of the $700 billion we were given to rescue the financial system. Today, most of that money has been repaid. And the financial fee we've proposed would recover the rest and close the books on Government's involvement.

And let me say a word about compensation here. Most Americans, including myself, do not begrudge reasonable rewards for a job well done. What's outraged people are outsized bonuses at firms that so recently required massive public assistance. Once that money is fully repaid, I don't believe it's appropriate for the Government to be in the business of setting compensation levels. I do believe that shareholders should have a say in compensation packages given to top executives and that those packages should be based on long-term performance instead of short-term profits. And I think that's particularly important in the financial industry, where reckless risks in pursuit of short-term gain helped create a crisis that engulfed the world economy.

But here's the larger point that I'm trying to make: The steps we took last year were about saving the economy from collapse, not about expanding Government's reach into the economy. The jobs bill working through Congress right now are similarly designed to be targeted and temporary. And I'm pleased that a few hours ago the Senate just passed a series of tax cuts for small businesses that hire more workers. This is an important step forward in putting more Americans back to work as soon as possible.

Now, the larger question is this: Beyond the immediate requirements of recovery, how do we lay the foundation for a more competitive America? How do we help you succeed? Now, I believe it starts with investments in innovation, in education, and a 21st-century infrastructure. To build the infrastructure of tomorrow, we're investing in expanded broadband access and health information technology, clean energy facilities, and the first high-speed rail network in America.

To spur the discovery of services and products and industries we have yet to imagine, we're devoting more than 3 percent of our GDP to research and development, an amount that exceeds the level achieved at the height of the space race. We've also proposed making the research and experimentation tax credit permanent, a tax credit that helps companies like yours afford the high costs of developing new technologies and new products.

To train our workers for the jobs of tomorrow, we've made education reform a top priority in this administration. We are not interested in just putting more money into our schools; we want that money moving towards reform. And last year, we launched a national competition to improve our schools based on a simple idea: Instead of funding the status quo, we will only invest in reform, reform that raises student achievement and inspires students to excel in math and science and turns around failing schools that steal the future of too many young Americans. I just met this week with the Nation's Governors, and education reform is one of those rare issues where both Democrats and Republicans are enthusiastic.

And to achieve my goal of ensuring America again has the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020, I'm urging the Senate to pass a bill that will make college more affordable by ending the unnecessary taxpayer

subsidies that go to financial intermediaries for student loans. It's a bill that will also revitalize our community colleges, which this organization has recognized are a career pathway to the children of so many working families.

And just as Government needs to support young people eager to learn, I'm very pleased to see that the business community has already begun to bet on the next generation of American talent. Just yesterday 17 high-tech companies announced plans to hire over 10,000 college graduates this year. That's good news. That's the kind of partnership that we need.

Now, finally, we're investing in innovation that will lead to a more efficient, affordable, and consumer-friendly Federal Government. Almost all of you have harnessed new technologies to build thriving businesses and provide better services to your customers. There's no reason Government shouldn't do the same and give taxpayers a better bang for their buck.

And with new technology, we're creating a single electronic medical record for our men and women in uniform that will follow them from the day they enlist until the day that they're laid to rest. We're cutting down the time it takes to get a patent approved by cutting out unnecessary paperwork and modernizing the process. And my Secretary of Commerce, Gary Locke, is here today and is doing an outstanding job leading that effort. We're working to give people the chance to go online and book an appointment at the Social Security office or check the status of their citizenship application, services countless businesses already provide. Government should be doing the same.

So in all of these areas—in infrastructure, in research, in education, and in Government reform—we're making investments that will lead to new products and services that will help America compete on the world stage. It means increases in productivity and increases in efficiency, and that's what we're going to need to be competitive.

Now, winning that competition also means we need to export more of our goods and services to other nations, something that supports more jobs here in the United States of America. Unfortunately, the Federal Government has not done a great job advocating for companies' exports abroad.

And that's why in the State of the Union, I set a goal of doubling our exports over the next 5 years, an increase that will support 2 million jobs. And to help me meet this goal, Gary Locke recently announced that we're launching a National Export Initiative where the Federal Government will significantly ramp up its advocacy on behalf of U.S. exporters. We're substantially expanding the trade financing available to exporters, including small and medium-sized companies. And while always keeping our security needs in mind, we're going to reform our export controls to eliminate unnecessary barriers. So some of the sectors where we have a huge competitive advantage in high-tech areas, we're going to be able to send more of those products to markets overseas. And we're going to pursue a more strategic and aggressive effort to open up new markets for our goods.

Now, I know that trade policy has been one of those longstanding divides between business and labor, between Democrats and Republicans. To those who would reflexively support every and any trade deal, I would say that our competitors have to play fair, and our agreements have to be enforced. We can't simply cede more jobs or markets to unfair trade practices. At the same time, to those who would reflexively oppose every trade agreement, they need to know that if America sits on the sidelines while other nations sign trade deals, we will lose the chance to create jobs on our shores. In other countries, whether China or Germany or Brazil, they've been able to align the interests of business, workers, and government around trade agreements that open up new markets for them and create new jobs for them. We must do the same. And I'm committed to making that happen.

That's why we launched the Trans-Pacific Partnership to strengthen our trade relations with Asia, the fastest growing market in the world. That's why we will work to resolve outstanding issues so that we can move forward on trade agreements with key partners like South Korea and Panama and Colombia. And that's why we will try to conclude a Doha trade

agreement, not just any agreement, but one that creates real access to key global markets.

A competitive America is also America that finally has a smart energy policy. And we know there's no silver bullet here. We understand that to reduce our dependence on oil and the damage caused by climate change, we're going to need more production in the short term, we're going to need more efficiency, and we need more incentives for clean energy.

And already, the Recovery Act has allowed us to jump-start the clean energy industry in America, an investment that will lead to 720,000 clean energy jobs by the year 2012. To take just one example, the United States used to make less than 2 percent of the world's advanced batteries for hybrid cars. By 2015, we'll have enough capacity to make up to 40 percent of these batteries.

We've also launched an unprecedented effort to make our homes and businesses more energy efficient. We've announced loan guarantees to break ground on America's first new nuclear plant in nearly three decades. We're supporting three of the largest solar plants in the world. And I've said that we're willing to make tough decisions about opening up new offshore areas for oil and gas development. So what we're looking at is a comprehensive strategy, not an either-or strategy, but a both-and strategy when it comes to energy.

But to truly transition to a clean energy economy, I've also said that we need to put a price on carbon pollution. Many businesses have embraced this approach, including some who are represented here today. Now, still, I am sympathetic to those companies that face significant potential transition costs, and I want to work with this organization and others like this to help with those costs and to get our policies right.

What we can't do is stand still. The only certainty of the status quo is that the price and supply of oil will become increasingly volatile, that the use of fossil fuels will wreak havoc on weather patterns and air quality. But if we decide now that we're putting a price on this pollution in a few years, it will give businesses the certainty of knowing they have the time to plan for the transition. This country has to move towards a clean energy economy. That's where the world is going, and that's how America will remain competitive and strong in the 21st century.

We will also be more competitive if we address those costs and risks that are preventing our economy from reaching its full potential. I'll list three critical areas: outdated financial regulations, crushing health care costs, and a growing deficit.

Right now we have a financial system with the same vulnerabilities that it had before this crisis began. And as I said in the State of the Union, my goal is not to punish Wall Street. I believe that most individuals in the financial sector are looking to make money in an honest and transparent way. But if there aren't rules in place to guard against the recklessness of a few and they're allowed to exploit consumers and take on excessive risk, it starts a race to the bottom that results in all of us losing.

And that's what we need to change. We can't repeat the mistakes of the past. We can't allow another AIG or another Lehman to happen again. We can't allow financial institutions, including those that take your deposits, to make gambles that threaten the whole economy. And what does that mean? It means we've got to ensure consolidated supervision of all institutions that could pose a risk to the system. It means we have to close loopholes that allow financial firms to evade oversight and circumvent rules of the road. It means that we need more robust consumer and investor protections.

And I ask the Business Roundtable to support these efforts. There are lobbyists on the Hill right now trying to kill reform by claiming that it would undermine businesses outside of the financial sector. That is not true. This is about putting in place rules that encourage drive and innovation instead of shortcuts and abuse. And those are rules that will benefit everybody.

Now, another undeniable drag on our economy is the cost of health care. And I appreciate the willingness of the Business Roundtable to work with us on health care reform. When you've had concerns about specific measures or policies, we've listened, and in many cases, we've made changes. But I know that there are

many who've been skeptical of our reform efforts, because in the wake of extraordinary measures that we took to rescue our economy, it's been an easy political tactic to characterize any effort at health reform as a big Government takeover.

But let's look at the truth, because the truth is just the opposite. We have not called for the elimination of private insurance. We have not—we've been extraordinarily careful not to in any way undermine the employer-based system. What we've called for is an insurance exchange where individuals and small businesses can pool together in order to get a better deal from their insurance companies. In return for getting more customers, we would require insurance companies not to discriminate on the basis of preexisting conditions or arbitrarily jack up premiums.

We've also incorporated almost every serious idea from across the political spectrum about how to contain the rising costs of health care. As a result, our proposal would reduce the deficit by as much as a trillion dollars over the next decade and would directly affect your bottom lines—each and every one of you who are already providing insurance to your employees—by a significant amount.

All these steps would provide more certainty for your businesses, not less, because there's no certainty in a future where premiums rise without limit. There's certainly no certainty where companies are forced to drop coverage or cut back elsewhere. That can't be good for business. Our proposal contains good ideas from Democrats and Republicans and health care experts across the spectrum.

And tomorrow I look forward to a good exchange of ideas at the Blair House with some of the legislative leaders. And I hope everyone comes with a shared desire to solve this challenge, not just score political points. And I hope the roundtable supports our efforts to finally pass reform that works for the American people and for American businesses.

Now, one of the benefits of health care reform is that by bringing down the cost of Medicare and Medicaid, it would significantly reduce our deficit. And I know this is an issue of great concern to many of you. My OMB Director, Peter Orszag, will be here soon to give you the scary numbers. I promise you, this is on my mind each and every day.

I walked into office facing a massive deficit, most of which was the result of not paying for two wars, two tax cuts, and an expensive prescription drug program. Keep in mind, the budget was balanced—in fact, we were running a surplus—in 2000. When we walked in, we had a deficit of $1.3 trillion and projected debt over the course of a decade of $8 trillion. The lost revenue from this recession put us in an even deeper hole. And the steps we took to save the economy from depression last year have necessarily added to that deficit—about $1 trillion, compared to the 8 trillion that we inherited.

Now, I've said we intend to pay for what we added. So my administration is doing what families and businesses all across the country are doing during these difficult times: We're tightening our belts and making tough decisions. We're investing only in what we need and sacrificing what we can do without. We've gone line by line through the Federal budget and identified more than 120 programs for elimination, a total of $20 billion in savings just for next year. Starting in 2011, I've proposed a freeze on nonsecurity discretionary Government spending for 3 years, something that was never enacted in the last administration.

I'm also grateful that Congress responded to my request and restored a simple budgeting rule that every family and business understands called pay as you go. And I've established a bipartisan fiscal commission that will provide a specific set of solutions by the fall to deal with our medium- and long-term deficit.

Of course, as many of you have reminded us, budget cuts aren't the only step we've proposed this year to help bring down the deficit, which brings me to everybody's favorite topic: taxes. You'll notice I've saved the best for last. Now, I want to set the record straight on this issue, because it's been one of the largest sources of tension between our administration and the business community.

During the campaign, I promised a tax cut for 95 percent of working Americans. I kept that promise. We've provided over $150 bil-

lion in tax cuts to small businesses and to families. We haven't raised anybody's income taxes by a single dime. This year, I expect to sign into law another $70 billion worth of business tax cuts for 2010 and 2011, a more than 10-percent cut in corporate taxes. Now, that may not jibe with what you're hearing or what you're reading, but those are the facts. They're indisputable.

Now, I've also made two other promises during the campaign. I promised that folks making over $250,000 a year—meaning everybody in this room plus me—would go back to paying the marginal tax rates they did in the 1990s, a time when businesses did pretty well; a lot of millionaires were made. I'm not doing this to be punitive or because I love paying taxes. I'm doing it because at a time of two wars and massive deficits, I can't justify continuing to give millionaires or billionaires big tax cuts.

The other promise I made during the campaign was to ensure that our Tax Code doesn't provide relief and a competitive advantage to companies that move jobs and investment outside of the United States relative to companies that are investing here in the United States.

Now, a number of you have made the point that we shouldn't discourage anyone from keeping headquarters and operations in America and that we have to balance your needs to compete overseas. I'm sympathetic to that. And after listening to you, we've made some modifications to our proposal. But as President of the United States, my interest is to reward—or at least not disadvantage—companies who are creating more jobs and doing more business within the borders of this country. That's not antibusiness; it's pro-America. And I don't apologize for it.

Now, on all these issues, from education to health care to taxes, my first question can't be, "Is this good for business?" or "Is this good for labor?" It can't be, "Is this good politics? Are folks going to tag me as a liberal or a conservative?" The only question I have to ask myself is, "Is this good for America? Does it help us compete? Does it grow our economy? Does it create jobs for middle class people and those trying to join the middle class? Is it fostering innovation and creating new business opportunities?" That's my job as President.

Having said that, I also know that Government can't meet all of these challenges on its own. Ultimately, the success of this economy is going to depend on you and people like you all across the country. And it's going to depend on our workforce and our families.

You know, when it comes to education, we need parents who are willing to read to their children and help with their homework, regardless of how much Government's doing to reform the school system, if we're going to compete. When it comes to energy, we need consumers who are willing to buy more efficient appliances and automobiles and conserve where they can. And when it comes to an economy that works for every American, we need business leaders like you who understand that private enterprise also entails some public responsibility.

Andy Grove, who most of you know was the CEO of Intel, once gave an interview where he said, "Those of us in business have two obligations, in my opinion. The one that's undebatable is that we have a fiduciary responsibility to . . . the shareholders who put us in our place. There's another obligation that I feel personally," is what Mr. Grove said, "given that everything I've achieved in my career and a lot of what Intel has achieved in its career were made possible by a climate of democracy, an economic climate and investment climate provided by our domicile, the United States."

Now, it's undoubtedly in the short-term interests of individual corporations at any given moment to pay less in taxes, to deal with fewer regulations. I understand that. But it's in the long-term interests of all companies to do business in a nation that maintains the world's best research facilities and universities, a nation with public schools that graduate highly skilled, highly educated young people, a nation with functioning railways and airports, a nation that's not dragged down by crushing debt, a nation in which families are getting good jobs, and when they work hard, they can support those families.

Now, if you pay your workers a salary they can raise a family on, they're going to feel more loyalty to your company. And if we have rules of the road that guard against recklessness in our financial system, it will protect the interests of

everyone, from the wealthiest CEOs to the lowest paid workers. If we give that kid in the Bronx a world-class education, it doesn't just benefit that child; it benefits the company that might hire him down the road, and it benefits the country that child lives in. Now, to put it simply, we are all in this together.

I am a big booster of each and every one of you. And I will go to bat for you every time as you compete in a tough international environment. But we're going to have to do this together. And we face some very big challenges right now. The only way we're going to get through them—and the only way we ever have—is if we align the interests of workers and businesses and Government around a common purpose, if we all pick up an oar and start rowing in the same direction.

At a time of such economic anxiety, it's tempting, and maybe it's easier, to turn against one another and to find scapegoats to blame. So politicians can rail against Wall Street or against each other, and businesses can fault Capitol Hill, and all of it makes for easy talking points and good political theater. But it doesn't solve our problems. It doesn't move us forward. It just traps us in the same debates and divides that have held us back for a very long time and forced us to keep on punting down the road the same problems we've been facing for decades.

And I believe we can't afford that kind of politics anymore, not now. But we know the way forward, and we know what the future can be. And I am confident we can get there. And I'm confident because we have the hardest working, most productive citizens in the world. I'm confident because our universities and research facilities are second to none. And I'm confident because of the caliber of the leaders and businesses represented in this room.

Now, we're not going to agree on every single issue; we're not going to support the same policies every time. But I promise I will never stop listening to your concerns and your ideas, and I will never stop rooting for your success, because we are in this together. And whether we rise or fall as a nation doesn't depend on some economic forces that are beyond our control; it depends on us, on the ingenuity of our entrepreneurs, the determination of our workers, and the strength of our people.

I've always believed in that strength, and I remain extraordinarily hopeful about our future. So thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. at the St. Regis Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Ivan G. Seidenberg, chairman, and John J. Castellani, president, Business Roundtable.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Health Insurance Industry Fair Competition Legislation

February 24, 2010

I applaud the House of Representatives for passing the "Health Insurance Industry Fair Competition Act" on a strong bipartisan vote today. This bill will help ensure that insurers abide by commonsense rules that prevent bid rigging, price fixing, and other practices that drive up health care costs for the American people.

Repealing the antitrust exemption for health insurers is an important step toward achieving reform that gives families and business owners greater control over their health care. I look forward to meeting with congressional leaders tomorrow to continue this critical discussion.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 4626.

Remarks at the Opening Session of a Bipartisan Meeting on Health Care Reform

February 25, 2010

The President. Good morning, everybody. Welcome. Thank you so much for participating today. I am very grateful to all of you because I know how busy you are.

What I want to do is just make a few brief remarks on the front end, and then we're going to allow leadership from both the House and the Senate to make some opening remarks, and then we will dive in.

Last year, obviously, was one of the toughest years we've had on record, and all of us in one way or another were devoted to focusing on breaking the back of the recession, restoring economic growth, putting people back to work. We've still got a long way to go. And so I know both the House and the Senate are interested in how do we propel economic growth forward, how do we create more jobs. I was very pleased to see a glimpse of bipartisanship in the Senate recently in passing a jobs bill, and I hope that continues. And I know there are going to be some additional pieces of legislation moving forward around, for example, making sure that small businesses can get financing. And those are the kinds of things that I think all parties and both Chambers should be able to agree to. So I'm very much looking forward to working with you on all those issues.

I have said repeatedly—I said at the State of the Union, I said last night when I was meeting with the Business Roundtable—that in addition to dealing with the immediate challenges we face in the recovery, it's absolutely critical that we also look at some fundamental structural problems in our economy that are hurting families, hurting businesses, and having an impact on the exploding deficits and debts that the Federal Government, but also State governments are carrying. And it's for that reason that last year, around this time actually, I hosted in the White House a health care summit and indicated to Congress that it was absolutely critical for us to begin now moving on what is one of the biggest drags on our economy and represents one of the biggest hardships that families face.

Some of you know that I get 10 letters, out of the 40,000 that I receive every day, for me to take upstairs to the residence and read every single night. And these are letters from all across the country, constituents from every walk of life. And I can tell you that at least 2, sometimes 5, of the 10 letters relates to the challenges that people are experiencing in health care every single day. I'll get letters from parents who—whose children have preexisting conditions, and maybe those children were able to get health insurance when they were young, but now they're growing up, they're about to move out, and they can't get insurance no matter what job they find.

I hear from small businesses who have just opened up their new rates from their insurance company, and it turns out that the rates have gone up 20, 30, in some cases 35 percent. I hear from families who have hit lifetime limits, and because somebody in their family is very ill, at a certain point they start having to dig out of pocket, and they are having to mortgage their house and in some cases have gone bankrupt because of health care.

So this is an issue that is affecting everybody. It's affecting not only those without insurance, but it's affecting those with insurance. And when you talk to every single expert and you just talk to ordinary people and you talk to businesses, everybody understands that the problem is not getting better, it's getting worse. Right now it's projected that premiums for families with health insurance—not people without health insurance, but with health insurance—will almost certainly double over the next decade, just as they doubled over the past decade.

In the individual markets, it's even worse. Businesses are having to make decisions about just dropping coverage altogether for their employees. If they're not doing that, then the money that they are spending on health care is money that otherwise could have gone to job creation.

And I don't need to tell people here about the effects on the Federal budget. We've got some people who've been working a very long time on figuring out how can we control the huge expansion of entitlements. Almost all of the long-term deficit and debt that we face relates to the exploding costs of Medicare and Medicaid—almost all of it. I mean, that is the single biggest driver of our Federal deficit. And if we don't get control over that, we can't get control over our Federal budget.

Now, I'm telling all of you things you already know. Maybe more personally, I should just mention the fact that I now have about as good health care as anybody could have. I've got a doctor right downstairs. And all of us—when I was in the Senate—and all of you as House and Senate Members have good health care. But remember maybe when you were younger, when you were first starting off. I can certainly remember Malia coming into the kitchen one day and saying, "I can't breathe, Daddy," and us having to rush her to the emergency room because she had asthma, or Sasha, when she was a baby, getting meningitis and having to get a spinal tap and being on antibiotics for 3 days, and us not knowing whether or not she was going to emerge okay. In each of those instances, I remember thinking, while sitting in the emergency room, what would have happened if I didn't have reliable health care.

My mother, who was self-employed, didn't have reliable health care, and she died of ovarian cancer. And there's probably nothing that modern medicine could have done about that. It was caught late, and that's a hard cancer to diagnose. But I do remember the last 6 months of her life—insurance companies threatening that they would not reimburse her for her costs and her having to be on the phone in the hospital room arguing with insurance companies when what she should have been doing is spending time with her family. I do remember that.

Now, everybody here has those same stories somewhere in their lives. Everybody here understands the desperation that people feel when they're sick. And I think everybody here is profoundly sympathetic and wants to make sure that we have a system that works for all Americans.

You know, I was looking through some of the past statements that people have made, and I think this concern is bipartisan. John McCain's talked about how rising health care costs are devastating to middle class families. Chuck, you've been working on this a long time. You've discussed the unsustainable growth on—in Medicare and Medicaid in our budget. Mike Enzi, who's worked on this and partnered with Ted Kennedy on a range of health care issues as a chairman of the committee, you said that small businesses in your home State are finding it nearly impossible to afford health care coverage for their employees. And you said that the current system's in critical condition. And, Mitch, you've said that the need for reform is not in question. And obviously, there are comparable studies on the Democratic side as well.

So here's the bottom line: We all know this is urgent. And unfortunately, over the course of the year, despite all the hearings that took place and all the negotiations that took place and people on both sides of the aisle worked long and hard on this issue and—this became a very ideological battle. It became a very partisan battle. And politics, I think, ended up trumping practical common sense.

I said at the State of the Union, and I'll repeat: I didn't take this on because I thought it was good politics. This is such a complicated issue that it's inevitably going to be contentious. But what I'm hoping to accomplish today is for everybody to focus not just on where we differ, but focus on where we agree, because there actually is some significant agreement on a host of issues.

I mean, I've looked very carefully at John Boehner's plan that he put forward. I've looked at Tom Coburn and Senator Burr's plan that's been put out there. Paul Ryan has discussed some of the issues surrounding Medicare. I've looked at those very carefully. Mike Enzi, in the past, you've put forward legislation around small businesses that are very important.

And so when I look at the ideas that are out there, there is overlap. It's not perfect overlap,

it's not 100 percent overlap, but there's some overlap. Now, what I did, what the White House did several days ago, is we posted what we think is the best blend of the House and the Senate legislation that's already passed.

The basic concept is that we would set up an exchange, meaning a place where individuals and small businesses could go and get choice and competition for private health care plans the same way that Members of Congress get choice and competition for their health care plans. For people who couldn't afford it, we would provide them some subsidies. But because people would have some pooling power, the costs overall would be lower because they'd be in a stronger position to negotiate.

We think it is a plan that works with the existing system, the employer-based system, the private health care system, but allows a lot of people who currently don't have health care to get health care, and more importantly, for the vast majority of people who do have some health care, it allows them to get a better deal.

We also have some insurance reforms in there that, for example, prohibit people who have preexisting conditions from being banned from getting coverage. We also talk about how we can help to make the Medicare system more effective and provide better quality care.

In each of these cases, there are corresponding ideas on the Republican side that we should be able to bridge. So I promise not to make a long speech. Let me just close by saying this: My hope in the several hours that we're going to be here today, that in each section that we're going to discuss—how do we lower costs for families and small businesses, how do we make sure that the insurance market works for people, how do we make sure that we are dealing with the long-term deficits, how do we make sure that people who don't have coverage can get coverage—in each of these areas, what I'm going to do is I'm going to start off by saying, here are some things we agree on, and then let's talk about some areas where we disagree and see if we can bridge those gaps.

I don't know that those gaps can be bridged. And it may be that at the end of the day, we come out of here and everybody says, "Well, you know, we have some honest disagreements. People are sincere in wanting to help, but they've got different ideas about how to do it, and we can't bridge the gap between Democrats and Republicans on this."

But I'd like to make sure that this discussion is actually a discussion and not just us trading talking points. I hope that this isn't political theater, where we're just playing to the cameras and criticizing each other, but instead are actually trying to solve the problem.

That's what the American people are looking for. As controversial as the efforts to reform health care have been thus far, when you ask people, should we move forward and try to reform the system, people still say yes. They still want to see change. And it strikes me that if we've got an open mind, if we're listening to each other, if we're not engaging in, sort of, the tit for tat and trying to score political points during the next several hours, that we might be able to make some progress. And if not, at least we will have better clarified for the American people what the debate is about.

So with that, I just want to say again how much I appreciate everybody for participating. And I am going to now turn it over to Senator McConnell so that he can make some opening remarks. And we'll just go back and forth between the Democratic leaders and the Senate—and the Republican leaders, House and Senate, and then we'll just open it up, and we'll start diving in. All right?

Senator A. Mitchell McConnell. Thank you very much, Mr. President. John Boehner and I have selected Lamar Alexander of Tennessee to make our opening framing statement, and let me turn to him.

Senator Lamar Alexander. Thanks, Mitch and John. Mr. President, thank you very much for the invitation.

The President. Absolutely.

Sen. Alexander. We appreciate being here. Several of us were part of the summits that you had a year ago, and so I've been asked to try to express what Republicans believe about where we've gotten since then.

As a former Governor, I also want to try to represent Governors' views. They have a big stake in it. I know you met with some Governors just the last few days.

The President. Yes.

Sen. Alexander. And we believe that we—our views represent the views of a great number of the American people who have tried to say in every way they know how—through town meetings, through surveys, through elections in Virginia and New Jersey and Massachusetts—that they oppose the health care bill that passed the Senate on Christmas Eve.

[*At this point, Sen. Alexander made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So if we can do that—start over—we can write a health care bill. It means putting aside jamming it through. It means working together the way General Marshall and Senator Vandenberg did. It means reducing health care costs and making that our goal for now and not focusing on the other goals. And it means going step by step together to re-earn the trust of the American people. We'd like to do that, and we appreciate the opportunity that you've given us today to say what our ideas are and to move forward.

Thank you very much.

The President. Well, thank you, Lamar. Both I and Lamar went a little bit over our original allocated time. [*Laughter*] I—not wanting to be a hypocrite, I wanted to give you some slack. We're going to have Nancy and Harry—I think my understanding is you guys want to split time. We'll split it up, and so we'll let them make some quick remarks.

What I will then do is just address—John, are you going to make the presentation yourself? Okay. What I will then do is just address a couple of points that were raised by you, Lamar, in terms of process, and then we will start diving in and getting to work. All right?

Nancy.

Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi. Yes, Mr. President. Thank you very much for bringing us here today. I will try to stick to the time because we have many people to hear from.

The President. Right.

Speaker Pelosi. Thank you, Mr. President, again. It was almost a year ago, March 5 of last year, when you brought us together in a bipartisan way to set us on a path to lower cost, improve quality, expand access to quality health care for all Americans. In the course of that time, in our committees in the House and the Senate, we've had lively discussions. Here we are today.

[*Speaker Pelosi made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

We started this 6 weeks after your Inauguration, just 6 weeks after your Inauguration, on March 5, with you extending a hand of bipartisanship. And many of the provisions that are in our bill are initiatives put forth by the Republicans; others of our colleagues will talk about this.

But I just hope that as we sit around this table, we understand the urgency that the American people have about this issue, how it affects not only their health but their economic security. And I thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership in getting us to this place.

Senator Harry M. Reid. Mr. President, my friends in the House and in the Senate, I want to spend a few minutes talking about Nevada, about our country, and not what's going on here in Washington. I want to start by talking about a young man by the name of Jesus Gutierrez. He works hard. He has a restaurant in Reno, Nevada. He had everything that he wanted, except a baby. He had health insurance. He had employees that liked him. But he was fortunate; they were going to have a baby, and it was going to be a little girl. And the baby was born, and in just a few minutes after the birth of that baby, he was told that the baby had a cleft pallet. "But that's okay," he was told. "We can take care of that." And they did. They did some surgery on the baby, and he was happy—that is, Jesus was happy—until he got his mail 4 months later, opened the envelope, and the insurance company said, "We didn't realize that your baby had a preexisting disability. We're not covering the $90,000 in hospital and doctor bills you've already run up." So he's trying to pay that off. The baby needs a couple more surgeries. This shouldn't happen to anyone in America. He had health insurance. He paid his premiums.

[*Sen. Reid made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

I know, it's obvious, we've heard it; our Republican friends oppose our legislation. And that is your right. But also, it becomes your responsibility to propose ideas for making it better. So if you have a better plan for making health insurance more affordable, let's hear it. If you have a better plan for making health insurance companies more accountable, let's face it—let's work on it. If you have a better plan for doing this while cutting the deficit, as our bill did—during the first 10 years, our bill cuts the deficit by $132 billion; the second 10 years, up to $1.3 trillion. Those aren't my numbers; they're from Congressional Budget Office.

So we're ready to listen. I so appreciate the President getting us together. I want the American people to know that we need to work together, and I want to do everything that I can as a Senator to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to get this done. We need to do health care reform.

I've spoken with Madam Speaker on many occasions, numerous times, about health care. We spent most of the last year talking about health care. I so admire her tenacity, her legislative brilliance. And I will do everything I can, Mr. President, to get this health care reform over the goal line.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. in the Garden Room at the Blair House. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Charles E. Grassley; and Rep. John A. Boehner.

Remarks in a Discussion on Cost Containment at a Bipartisan Meeting on Health Care Reform

February 25, 2010

The President. Well, thank you very much, Harry. Everybody went a little over time, which is not surprising with a room full of elected officials. I wanted to give people a little bit of a wide berth starting off, but we're going to need to be more disciplined moving forward if we're going to be able to cover every item. And I'll try to set the example here.

I just want to address very quickly, Lamar, the issue of process that you raised at the beginning, and then we'll move on and start talking about the specifics. As I listened to your description of the House-Senate bill, as well as the proposal that I put on our web site, obviously there were some disagreements about how you would characterize the legislation.

On the other hand, when I listened to some of the steps that you thought Republicans would be open to, I thought, well, a bunch of these things are things that we'd like to do and, in fact, are in the legislative proposals.

So part of the goal here, I think, is to figure out what are the areas that we do agree on, what are the areas where we don't agree, and at the end of that process then make an honest assessment as to whether we can bridge these differences. I don't know yet whether we can. My hope is that we can, and I'm going to be very eager to hear and explore how we might be able to do so.

So rather than start at the outset talking about legislative process and what's going to happen in the Senate and the House and this and that, what I'd suggest is let's talk about the substance, how we might help the American people deal with costs, coverage, insurance, these other issues. And we might surprise ourselves and find out that we agree more than we disagree. And that would then help to dictate how we move forward. It may turn out, on the other hand, there's just too big of a gulf, and then we'll have to figure out how we proceed from there. So that would be my proposal.

And what I'd like to do, then, is to start first with something I heard everybody agree on, every single speaker, and that was the issue of cost. It is absolutely true that if all we're doing is adding more people to a broken system, then costs will continue to skyrocket and eventually somebody is going to be bankrupt, whether it's the Federal Government, State governments, businesses, or individual families. So we have to

deal with costs, and I haven't heard anybody disagree with that.

Now, I've already indicated some statistics, but I just want to reemphasize these. More than a quarter of small businesses have reported a premium increase of 20 percent or more just last year—20 percent. As a consequence, a lot of small businesses have dropped coverage altogether. Fewer than half of businesses with fewer than 10 workers now offer coverage.

By one estimate, without health care reform, by the end of the decade, premiums for businesses would more than double in most States. And the total cost per employee is expected to rise to more than $28,000. So you can imagine what that does to hiring, what that means for incomes, and you can imagine how many families are going to be unable to afford insurance.

As I mentioned earlier, I hear stories from people all the time about how these costs have very concrete impacts on their lives. I spoke to a family, the Links, from Nashville, Tennessee. They've always tried to do right by their workers with their family-run company, but they had to do the unthinkable and lay off employees because their health care costs were too high. I've talked to other businesspeople who say, we were going to hire, but we decided not to when we got our monthly premiums.

And so one of the goals that I set out very early on in this process was, how do we control costs? Now, what we have done, as I mentioned earlier, was to try to take an idea that is not just a Democratic idea but actually is a Republican idea, which is to set up exchanges. These are pools where people can come in and get the same purchasing power as Members of Congress do as part of the Federal employees' health care plan, as people who are lucky enough to work with big businesses can do because there are a lot of employees in those big businesses. What we've said is that if you join one of these exchanges, you will have choice and you'll have competition. You will have a menu of private insurance options that you'll be able to purchase, but because you're not purchasing it on your own, you're purchasing it as part of a big group, you're going to be able to get lower costs.

For folks who, even with those lower costs, still can't afford coverage, we provide some subsidies. But here's what I want to emphasize, is that even without the subsidies, it's estimated by the Congressional Budget Office that the plan we put forward would lower the costs in the individual market for the average person who's just trying to buy health insurance and they don't—they're not lucky enough to work for a big company, would lower their costs by between 14 and 20 percent.

So, Lamar, when you mentioned earlier that you said premiums go up, that's just not the case, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

Senator Lamar Alexander. Mr. President, if you're going to contradict me, I ought to have a chance to—the Congressional Budget Office report says that premiums will rise in the individual market as a result of the Senate bill.

The President. No, no, no, no—let me—and this is an example of where we've got to get our facts straight.

Sen. Alexander. That's my point.

The President. Well, exactly. So let me respond to what you just said, Lamar, because it's not factually accurate. Here's what the Congressional Budget Office says: The costs for families for the same type of coverage as they're currently receiving would go down 14 to 20 percent. What the Congressional Budget Office says is, is that because now they've got a better deal because policies are cheaper, they may choose to buy better coverage than they have right now, and that might be 10 to 13 percent more expensive than the bad insurance that they had previously. But they didn't say that the actual premiums would be going up. What they said was they'd be going down by 14 to 20 percent. And I promise you, I've gone through this very carefully with the Congressional Budget Office. And I'll be happy to present this to the press and whoever is listening, because this is an important issue.

Sen. Alexander. Well, may I—may I——

The President. Let me just finish, Lamar. Now, the—what we've done is we've tried to take every single cost containment idea that's out there. Every proposal that health care economists say will reduce health care costs,

we've tried to adopt in the various proposals. There are some additional ideas that Republicans have presented that we think are interesting and we also tried to include. So let me give you an example.

You mentioned the idea of buying across State lines, insurance. That's something that I've put in my proposal that's actually in the Senate proposal. I think that it shows some promise. You mentioned that as—that Mike Enzi has previously said that he's interested in small businesses being able to pool, in the equivalent of some sort of exchange. So that's where there's some overlap.

But I just think it's very important to understand that what we've done is to try to take every single cost containment idea that's out there and try to adopt it in this bill. What I'd like to do is to see if we can proceed and have a very concrete conversation about what are the ideas that you guys have that you don't think are in our bill to contain costs. And what I want to do is to see if maybe we can adopt some of those or refine what we've already done in order to further reduce costs.

Sen. Alexander. Mr. President, I've had my time——

The President. And what I'd like to do also is to make sure that you maybe suggest some of the ideas that are currently in the bill that you think are good, because, Lamar, in your opening introduction, what I saw was sort of a—the usual critique of why you thought it was bad. But as I said, we've adopted a lot of the ideas that we've heard from your side of the aisle. So I hope maybe you could say, "Well, those are the ones that we think are good ideas; here are the things that we think are bad ideas," as opposed to just painting in broad brush. Go ahead.

Sen. Alexander. Mr. President, let me show some respect for my colleagues here. They're all here eager to speak, all sure they could do a better job than I could on any of these points. And what I would like to do is get back directly to you with why I believe—with respect—you're wrong about the bill. Your bill would increase premiums, I believe; you say it wouldn't. So rather than argue with you in public about it, I'd like to put my facts down, give them to you. Maybe other colleagues will say that. As far as Mike Enzi's proposal, he is ready to talk about it, others are.

The President. Good.

Sen. Alexander. So I appreciate the opportunity that Mitch and John gave me to talk. You've made some interesting points, and why not let other Members of Congress have a chance to talk.

The President. I think it's a great idea. I'd like to get this issue settled about whether premiums are reduced before we leave today, because I'm pretty certain I'm not wrong. And you give us the information. And we're going to be here all afternoon; I promise you we'll get this settled before the day is out. All right?

Mitch, who would you like to talk about cost?

Senator A. Mitchell McConnell. Yes, Mr. President, since some liberties have been taken here, let me just make a quick observation, then I'm going to call on Dr. Coburn to make our framing statement on the issue of cost containment.

One thing I think we need to be acutely aware of, ladies and gentlemen, we are here representing the American people. And Harry mentioned several polls. I think it is not irrelevant that the American people, if you average out all of the polls, are opposed to this bill by 55 to 37. And we know from a USA Today/Gallup Poll out this morning, they're opposed to using the reconciliation device—the short-circuit approach that Lamar referred to that would end up with only bipartisan opposition—by 52 to 39.

Now I'd like to call on Dr. Tom Coburn, who's been a practicing physician for many years, to address the cost containment issue.

Senator Thomas A. Coburn. Thank you.

The President. Tom.

Sen. Coburn. Well, Mr. President, thanks for having us do this. I think today is going to be enlightening. The first thing I would do is put out a caution to us, because what I see the Congress doing, and what I saw this last year, is us actually performing bad medicine. And that is that we get stuck in the idea of treating the symptom rather than treating the disease. And whether you go to Harvard or whether you go to Thomson Reuters, there are some facts we know about health care in America. And the facts we know is, one out of every three dollars

that gets spent doesn't help anybody get well and doesn't prevent anybody from getting sick.

[*At this point, Sen. Coburn made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And my hope would be that we would look at where the money is, and if truly it's accurate—and I don't know many people that will disagree that one in three dollars doesn't help somebody get well and doesn't prevent—then we ought to be going for that one in three dollars. And we ought to do it not by creating a whole bunch of new Government programs, but by creating an incentive to reward people.

In your new bill, you have good fraud programs, but you lack the biggest thing to do. The biggest thing on fraud is to have undercover patients so that people know we're checking on whether or not this is a legitimate bill. And you don't know who's an undercover patient and who's not, and all of a sudden, you start changing your attitude of whether or not you're going to milk Medicare or you're going to milk Medicaid. So I——

Senator Harry M. Reid. Mr. President, if I could just say, I'm not an expert on much, but I am filibusters, and we've got 40 Members of Congress here.

The President. Tom, you made some powerful points. You want to just wrap up real quick?

Sen. Coburn. No, I'll just finish with that, is with one out of three dollars not helping everybody, we ought to go for where it is.

The President. Okay. Well, Tom, I appreciate what you said. I think we're going to have Steny Hoyer go next. I just want to make this quick point. Every good idea that we've heard about reducing fraud and abuse in the Medicare and Medicaid system, we've adopted in our legislation. So that's an example of where we agree. We want to eliminate fraud and abuse within the Government systems.

Let's recognize, though, that those savings in the Government systems, which will help taxpayers and allow us to do more, doesn't account for the rising costs in the private marketplace.

Now, the private marketplace—you mentioned the issue of medical malpractice and frivolous lawsuits, and as you indicated, these are areas where Secretary Sebelius has already begun to try to give States some incentives to do that.

On the prevention side, there's a whole host of provisions inside the legislation that's been passed by the House and the Senate, and I think Steny will talk about it.

So we've identified some areas we agree on, and then the question just is, does that help the average family in the individual market who potentially can get cost? But, Steny, why don't you——

Sen. Coburn. Well, let me just respond to one thing. You get cost-shifted every penny that gets wasted on Medicare.

The President. Absolutely.

Sen. Coburn. And that gets cost-shifted to the private sector. So if, in fact, we're wasting it in the public sector——

The President. It would help.

Sen. Coburn. ——we're shifting it to the private sector.

The President. You and I agree on this. Steny.

Representative Steny H. Hoyer. Mr. President, thank you very much. A quote I will use is, "We should have available and affordable health care to every American citizen, to every family." I suppose there are a whole lot of every Americans and American families listening to us today and watching us, and they're hoping that we're all sitting around here talking about them, not about us. That's the message they're sending to all of us, and they're absolutely correct. And we believe that we have been addressing them and trying to get some of these stories that all of us hear to a place where they won't be so tragic for individuals and for families.

[*Rep. Hoyer made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

But I think what the American public that's listening and watching expects us to do, Mr. President, is what you're doing, bringing us together, coming to agreement to make sure that we get to a place where we reach the objective that President Obama and candidate McCain

expressed as the objective on behalf of the American people.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Before you go, Max, I just want to ask—whether it's you, Tom, or anybody else on the Republican side, and maybe some of the House Members might be interested—Senator Coburn mentioned some cost containment issues where it sounds like we agree. Fraud and abuse, we agree. It sounds like you have maybe one other idea that you don't think is in our proposal, but—the idea of undercover patients, but that's something that I'd be very interested in exploring. I don't think conceptually that would be a problem.

The issue of prevention, and that includes, by the way, things like how our kids are eating and getting exercise—and I'm proud of the First Lady for working to see what she can do on that front. And that's—there are some provisions in the legislation that's already been passed through the Senate and the House that directly relate to this that I think you'd be supportive of.

The issue of defensive medicine: As I indicated, Secretary Sebelius is working on this, but I think that there are things that we could do at the State level to help foster innovation and eliminate some of the concerns that you've got.

I would be interested in hearing from any of our Republican colleagues what objections they have to what we consider one of the biggest ways of driving down costs, and that's what Steny just referred to, which is allowing individuals and small businesses who are currently trapped in a very expensive market—essentially, they're having to be out there fending for themselves—to be able to buy into, essentially, a large group, to become part of a large group just like all of us as Government employees are part of a large group, so that they have more negotiating power with the insurance companies, which I think we all agree would drive down costs. If you've got some bigger purchasing power, insurance companies want more customers, they would drive down those costs.

I know some of you have agreed to this as a concept in the past. And so my question is, is there something in terms of the way the House and Senate bills have been structured that leads you to be concerned or want to not move forward on that approach?

John.

Representative John A. Boehner. Well, Mr. President, I'd like to yield to Mr. Kline from Minnesota, who will talk about the small-business health plans in terms of how we would propose to do this.

Representative John Kline. Thank you, Leader. Thank you, Mr. President. I think that Senator Alexander framed our overall position very well when he said that we're looking at thousands of pages of legislation, and we believe a better approach is to go step by step to address these issues of cost. Now, we certainly agree that you get better economies of scale if you can come together.

[*Rep. Kline made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

We all know stories like we've heard here of small businesses that are saying, I can no longer provide insurance for my employees. Small businesses have been asking for this for years. It's not a new idea. They've been asking for it for years. And we think it's a far better way to get these economies of scale than the exchange thing that's in the huge bill, that this will actually allow businesses to be able to lower their cost exactly the same way that large businesses do.

The President. Okay. Max is going to go, and then I'll go to you, Rob.

Max, do you want to address this issue of how we can allow people to buy into the large groups, how the Senate bill accomplishes it, and I don't know if you want to remark on what John just said.

Senator Max S. Baucus. Sure. Yes, absolutely. I'd, though, first like to say something that just strikes me just in spades. Frankly, we all have studied this issue a lot—health care reform. We basically know what the problems are, all of us. We basically know that the current system is unsustainable. We are actually quite close. There's not a lot of difference—close in the sense that, without being corny or dramatic about this, if the American people want us to do something that's just basically reasonable, it doesn't have to be one Congressman, one Senator's provision, but basically reasonable—it's—we

are on the verge and the cusp, with not too much effort, to try to bridge a lot of gaps here, because the gaps, in my judgment, are not that great.

[*Sen. Baucus made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And I think that once we keep pushing on those areas that we're close, it's going to make a difference. The exchanges, as you mentioned, Mr. President, it's a Republican idea. It works. What I like about exchanges—it's like Orbitz, it's like Expedia. You go to Orbitz or Expedia to buy a airline ticket; you compare it to get the best price. That's basically what this is. It's an exchange. You go to the exchange and shop around, and you get your best price. That's going to help, in my judgment.

I also think that we should—where hospitals should publish the cost of their basic procedures, what's an appendectomy or a colonoscopy or whatnot, to enable consumers to shop around, where's the best price. We all know that there's a wide disparity in what hospitals charge for the same procedures. Let's—I think the disinfectant of sunshine helps; it helps consumers, it helps our people.

And fraud and waste, we talked about that. We have major provisions in our bill to reduce fraud and waste. Mr. President, I compliment you because in your proposal, you go even farther.

The President. Well, we took some additional ideas from folks like Congressman Roskam.

Sen. Baucus. They're great ideas. And we addressed unnecessary readmission rates from hospitals, et cetera. The main point is, we basically agree. There's not a lot of difference here. And I'd just like us to kind of just—there's opportunity for us to work out some of these differences.

The President. Mitch, is there somebody——

Sen. McConnell. Yes, Mr. President. I'm going to yield to John here.

The President. John.

Rep. Boehner. I'd like to yield to Dave Camp to continue this conversation about cost containment.

The President. Dave.

Representative David L. Camp. Thank you, Leader Boehner, and thank you, Mr. President, for the invitation today. I think as we focus this part of the conversation on cost, a lot of Americans say to me, if you're really interested in controlling costs, well, maybe you shouldn't be spending a trillion dollars on health care as the Senate and House bills do. Also, cutting Medicare benefits by a half a trillion dollars to fund this new entitlement is, I think, a step in the wrong direction, and many Americans do as well.

[*Rep. Camp made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Now, holding down health care costs for the Government is important, but I think it's also important to hold down costs for families and employees.

The President. Dave, I don't mean to interrupt, but the—we're going to have the whole section talking about deficits, and we can talk about the changes in Medicare. We were trying to focus on costs related to lowering families'. And the only concern I've got is, look, if every speaker, at least on one side, is going through every provision and saying what they don't like, it's going to be hard for us to see if we can arrive at some agreements on things that we all agree on.

So I don't want to try to cut you off. Please finish up——

Rep. Camp. Well, I'm almost done.

The President. ——but I just want to kind of point out that——

Rep. Camp. I'm almost done. I do want to say on this issue on premiums, CBO, in their letter, on page four, does say that the estimated average premium per person for nongroup policies would increase by 10 to 13 percent.

The President. This is the discussion that I just had to—about Lamar. And——

Rep. Camp. Yes, they do say that. And they do say that the value of the benefit is higher, and that is why it goes up.

The President. Right.

Rep. Camp. But the reason the value of the benefit is higher is because of the mandates contained in the legislation. And this is one of

our big concerns with a lot of the issues that have been raised. Yes, we have similarities. But when all of this is structured around a Government-centered exchange that sets the standard for these policies, States can't get out of these requirements unless they seek a waiver from the Secretary. That kind of approach raises costs. And so both of your comments were correct that costs do go up and it's because they have a richer benefit, but the reason it's richer is because of the mandates contained in these very large bills.

The President. Okay, I'm going to let—Rob, feel free to respond to anything that Dave indicated or to any of the other issues that have been discussed.

Representative Robert E. Andrews. Thank you, Mr. President. I want to thank my friend Tom Coburn and John Kline for the spirit of conversation which they offered and try to carry that forward a little bit. The President asked at the beginning of this, what ideas do we share about cutting costs? And, Tom, I think you had some very good ones: fraud—that the President has a proposal that says we should have a database, if you've committed fraud against Medicare once, you can't make a contract again; wellness—there's a lot of good ideas in the bills; junk lawsuits—I think that there's—what Secretary Sebelius is doing is very important in curtailing that.

And then the President asked the question about whether we can find agreement on pooling the purchasing power of small businesses and individuals so they can get the same deal that big companies and Members of Congress get. And my friend John Kline talked about the association health plan proposal. Respectfully, John, I think that what you're talking about with association health plans and what we're talking about with exchanges is a semantic difference. It's a matter of pooling the purchasing power of small businesses and individuals to get a better deal.

[*Rep. Andrews made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

We think, John, that there shouldn't be necessarily 51 different rules for each State, but there ought to be some minimum Federal standards in these exchange to protect people in cases like that.

So I think the issue is, if we could find a way to agree, that in a case like this where a lady has a baby by C-section and has the ability to not have the insurance company get between her and her doctor, so the doctor makes the decision about when they go home, we could figure this out. And if you—do you—how do you feel about that?

Rep. Kline. Mr. President, if I could just respond to that, my friend knows very well that there are large companies today who operate under what I'm proposing for association health plans. They get a waiver, they don't have to comply with the individual mandates of all 50 States, and I don't hear people complaining about the insurance policies that they're getting from their big companies. In fact——

Rep. Andrews. Well, we do.

Rep. Kline. ——now, many of those now would fall into what we've been calling Cadillac plans, because they provide very excellent service. So I think that, frankly, is a red herring, and I think that we can—that you're not going to have adequate coverage if you have association health plan that's working under the same rules of a large company.

Rep. Andrews. But, John, would you favor a standard that says they have to do something like that, or would you just leave it up to the insurance company?

Rep. Kline. I would say that we put the association health plans in exactly the same position that large companies are today with exactly the same rules under—[*inaudible*].

Rep. Andrews. See, we don't—I mean, with all respect, we don't agree with that. We don't agree with the idea that the insurance company should get to make that kind of decision about whether the lady goes home Thursday or Sunday. Now, I don't think that's intrusive; I think that makes common sense. But if we could find a way to bridge that gap—and I think we could—then I think the AHPs that you support aren't all that different than the exchanges that we do, and I would think that would be a common ground.

The President. Good. This has been a useful conversation. I—Paul Ryan wants to make a comment but I——

Sen. McConnell. Mr. President, could I just interject one quick point here, very quick, just in terms of trying to keep everything fair, which I know you want to do. To this point, the Republicans have used 24 minutes, the Democrats 52 minutes. Let's try to have as much balance as we can.

Representative Paul D. Ryan. I think the Republican leaders are controlling the time for the Republicans, if I'm not mistaken. Is that right?

The President. I don't think that's quite right, but I'm just going back and forth here, Mitch. I think we're just trying to go back and forth, but that's okay.

Paul, I was about to call on you, if that's all right? Go ahead.

Rep. Ryan. All right. Rob, here's basically what we're looking at. The difference is this: We don't think all the answers lie in Washington regulating all of this. So the problem with the approach we're seeing that you're offering, which I do believe, Senator, is very different than what we're saying, is we don't want to have—sit in Washington and mandate all of these things. So what you're doing is you're defining exactly what kind of health insurance people can have. You're mandating them to buy this kind of health insurance.

And so we simply say, look, if the National Restaurant Association or the National Federation of Independent Business, on behalf of their members, wants to set up an association health plan, we think they'll probably do a good job on behalf of their members. Let them decide to do that instead of restricting insurance competition by federalizing the regulation of insurance. And by mandating exactly how it will work, you make it more expensive and you reduce the competition among insurers for people's business. We want to decentralize the system, give more power to small businesses, more power to individuals, and make insurers compete more. But if you federalize it and standardize it and mandate it, you do not achieve that. And that's the big difference we have.

Rep. Camp. Paul, would you yield? Mr. President, can I ask him to yield?

The President. We're not in a formal hearing here—[*laughter*]—so the—go ahead.

Rep. Camp. Paul, I read your—[*inaudible*]—and I thought one of the things that you said is that there should be some minimum consumer protections in the exchanges that you've proposed. Did I get that wrong?

Rep. Ryan. And there are in every State. And so what we're simply saying is, look, lots of us have offered lots of different ideas. We've got dozens of Republican ideas offered in the House in bills, in the Senate, and many of us look at the point of the fact that the States—do we distrust our Governors? Do we distrust our State legislatures? Do we distrust all the State insurance—okay, some of you may do that. [*Laughter*]

Rep. Camp. Depends on who it is, Paul.

Rep. Ryan. But should we regulate all this? Should 40 people in Washington decide exactly how this works and what you can and cannot buy?

The President. Paul——

Rep. Ryan. Well, so it's just a difference in philosophy—[*inaudible*].

The President. No, no, no, look——

Rep. Camp. It is. We think—[*inaudible*]—there should be protected.

The President. This is an important point. We've got a couple of other people who want to speak. We've gone about 55 minutes on this section. We're running over because we went long on the opening statements. And you're right, there was an imbalance on the opening statements because I'm the President, and so I made—[*laughter*]—I didn't count my time in terms of dividing it evenly. In this section, Mitch, we've gone back and forth pretty well.

Sen. Reid. Senator Schumer for the Senate——

The President. I know Senator Schumer wants to speak, and I know that Jim Clyburn wants to say something very quickly, and you guys may want to——

Sen. McConnell. And Jon Kyl would like to as well.

The President. ——and Jon. What I want to do, though, is just focus in on this philosophi-

cal debate. This is a legitimate debate. And it actually speaks to the point that Congressman Camp was making earlier about what's happening in the exchanges.

When I was young, just got out of college, I had to buy auto insurance. I had a beat-up old car. And I won't name the name of the insurance company, but there was a company—let's call it "Acme Insurance" in Illinois. And I was paying my premiums every month. After about 6 months, I got rear-ended, and I called up "Acme" and said, "I'd like to see if I can get my car repaired," and they laughed at me over the phone because really this was set up not to actually provide insurance. What it was set up was to meet the legal requirements, but it really wasn't serious insurance.

Now, it's one thing if you've got an old beat-up car that you can't get fixed. It's another thing if your kid is sick or you've got breast cancer.

So the general idea has been here that we should set up some minimum standards within the exchange, that a plan that people are buying into, whether it's a small business or an individual, should be at least solid enough that if your kid got sick, they're actually going to be treated; that if something happened, that you weren't left with a huge bunch of out-of-pocket costs. It is true that you can always get cheaper insurance if it has really high deductibles or really high copayments or doesn't cover as many things. And so there has to be a balance that's struck there.

I just want to point out, though, that the principle of pooling is at the center of both the Senate and the House bill. And the reason I'm pointing this out is because there was a lot of talk about Government takeover of health care, and the implication, I think, was that everybody was going to have to sign up for a Government health care plan. Now, that's not the issue. What—the issue here, which we've had an honest disagreement about, is how much should Government set a baseline versus just letting people decide that, I can't really get decent insurance, but maybe this is better than nothing.

And that's a legitimate argument. I don't disagree with that. But I just wanted to point out that when we start talking about how much Government involvement we're talking—is at issue here, it's not because the House or the Senate bills are a Government takeover of health care; it is that the House and the Senate bills put in place some regulations that restrict how insurance companies operate, and if there's an exchange or a pool that's set up, that there's a baseline, sort of minimum requirements that were expected. And I understand that there may be some philosophical differences on the other side of the aisle about that issue.

I'm—Chuck, go ahead.

Senator Charles E. Schumer. Thank you, Mr. President. And I thank you. I think this has been a constructive dialogue.

I was glad to hear my friend Tom Coburn's remarks. I think we agree with most of them, and particularly the point that about a third of all of the spending that's done in Medicare, Medicaid—I would imagine a lot of it is in the private sector as well—doesn't go to really good health care; it goes to other things.

[*Sen. Schumer made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And when I hear my friend Dave Camp say, "You cannot cut money out of Medicare," well, we don't want to cut the good stuff that you point out or not—or then add the prevention. But if we're going to—if one-third—if what Senator Coburn says, that one-third of Medicare doesn't go to patient care, you can't just get up there and say, "We don't want to cut anything out of Medicare." We want to cut the bad stuff and keep the good stuff.

And I think that's where we can find common ground on some of the things you've mentioned, some of the things that are in our bill. And I hope, at least in this area, we can move forward that way, because frankly, the Republican Party has always stood for getting rid of the waste, fraud, and abuse in the system. In '97, it was the centerpiece of your program, and all of a sudden, this year we're hearing, don't do any of that. That's something that I think we can come together on. I thank you.

The President. Okay——

Sen. McConnell. Mr. President, can we turn to Jon Kyl. I'm sorry——

The President. Sure. I'm sorry; you had Jon. We're going to go to Jon, and then we're going

to go to Jim Clyburn. And then I think we're going to take a break, because we've run out of time.

So, Jon.

Senator Jon L. Kyl. Thank you, Mr. President. I think you framed the issue very well just a moment ago, because there are some fundamental differences between us here that we cannot paper over. And, Mr. President, when you said that this is a philosophical debate and it's a legitimate debate, I agree with that. We do not agree about the fundamental question of who should be mostly in charge. And you identified this question as central: Do you trust the States, or do you trust Washington? Do you trust patients and doctors making the decision, or do you trust Washington?

[*Sen. Kyl made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

That's why Republicans would rather start not by having to raise a lot of money in order to pay the high cost of this bill, but to start a piece at a time, directing solutions to specific problems. That way you don't incur all of the costs up front, which require you to raise the taxes.

The last quick point: One of the worst things about this is, for people that have catastrophic medical expenses today, after you've spent 7.5 percent of your adjusted gross income, you can deduct that. This bill would raise that to 10 percent. Who does that hurt? The very people you promised, Mr. President, that you wouldn't allow taxes to be raised on—average age, 45; average income, $69,000. These are not wealthy people. It's just another example of why because the bill has to raise so much money, it ends up hurting the very people that we want to help.

The President. Okay, Jon. I'm going to go to you, Jim, but I—since, as has tended to happen here, we end up talking about criticisms of the existing bill, as opposed to where we might find agreement, I feel obliged just to go through a couple of the points that you raised.

Just to go back to the original argument that Lamar and I had and we've now chased around for quite some time. Look, if I'm a self-employed person who right now can't get coverage or can only buy the equivalent of "Acme Insurance" that I had for my car so—I have some sort of high-deductible plan. It's basically not health insurance; it's house insurance. I'm going to—I'm buying that to protect me from some catastrophic situation; otherwise, I'm just paying out of pocket. I don't go to the doctor. I don't get preventive care. There are a whole bunch of things I just do without. But if I get hit by a truck, maybe I don't go bankrupt. All right, so that's what I'm purchasing right now.

What the Congressional Budget Office is saying is, is that if I now have the opportunity to actually buy a decent package inside the exchange that costs me about 10 to 13 percent more, but is actually real insurance, then there are going to be a bunch of people who take advantage of that. So yes, I'm paying 10 to 13 percent more, because instead of buying an apple, I'm getting an orange. They're two different things.

Now, you can still—you still have an option of—no, no, let me finish. The way that this bill is structured uses a high-cost pool, a catastrophic pool, for people who can't afford to buy that better insurance, but overall, for a basic package—which, by the way, is a lot less generous than we give ourselves in Congress. So I'm amused when people say, let people have this not-so-good plan, let them have a high-deductible. But there would be a riot in Congress if we suddenly said let's have Congress have a high-deductible plan, because we all think it's pretty important to provide coverage for our families. And the Federal health insurance program has a minimum benefit that all of us take advantage of, and I haven't seen any Republicans or Democrats in Congress suddenly say, "You know what? We should have more choices and not have to have this minimum benefit."

So what we're basically saying is we're going to do the same thing for these other folks that we do for ourselves, on the taxpayers' dime, by the way.

Now, there is a legitimate philosophical difference around that, but I think it's just very important for us to remember that saying there's a baseline of coverage that people

should be able to get if they're participating in this big pool is not some radical idea. And it's an idea that a lot of States—we were talking earlier about what States do—a lot of States already do it.

This, by the way, goes to the other difference that we have when it comes to interstate purchase of insurance. Actually, this is a Republican idea, been championed by the Republicans. We actually agree with the idea that maybe if you get more regional markets and national markets, as opposed to just State-by-State markets, you might get more choice and competition. People would be able to say, "Gosh, there's a great insurance company in Nevada, and I live in New York, and maybe I can purchase it." That's actually something that we find attractive. So do you guys.

But again, the one difference, as I understand it, and the reason you're not supporting the approach that we take, is what we say is there should be sort of a minimum baseline benefit, because if not, what ends up happening is you get a company set up in Nevada—let's assume there were no rules there, there are no protections for the woman who's got breast cancer; they go into New York, they offer pretty cheap insurance to everybody who's healthy; they don't offer the same insurance to people who aren't so healthy or have preexisting conditions. They drain from New York all the healthy people who are getting cheaper rates, but now suddenly everybody left in New York who doesn't qualify for that cheaper plan is in a pool that's sicker, older, and their premiums go up.

So what we've said is, well, if we can set a baseline, then you can have interstate competition. But it's not a race to the bottom; rather, everybody has got some basic care.

Now, these are legitimate arguments to have. But I just want to point out that this issue of Government regulation and—which we're going to also be talking about with respect to insurance—is very different than the way this has been framed during the course of the debate over the last year, which is, Government takeover of insurance. This is not a Government takeover of insurance. What it is, is saying, let's set up some baselines and then use market principles, the private sector, and pooling in order to make sure that people get a better deal.

So, Jim, and then what we're going to do is we're just going to move on to the next topic. But anybody who wants to pick up on what we've just talked about obviously can return to that as well.

Representative James E. Clyburn. All right. Thank you very much, Mr. President. And, Mr. President, leaders, and Members of the Congress, there are two cost containment issues that I think have not been sufficiently vetted here today.

[*Rep. Clyburn made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Now, I think that no matter what kind of plan we develop, there will be many people left uncovered, and we need a safety net for those people. I believe that the one way to provide that safety net and to take care of all of those people who may be uncovered and those people who have $2,000 deductibles with primary care is for a significant expansion of community health centers. And we have not spoken about that here today, but I know that your proposal, Mr. President, I know that both the House and Senate plans have that in them. And I do believe that that is very, very important. We have more than a 40-year experience with these health care centers, and I do believe that no matter what we do, there ought to be a significant expansion of those health care centers.

[*Rep. Clyburn made further remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And finally, Mr. President, this morning I was doing one of these call-in shows on C–SPAN. A gentleman called in, and he was very, very emotional. He said to me that he was getting ready to have transplant surgery, but he was told by the hospital that because he's on Medicare, that his postoperative treatment was going to be limited to 3 years. After that, he would have to find some way to pay. This man was very emotional today.

What we're doing here fixes that, and I do believe that we ought to really be honest with the American people when we talk about what

we are doing with Medicare. We are trying to make sure that Medicare is there for that man and so many others who will find themselves in his position. With that, I yield back, Mr. President.

The President. Okay. I think this has actually been a very useful conversation. What I'm going to do is move on to the next topic, but maybe after we break for lunch and come back, I want to go through some areas where we decided we agreed, and I know that Medicare abuse is a good example—some areas where we still disagree.

One thing, Jon, you shook your head when I said that people would be able to choose the better plan, because the notion was, well, people are mandated. Actually, any insurance that you currently have would be grandfathered in so you could keep. And so you could decide not to get in the exchange, the better plan. I could keep my "Acme Insurance," just a high-deductible catastrophic plan; I would not be required to get the better one. If I chose to get the better one, it would be 14 to 20 percent cheaper than if I were going into the individual market. I just wanted to clarify that issue.

Sen. Kyl. Well, Mr. President, if I could clarify, that's for a very limited period of time, number one. Secondly, the incentives are set up so that employers would drop you from their coverage because it's cheaper for them to pay the fine than to continue to pay the insurance, so they wouldn't be able to keep what they have. And third, there are still mandates in the legislation as to what you can do with what you have such that it doesn't end up being the same coverage.

So with all due respect, I disagree. And it's just a fundamental disagreement between us. Does Washington know best about the coverage people should have, or should people have that choice themselves? Pay a little less, get a little less coverage, or pay a little more and get more coverage.

The President. Can I just say that, at this point, any time that a question is phrased as, "Does Washington know better," I think we're kind of tipping the scales a little bit there since we all know that everybody is angry at Washington right now. I think the—so it's a good way of framing—it's a good talking point, but it doesn't actually answer the underlying question, which is, do we want to make sure that people have a baseline of protection? And this topic of the insurance market reforms, I think, is a good additional example of what may be philosophical differences, but what we may have in common.

Rather than go through the problem, because I think everybody understands out there the issue of people with preexisting conditions not being able to get insurance, people coming up with—bumping up against lifetime caps and suddenly thinking, as a family I met in Colorado, they thought their child was covered, suddenly they hit the lifetime cap, and they started having to scramble to figure out how they'd pay the additional costs. We all are familiar with these examples.

I just want to go through areas where I think we agree on insurance reforms, or at least some Republicans and some Democrats agree. I think that we agree on the notion that you can't just drop somebody if they've already purchased coverage; looking at your bill, Jon, the idea that you ban rescissions. We agree on the idea of extending dependent coverage to a certain age. Some people say up to 25, some people say up to 26, but we basically agree on that concept. We agree on no annual or lifetime limits. We agree philosophically that we want to end the prohibition on preexisting conditions. I think the thing we're going to have to talk about is, how do you actually accomplish that? There may be a disagreement as to whether you can do that without making sure that everybody is covered, but that's something that we can talk about.

In addition, though, there are some other insurance reforms that have been proposed by the House and Senate in their legislation that I think we should explore. And maybe we can narrow the gaps there and come up with some—even a longer list of areas that we agree on.

So what I'd do is, since I want to make sure that Mitch doesn't give me a time clock tally again, let me first go to Mitch, and I don't know who wants to make the presentation with respect to insurance reform.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:53 a.m. in the Garden Room at the Blair House. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Remarks in a Discussion on Insurance Reform at a Bipartisan Meeting on Health Care Reform

February 25, 2010

Representative John A. Boehner. Mr. President, I'd like to yield to Dr. Boustany to continue this conversation about insurance reform.

Representative Charles W. Boustany. Thank you, Leader Boehner, and thank you, Mr. President. I come at this as a physician, a cardiovascular surgeon with over 20 years of practice doing open-heart surgery, dealing with patients who have come to me with very challenging cases at very difficult times in their lives. And along with my colleagues, Dr. Coburn and Dr. Barrasso, we bring a wealth of experience in dealing with insurance companies and all these everyday problems that so many American families face. We all agree—we all agree that we need insurance reform. There's no question about it. The question is, how do we do it?

[*At this point, Rep. Boustany made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So again, I think it's clear that the American people have rejected the bills that have gone through so far because they see increases in premiums for families, they see that it raises taxes significantly on families and raids Medicare to create a new entitlement. This doesn't really bring down the cost; this is really not the answer.

What American families want is a common step—a commonsense, step-by-step approach that will really lower the costs for families and small businesses.

The President. All right.

Rep. Boustany. I believe we have a duty to reform health care, but we have an obligation to get it right.

The President. Okay.

Rep. Boustany. Thank you.

The President. Thanks, Charles. We're going to go to George Miller—and if you want to respond to some specific things that Charles raised or make some more general points. We'll then go back to a Republican. At some point in this discussion—and we're going to have to be a little more disciplined in our time in order to stay on schedule on this section—at some point, I'd like Secretary Sebelius, who is not only a former Governor, but also an insurance commissioner, to address some of the issues that have been coming up around insurance and minimum payment.

Senator Max S. Baucus. Mr. President, I don't know if any one of us were told of what the time limits are.

The President. Well, I'm trying to be flexible, but——

Sen. Baucus. I know; I'm just curious if you've got a certain amount of time in mind.

The President. We've got about half an hour remaining for this section. So if people can keep their points brief.

Sen. Baucus. Thank you.

Senator Harry M. Reid. Mr. President, from the Senate we have Senator Harkin and Rockefeller to respond for the Democrats.

The President. Right. And I've got a list. George.

Representative George Miller. Well, thank you very much. This issue of insurance reform is, I think, where most families intersect with their insurance companies, with the health security of their families. And let's start out with our commonalities in the bill that Congressman Boehner—Leader Boehner offered on the floor. He agreed that lifetime caps should be abolished, that annual caps should be abolished, that young people should be able to stay on their parent's plan—I think it was 25, I think, and your suggestion, Mr. President, it's 26. So there's that kind of commonality there.

[*Rep. Miller made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And yes, you can go to a high-risk pool; so yes, because you have a preexisting condition, because I have two artificial hips, I can go to the most expensive insurance system in the country. I'm now in a high-risk pool, and I'm trapped in that high-risk pool forever. You can make it a high-risk pool among States, you can make it a high-risk pool among small businesses, you can make it a high-risk pool among large businesses—I'm still trapped in the most expensive insurance because of something that happened to me that I had no control over: I have a child with a cleft palate, I have a child with acne. How can this possibly be?

Now, fortunately, in our discussions, as I said, a lot of the business organizations have agreed that these things should be phased out over time. Some can be put in right away; it's not terribly expensive to cover people 18 to 26, and that can be done right away, and we have that commonality.

So I would just hope that we would focus on this issue of what real insurance reform looks like with respect to the impacts on families and individuals as they try to navigate this insurance market.

The President. Thank you, George.

Senator A. Mitchell McConnell. Mr. President, we're going to turn now to John McCain.

Senator John S. McCain III. Well, thank you, Mr. President, and thank you for doing this. And I understand the four categories, but there's a big category that the people in my State and across this country are deeply concerned about, and that's not just the product that we are examining today, the 2,400 pages, but the process we've gone through to reach that.

[*Sen. McCain made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And at the town hall meetings that I conduct all over my State, people are angry. We promised them change in Washington, and what we got was a process that you and I both said we would change in Washington.

So then we got into the special interests, whether it be the Hospital Association or the AMA or others. And one of them that was particularly egregious—and I won't go through the whole list—was PhRMA. PhRMA got an $80 billion deal, and in return—for which they ran $150 million worth of ads in favor of, quote, "health reform." Their over-2-million-dollar-a-year lobbyist was here at the White House and was reported to say in the media, "A deal is a deal." And part of that deal was that there would not be competition amongst pharmaceutical companies for Medicare patients. The other—among others was that the administration would oppose drug reimportation from Canada, a proposal that you supported in the United States Senate. And the Christmas——

The President. John, can I just say——

Sen. McCain. Can I just finish, please? And then at Christmas Day—I believe it was Christmas, the majority leader said, quote: "A number of States are treated differently than other States. That's what legislation is all about. That's compromise." Compromise is not the word for that.

So when my constituents and Americans now who overwhelmingly reject this proposal say, "Go back to the beginning," they want us to go back to the beginning. They want us not to do this kind of legislating. They want us to sit down together and do what's best for all Americans, not just for some people that live in Florida or happen to live in other favored States. They want a uniform treatment of all Americans.

So I hope that that would be an argument for us to go through this 2,400-page document, remove all the special deals for the special interests and favored few, and treat all Americans the same under provisions of the law so that they will know that geography does not dictate what kind of health care they would receive.

I thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Let me just make this point, John, because we're not campaigning anymore. The election is over.

Sen. McCain. I'm reminded of that every day. [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes. So we can spend the remainder of the time with our respective talking points going back and forth. We were supposed to be talking about insurance. Obviously, I'm sure that Harry Reid and Chris Dodd and others who went through an exhaustive process through the—both the House and the Senate, with the most hearings, the most debates on the floor, the longest markup in 22 years on each and every one of these bills, would have a response for you.

My concern is, is that if we do that, then we're essentially back on FOX News or MSNBC on the split screen just arguing back and forth. So my hope would be that we can just focus on the issues of how we actually get a bill done.

And this would probably be a good time to turn it over to Secretary Sebelius, who——

Sen. McCain. Could I just say, Mr. President, the American people care about what we did and how we did it. And I think it's a subject that we should discuss. And I thank you.

The President. They absolutely do care about it, John. And I think that the way you characterized it obviously would get some strong objections from the other side. We can have a debate about process, or we can have a debate about how we're actually going to help the American people at this point. And I think that's—the latter debate is the one that they care about a little bit more.

So, Kathleen, why don't you just address some of the issues related to insurance reform. There's some agreement here, but I know that on the Republican side, there are a couple of concerns about the issue of rate review. The issue of setting up some benchmark standards that insurance companies have to abide by, some people may think that those have been a little bit too aggressive.

You've been both a Governor as well as an insurance commissioner. Maybe you can talk a little bit about what you've seen at all those different levels and how you think we can best move forward to protect American families.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius. Well, thank you, Mr. President. And I know there are lots of people who want to comment on these topics, but I don't think there's any question and I think there's a lot of agreement that the current insurance market really fails way too many people. It is a system that is not a market for about 40 million Americans who are either in an individual policy or in a small group policy, have no choice, there is no competition.

[*Secretary Sebelius made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

It's a lot cheaper to insure people who promise never to get sick. I watched it as insurance commissioner. But segregating that market is not insurance, it's not pooling a risk. And I think your proposal, Mr. President, gets back to the notion that there'd be a pool, there'd be an opportunity to pool that risk and have people have the kind of negotiating power as a Governor. And like Senator Alexander, I am a former Governor. We both ran our State employee health pools. I don't know about Tennessee, but in Kansas, that was the largest pool in the State, 90,000 covered lives. We had a lot of negotiating power. We could get a pretty good deal on a couple of companies competing on hospital rates, on doctor rates. That's what this kind of pooling mechanism and a new exchange would give everybody, and it's around a set of standards that made sense.

The President. Okay.

Rep. Boehner. Mr. President——

The President. Yes, John.

Rep. Boehner. Mr. Cantor, please.

The President. Eric.

Representative Eric Cantor. Mr. President, thank you again very much for having us and for staying with us for the 6 hours. I appreciate that. I don't know if you will after the 6 hours or not. But I want to——

The President. Let me just guess, that's the 2,400-page health care bill. Is that right?

Rep. Cantor. Well, actually, Mr. President, this is the Senate bill along with the 11-page proposal that you put up online that really, I think, is the basis for the discussion here.

But I do want to go back to your suggestion as to why we're here. And you suggested that maybe we are here to find some points of agreement to bridge the gap in our differences. And I do like to go back to basics. We're here because we Republicans care about health care just as

the Democrats in this room. And when the Speaker cites her letters from the folks in Michigan and the leader talks about the letters he's received—Mr. Andrews, his—all of us share the concerns when people are allegedly wronged in our health care system. I mean, I think that is sort of a given.

[*Rep. Cantor made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So I guess my question to you is, in the construct of this bill, if we want to find agreement, we really do need to set this aside. And we really do need to say, okay, the fundamental structure is something we can't agree on, but there are certainly plenty of areas of agreement. And because I don't think that you can answer the question in the positive to say that people will be able to maintain their coverage, people will be able to see the doctors they want in the kind of bill that you're proposing.

The President. Well, let me—since you asked me a question, let me respond. The 8 to 9 million people that you refer to that might have to change their coverage—keep in mind, out of the 300 million Americans that we're talking about—would be folks who the CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, estimates would find the deal in the exchange better. It would be a better deal. So yes, they would change coverage, because they've got more choice and competition. So let's just be clear about that, point number one.

Point number two, when we do props like this—stack it up and you repeat "2,400 pages," et cetera—you know, the truth of the matter is, is that health care is very complicated. And we can try to pretend that it's not, but it is. Every single item that we've talked about on the Republican side, if we wanted to exhaustively deal with fraud and abuse, would generate a bunch of pages. So I point that out just because these are the kind of political things we do that prevent us from actually having a conversation.

Now, let me respond to your question. We could set up a system where food was probably cheaper than it is right now if we just eliminated meat inspectors and we eliminated any regulations in terms of how food is distributed and how it's stored. I'll bet in terms of drug prices, we would definitely reduce prescription drug prices if we didn't have a drug administration that makes sure that we test the drugs so that they don't kill us.

But we don't do that. We make some decisions to protect consumers in every aspect of our lives. And we have bipartisan support for doing it, because what we don't want is a situation in which suddenly people think they're getting one thing, and they're getting something else; they're harmed by a product. What Secretary Sebelius just referred to—which is not a Washington thing; in fact, State insurance standards in many States are higher than anything that's done in Washington—is as a consequence of seeing consistent abuses by the insurance companies and people finding themselves helpless to deal with.

Now, we can have a philosophical disagreement about how much insurance regulation is appropriate. What you've indicated to me, just based on the bills that I've seen, is you guys believe in some regulations. You already said you did. You believe in making sure that you can't just drop somebody with coverage. Now, if you don't have a law there, let me tell you, that happens all the time. I've got a bunch of stories in here of folks who thought they had insurance, got sick, the insurance company goes back and figures out a way to drop them. I'm not making this up. I'm not trying to just add to the pages of that bill. It's in response to an actual problem, and you guys have agreed to it. So philosophically at least, on a whole range of issues, you agree that we should have some insurance regulation. My suggestion had been that we try to focus on what are the specific regulations, since we agree that there have to be some, what are the specific ones that you object to.

Now, let me just close by saying this. Preexisting conditions is one that, theoretically, we all say we agree on. Theoretically, everybody thinks it's a bad deal if my wife had breast cancer, I lose my job, I now try to buy insurance, and they say, "Well, you know what, if we're going to cover—we can't cover you because your wife has a history of cancer." We all think that's a bad deal.

There are two options of—two ways of dealing with that. One is what Kathleen raised, which is a high-risk pool. You could say, you know what, you can go in there and buy it in a big high-risk pool. And by the way, you could probably set up a high-risk pool without having as many pages in the bill. And it's an option that's been around for 30 years.

Here is the problem. What happens is the reason that all our rates—as Members of Congress or as elected officials—are pretty low is we've got such a big pool, there are millions of Federal workers, and as a consequence, any single one of us have cancer, any single one of us have a child with a disability, our costs are spread out over millions of people. And so all of us are able to keep our rates relatively low, even though if any individual in that situation was trying to buy insurance, it would skyrocket.

That's the concept of pooling, is you get the healthy people and the young people alongside the not-so-healthy and the older people. But we're all kind of spreading our risk, because each of us don't know at any given time what might happen. Maybe our kid is the one who gets diagnosed, heaven forbid, for something. And as a consequence, we insure ourselves by making sure that we're also insuring somebody else.

When you get into something like a high-risk pool, what happens is all the sicker, older people are in that pool; all the younger people, they end up getting really cheap rates. And overall you could say, well, that's how the market works; it's a good thing; there's more choice. There's more choice for the young, healthy person, but not for the person who, heaven forbid, got sick.

Now, on preexisting conditions, we've got a similar situation. The challenge we have—I'd love to just pass a law that said, insurance companies, you can't exclude people based on preexisting conditions. The problem is, what they'll say to you is, well, you know what, what prevents somebody from not buying insurance until they get sick and then going in and just buying it and gaming the system?

So we've tried to respond to a difficult problem by saying, well, let's make sure everybody has some coverage. Without that, it's hard to do. So I just wanted to respond to—yes, we've got a philosophical objection, but let's not pretend that any form of regulation of the insurance market is somehow some onerous burden that's going to result in terrible things happening to consumers. That's a good thing.

Rep. Cantor. Mr. President, if I could respond.

The President. Please.

Rep. Cantor. We, again, have a very difficult bridge to gap here, because I know that this is something that we don't want to look at, but these are, as you say, the complexities of what this is about. But when you start to mandate that everyone in this country have insurance and you lay on top of that now the mandates that we all would like to see in a perfect world, there are consequences to that.

We just can't afford this. I mean, that's the ultimate problem here, is in a perfect world, everyone would have everything they want. This Government can't afford it. Businesses can't afford it. That's why we continue to say, go step by step trying to address the cost, and we could ultimately get there. But we're asking that you set aside this mandated form of insurance—this mandated form of health care regulation and let's go back to things we can agree on without this trillion-dollar attempt here, that's all.

The President. I think the cost issue is legitimate, and whether we can afford it or not, we'll be discussing that. And I think that's an entirely legitimate discussion.

Vice President Joe Biden. Mr. President, can I have 10 seconds? Literally, 10 seconds.

The President. Go ahead.

Vice President Biden. We don't have a philosophic disagreement. If you agree that you can't be dropped, there has to be dependent coverage, if there's no annual lifetime cap, then in fact you've acknowledged that it is the Government's role. The question is how far to go.

So this idea we have a fundamental, philosophic difference—you're either in, or you're out. You either say your Government can't do it, none of it, or they can do some of it—we argue how much.

The President. The cost issue is legitimate; we're going to address it. I want to——

Rep. Cantor. Actually, Mr. President, if I could just—it's not the—it's the cost issue, but it's being driven by the fact that you've got in the bill—which I assume that your proposal supports—that the Secretary define what a health benefit package should be.

The President. Only in the exchange. Only as part of the pool that people who don't have health insurance would buy into. If you were working at a big company that already has a big pool, then—but you know what, I want to make sure—because, Eric, we're going to end up in a back-and-forth that cuts everybody else out.

I've got, on the Democratic side, a couple of people that want to speak, and there are probably some—a couple of Republicans. We're already over time. I've burned some of it; I apologize. I'm going to go to Louise, then——

Sen. McConnell. Mike Enzi.

The President. ——Mike Enzi. I'll go to Tom Harkin and then go back to Dave. So I've got five speakers, and I don't have a lot of time. Go ahead.

Representative Louise McIntosh Slaughter. Thank you, Mr. President, and thanks to all of my colleagues for being here. I am pretty succinct and pretty timely. I will not take up a lot of time, but I sure do have to say some things.

The first one is the preexisting conditions absolutely has to go. It is cruel, it is capricious, and it is done only to enhance the bottom line. This was not even anything we talked about 10 or 15 years ago. But it was mentioned that all Americans should be treated the same. Let me give you a little history on that.

Eight States in this country right now have declared that domestic violence is a preexisting condition on the grounds, I assume, that if you've been unlucky enough to get yourself beaten up once, you might go around and do it again. Forty-eight percent is the higher cost for women, in many cases, to buy their own insurance. Believe you me, that is really discriminatory.

[*Rep. Slaughter made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

I think it would be really a good thing for us today, while we're here in this room together, to really think about what's absolutely important here, not nitpick over little pieces of this and that, but think about all the people out there every single day, the number of people with excess deaths because they have no health insurance.

I even had one constituent—you will not believe this, and I know you won't, but it's true—her sister died. This poor woman had no dentures; she wore her dead sister's teeth, which of course were uncomfortable, did not fit. Did you ever believe that in America that that's where we would be?

This is the last chance, as far as I'm concerned, particularly on the export business. We have fallen behind. We're no longer the biggest manufacturer in the world. We've lost our technological edge. We have an opportunity to do that, but a major part of the success of that is getting this health care bill passed.

Thank you very much.

The President. Louise, thank you. I was just informed—and by the way, this has been a terrific conversation so far—the House had to schedule a vote on an item, and my understanding is it has already started. So what I'd like to do is this—we've got four remaining speakers, Mike Enzi, Dave Camp, I guess again, as well as Tom Harkin—four remaining speakers—and Jay Rockefeller.

What I'd like to do is to break so that the House can take the vote. When we come back, we will start with Mike, and we will return to finish up the issue of insurance reform. And then we will move on to the questions of coverage. All right? So we are scheduled to be back here at 1:45.

[*There was a break in the discussion. Later, the discussion continued as follows.*]

The President. Okay, all right. There were several people who were still in the queue who didn't have a chance to speak prior to us breaking. The topic was still insurance reform, although, obviously, these things interrelate, and I suspect that people may have some other issues that they want to raise.

After this, we're going to go to the issue of deficit, which touches on some of the issues related to Medicare that have been raised al-

ready. And I'm going to actually have Joe Biden open that up.

Representative Charles B. Rangel. Mr. President, before we leave health care reform, could I get on the list? I didn't know—[*inaudible*].

The President. Well, no, no, I mean, we will be talking about health reform, Charlie. I guarantee you, you will be called on before—you'll have a chance to talk about all these issues. All right.

Q. Mr. President, what time do you expect to end the meeting?

The President. My hope is that we get out of here—we're running a little bit late, but for having a lot of elected officials sitting around a table, we're not too late. [*Laughter*] My hope is, is that we can adjourn by 4:15. All right? Okay, 4:15. Originally, it was scheduled to go to 4. We're starting a little bit late on this front, you know, so we'll see if we can get out of here by 4:15, all right? That will require, probably, a little more discipline on all our parts, including myself, than was shown in the morning session, although let me just say that I thought the tone of the discussion was helpful, and I appreciate everybody's participation so far.

With that, I'm going to go to Mike Enzi. Then I'm going to go to——

Q. Mr. President, as long as I hear you talking about leaving, Mr. President, please put me on the list.

The President. Well, I guarantee you, you guys are all going to have a chance to speak. But we're going to go to Mike Enzi, and then we're going to go to Tom Harkin. I know that we had—Jay Rockefeller was still on the list. Was there another Republican that wanted to speak just on the insurance reform issues or—do you want to go to John Barrasso? Well, all right, we'll let you guys split time on this one.

All right. Mike.

Senator Michael B. Enzi. Thank you, Mr. President, colleagues. When we're talking about insurance reform, we haven't really talked about, but Representative Slaughter kind of opened the door on it, and that's Medicare. Seniors out there are really nervous. Seniors are the ones objecting the most to the program, and it's because they see half a trillion dollars coming out of their program.

If Medicare were separate and any savings that we did in Medicare reform went back into Medicare, it would do a lot to relieve the tension that's out there. It'd even be a way to pay for the doc fix. So I'm hoping that that can be a piece of what we're doing.

[*Sen. Enzi made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

But what I would hope you would consider is having the exchanges to list anybody's insurance that wants to put it on there, and then mark the ones that meet the Federal minimum standards so that people can decide really what's out there in the market. And I think it would pull up some of the ones that are lower down up into the category, and at the same time, everybody could see what all is on the market out there and, hopefully, regardless of States.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you very much, Mike, and thanks for staying succinct. Thank you very much. And I thought you shared some important ideas there.

Tom Harkin.

Senator Thomas R. Harkin. Mr. President, thank you again for bringing us together today. I think if anything of what I've learned here so far is that, quite frankly, we may be closer together than people really think in actually getting agreement that we can move forward on. I hope that's the case.

[*Sen. Harkin made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Lastly, I'd like to put this in a different kind of a contextual framework. We don't allow segregation in our country on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, et cetera. Twenty years ago this year, we also said we're not going to allow segregation on the basis of disability, when we passed the Americans with Disabilities Act. And yet we still allow segregation in America today on the basis of your health. Why should we? Why should we allow that to happen? It's time to stop segregating people on the basis of their health. That's why insurance reform is so vital, because the health insurance industry in this country is based on a flaw. And

the flaw is, their ratings are based on segregating people because of their health.

Think about that. Whenever I hear the word pool—this pool, that pool, this pool—I think segregation. You're segregating people out because of their health status. I think it's time to end that. I sold insurance. I was an insurance agent when I was a young man. And there's one principle of insurance I learned then that I've never forgot: The more people in the pool, the cheaper it is for everybody. You start setting up these pools, you're going to make it more expensive, and you're going to be segregating people on the basis of health. Let's think about that. It's time to stop that kind of segregation in our country.

The President. All right, Tom. Dave Camp.

Representative David L. Camp. Thank you very much. On the issue of insurance reform and preexisting conditions, there are responsible ways to solve this problem and reduce the cost of health insurance for everyone. And we support State universal access programs that address high-risk pools and reinsurance that makes affordable coverage available to those who are sick and those who have a preexisting condition. And I won't go all of those—through all of those things that Dr. Boustany and others here have talked about.

[*Rep. Camp made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And the American people are telling us that the individual—the mandates, the requirements to buy insurance are something that they want us to scrap and start over on. And that's why you're seeing State legislatures around the country passing resolutions saying, our citizens are going to have a choice on whether they buy health care; they're going to have a choice on the kind of coverage they want to have.

And so this is a fundamental difference in this area of insurance reform that I think we have to really begin again and really take into what the American people are saying and expressing this through their elected representatives in the State legislatures. I know there's a lot of former State legislators here; I am one as well. And I think that's a very serious point that we need to address.

The President. I'll just touch on your last point, which is the whole issue of preexisting conditions. Tom Harkin mentioned it. And I'll be very brief, because I know that we've got to move on to the next topic.

The way I understand Leader Boehner's bill works, and I think that's the one you're referring to, the way you deal with a preexisting condition is to essentially set up a high-risk pool. I mean, that's the mechanism. So what you're saying is, if you're sick or older or you got hip replacements or what have you and you're having trouble buying insurance on the open market, you're going to be able to buy into a high-risk pool.

Now, Tom made the point earlier that—and this is indisputable; I don't think anybody would disagree with this—that if you set up a high-risk pool in which you don't have healthy people, younger people in the same pool as older, sicker people, the premiums for the older, sicker people who have been segregated into this pool is just going to be higher. Now, I have—you know, we looked at the Boehner bill to see sort of how you approach that. And you've got some reinsurance—and keep in mind, we use a high-risk pool as well until we get to the exchange. And we have reinsurance. For example, for people who are on retiree plans, we want to help employers maintain those plans, and they've got an older population, so we want to help reinsure them.

But given the amount of money that you have allocated for that pool, it's just not going to be a very useful tool for the vast majority of people who've got preexisting conditions, just because there's just not enough money that you guys put into it to be able to cover all the people with preexisting conditions, which is why other States have high-risk pools, as Kathleen mentioned. There are—I don't know how many States, but let's say 20, 21 States currently have high-risk pools. Out of all those 21 States, about 200,000 people use the high-risk pool. And the reason is because by just dealing with older, less healthy individuals separately or people with preexisting conditions, it is very, very expensive.

Tom's point was, if everybody is in it—because presumably none of us know at any given moment who is going to end up being healthy and who is not; we don't know whether our kids are going to be suffering some sort of disease that we don't anticipate yet or our spouses get ill—that if everybody is in it, then that drives prices down cheaper for everybody.

So it's not that I think that the high-risk pool idea is a bad one. As I said, the House, the Senate bill, the bill—the proposal that I put forward all use the high-risk pool as a stopgap measure to get to a broader pool. But the goal has to be to get everybody in, in a place where those risks are spread more broadly.

[*Rep. Camp. made further remarks.*]

The President. All right. What I'd like to do is to move on to the topic, which I think underlies—oh, I'm sorry. We've still got Jay, my apologies. Jay, please go ahead.

Senator John D. "Jay" Rockefeller IV. Thanks, Mr. President. One of the—we really haven't discussed, I think, what is at the basis of the frustration about this whole business of preexisting conditions and lifetime limits, all the rest of it, and that is the way and the nature of the health insurance industry for the most part. They are, among all industries I've ever encountered—and in the Commerce Committee, we have spent a year analyzing and bringing out some of their sins and ills—they're terrible. They're in it for the money.

[*Sen. Rockefeller made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

I'm going to say one word about medical loss ratio, because it's sort of a crazy name but it's a really good concept. What we say is that—the health insurance industry says that they spend 87 percent of all of their revenues from premiums or any investment that they might have on health care. That doesn't work out quite that way. For large businesses, they do a much better job, but for small businesses and the individual market, they're down, in West Virginia, in the high sixties and the low seventies.

So how do you stop that? You can't stop that by asking them to. You stop that by having a law, which is a good law, saying that you have to spend between 80 and 85 percent of everything you take in, in revenue on medical care for your patients. And if you don't, we will know about it because we'll be tracking it. And then you have to rebate that difference to the people.

So there's a reason for doing that. It's good public policy. It can't just happen on a voluntary basis. I mean, it's—but it's a way to make sure you get your objective.

Let me just close on one other issue. The rate review—and I wish we could talk about the Medicare board—advisory Medicare board, which is controversial, but which is——

The President. Well, we will have a chance to talk about it next.

Sen. Rockefeller. I know. I know.

The President. So, Jay, let's wrap it up, because I want to make sure everybody——

[*Sen. Rockefeller made further remarks.*]

Rep. Boehner. Mr. President, Ms. Blackburn was on the list, I thought, before we left.

The President. Okay. Go ahead, Marsha.

Representative Marsha Blackburn. Thank you, Mr. President. And yes, one of the points that we did want to cover today was the across-State-line purchasing of insurance. You've alluded to that a couple of times and mentioned that you felt like we were close on that issue. I think that there are some very important structural differences in the way we approach this, just as I think that there are very deep philosophical differences in how we approach health care reform.

[*Rep. Blackburn made brief remarks.*]

The President. I appreciate that very much, Marsha. Just to close, because there have been two issues that were raised—one, the purchasing insurance across State lines, and the other was the issue of the mandate—and I just want to address those very briefly, and then I'm going to turn it over to Joe.

I support the idea of purchasing insurance across State lines. And you're right that the way we structure it is to have compacts between States so that you start getting a regional mar-

ket. But I think there are two things that are important to understand.

Number one, with respect to California, for example, the problem, as was presented yesterday, in California was not that there were a whole bunch of insurance companies from other States who were clamoring in to get into California to sell insurance to those individuals who saw their premiums spike by 39 percent. There weren't.

The problem has to do with the fact, according to them, that people who have lost their jobs now, who are healthy and can't afford the individual market, have basically just decided, "I'm going to go without insurance. I'll see—I got to take my chances because I just can't afford it." What that's left is people who, because of preexisting conditions, because of special health care needs, because of age, they have to keep their insurance. And so the pool has become older and sicker.

Now, the way to get at that problem is actually what we've discussed earlier, which is to broaden the pool, make sure everybody is in the pool. And that's what the exchanges do.

I actually think that on the purchasing insurance across State lines, there may be a way of resolving the philosophical difference, not entirely, but there's a potential way of bridging this gap, and that is to say that once there was a national exchange with some minimum standards, then potentially you could just have a national marketplace, and anybody could be able to sell into the exchange. This is something that Mike Enzi just mentioned. I actually think that could be workable once the exchange was stood up. So there may be a way of bridging this difference.

Now, on the mandate, though—because the mandate issue is connected, and so I'm just going to mention this real quickly, and then I will move on. When I ran in the Democratic primary, I was opposed to the mandate.

Q. Bless you.

The President. Well—and I'll—because my theory was, you know what, people—the reason they don't have health insurance isn't because somebody is not telling them to get it, but because they just can't afford it, and that if we lowered costs enough, then everybody would be able to get it. So I was dragged, kicking and screaming, to the conclusion that I arrived at, which is, is that it makes sense for us to have everybody purchase insurance. And I have to say, this is not a Democratic idea. I mean, there are a number of Republicans sitting around this table who have previously supported the idea of an individual mandate, responsibility.

The reason I came to this conclusion is twofold. One is cost-shifting, which is a fancy term for saying everybody here who has health insurance is one way or another paying for those who don't. Every time somebody goes into the emergency room—if Jay's son got hit by a bus and his dad wasn't Jay Rockefeller, and he ends up in the emergency room, we'd give him emergency treatment, and we'd all pick up the tab. And the calculation—not our calculation, but independent economists—is that each family with health insurance right now is picking up 1,000 to $1,100 worth of costs for people who don't have health insurance.

So when Tom Coburn earlier said, you know, if a kid comes to the emergency room, they're going to get treated—yes, they will get treated. Who's paying for it? Well, we're paying for it. Every American family who's got health insurance is paying for it. Every employer who is covering their employees is paying for it.

So we're already putting the money in. It's just in a very inefficient way. And so the notion that somehow if we don't ask people to carry their responsibilities, that we're saving money—no, we're not saving money; it's just we don't see it. It's called uncompensated care, and we all get charged an extra thousand bucks. So that's part of the reason.

The second reason has to do with the issue of preexisting conditions and the pool that we've already discussed, but I just wanted to address those two issues. Marsha, you had one thing that you wanted to respond to.

Rep. Blackburn. Yes, Mr. President——

The President. All right.

Rep. Blackburn. ——I did, very quickly. I would just suggest that we're looking at this from, in your example, we're looking at it the wrong way. You're talking about letting com-

panies into California. I'm talking about letting individuals out, empowering individuals——

The President. No, but it's the same idea, Marsha. It doesn't matter whether they're—companies are going in or people are going out. I promise you if——

Rep. Blackburn. Free it up.

The President. No, no, no.

Rep. Blackburn. Free it up.

The President. I promise you that the problem that's going on in California is going on in every State. It's not unique to California. It's not as if there are insurance companies that are given great deals in Iowa. That gentleman farmer who just talked about—these are some structural problems that exist in every State. It is——

Rep. Blackburn. Let them——

The President. ——what is true——

Rep. Blackburn. Yes, let them——

The President. No, I want to say this; hold on a second, guys. What is absolutely true is that some States probably have higher mandates than others, and so you can probably attribute a certain amount of the cost in a high—a State that has more requirements for bare minimum coverage, doesn't allow driveby deliveries or requires mammograms or what have you. Those things all may add some incremental cost, but the truth of the matter is, is that that's not the reason that you're seeing such problems. In a lot of States, the problem is just you don't have competition at all. We want competition. We just want some minimum standards.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 12:12 p.m. in the Garden Room at the Blair House.

Exchange With Reporters Following the Morning Session of the Bipartisan Meeting on Health Care Reform

February 25, 2010

Q. How is it going, Mr. President?

The President. It's interesting. I mean, I don't know if it's interesting watching it on TV, but it's interesting being part of it.

Q. Are you making progress?

Q. How is the progress?

The President. I think we're establishing that there are actually some areas of real agreement, and we're starting to focus on what the real disagreements are. If you look at the issue of how much Government should be involved, the argument that Republicans are making really isn't that this is a Government takeover of health care, but rather that we're insuring the—or we're regulating the insurance market too much. And that's a legitimate philosophical disagreement. We'll, hopefully, be able to explore it a little more in the afternoon.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 12:55 p.m. in front of the Blair House. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks in a Discussion of the Deficit at a Bipartisan Meeting on Health Care Reform

February 25, 2010

The President. All right, Joe, let's talk about cost, because—and now we're not talking about cost to families, but we're talking about deficit, how much respective ideas cost. I think this is a good place to talk about Medicare as well, because it's been brought up several times. Joe, go ahead.

Vice President Joe Biden. Mr. President, I'll try to be brief. There's a lot to talk about. I'd like to focus it, though, on the deficit, impact on the deficit, which we're all talking about. And I must tell you, maybe I've been around too long, but I—I'm always reluctant, after being here 37 years, to tell people what the American people

think. I think it requires a little bit of humility to be able to know what the American people think. But—and I don't; I can't swear I do. I know what I think, I think I know what they think, but I'm not sure what they think.

And the second point I'd make is, this probably has an echo—this is slightly off point—but this debate about the philosophic difference has an echo of the debate that probably took place in the midthirties on Social Security. It was mandated, and it was mandated because everybody knew you couldn't get insurance unless everybody was in the pool. And they knew if only some people were in the pool, what would happen is a lot of people, when they got old, we'd take care of them anyway, and you'd have to pay for them.

[*At this point, Vice President Biden made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And, Mr. President, we can argue, which we will, about whether or not the way you and I want to go after dealing with the long-term debt, whether commissions make sense, whether or not we're ever going to deal with the entitlement—this is a big entitlement. This is a big entitlement. Medicare—it exists. We've got to figure out how to keep it from bankrupting the country without denying seniors what they're entitled to in a nation like ours: decent health care that provides for their needs.

So I'd like us, Mr. President—I'm going to hush—I'd like us to talk about, if we can, specifically, what we all agree on. What do we do about bending the cost curve? What's the best way to do it? And I yield the floor.

Representative John A. Boehner. Mr. President——

The President. John.

Rep. Boehner. Mr. President, Mr. Ryan's going to open this conversation on behalf of us.

Representative Paul D. Ryan. Thank you. Look, we agree on the problem here, and the problem is health inflation is driving us off of a fiscal cliff. Mr. President, you've said health care reform is budget reform. You're right. We agree with that. Medicare right now has a $38 trillion unfunded liability. That's 38 trillion in empty promises to my parents' generation, our generation, our kids' generation. Medicaid's growing at 21 percent this year. It's suffocating States' budgets. It's adding trillions in obligations that we have no means to pay for it.

Now, you're right to frame the debate on cost and health inflation. And in September, when you spoke to us in the well of the House, you basically said—and I totally agree with this—"I will not sign a plan that adds one dime to our deficits either now or in the future."

[*Rep. Ryan made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Now, I will just simply say this—and I respectfully disagree with the Vice President about what the American people are or are not saying, or whether we're qualified to speak on their behalf. So we are all representatives of the American people. We all do town hall meetings. We all talk to our constituents. And I've got to tell you, the American people are engaged. And if you think they want a Government takeover of health care, I would respectfully submit you're not listening to them.

So what we simply want to do is start over, work on a clean sheet of paper, move through these issues step by step, and fix them and bring down health care costs and not raise them. And that's basically the point.

The President. I'm going to call on Xavier Becerra, but I just want to follow up on a couple points. There are some strong disagreements on the numbers here, Paul, and—but I don't want to get too bogged down in.

First question I have is whether your side thinks Medicare Advantage is working well. Because I think it's important just to point out that when we keep on talking about cuts in Medicare, what we're really talking about is what Joe alluded to, which is—a decision was made a while back to set up a system in which Medicare costs, let's say, a dollar under the Government program that 80 percent of people still use and are perfectly satisfied with, and there's no showing that it's not working for them. We said we'd give it to private insurers, and we'd give them a bonus of a $1.15 for every dollar in the normal plan. And it turns out that people aren't healthier because of that ex-

tra $15—or 15 cents. It's estimated that it's costing us about $180 billion over 10 years and, say, $18 billion a year.

And essentially, what my proposal would do, and what the House and Senate proposals would do, would say instead of having the insurance companies get that money, let's take that money—the savings are between $400 and $500 billion a year—and let's devote some of that money to closing the doughnut hole, which has already been talked about. Seniors who need more prescription drugs than Medicare currently is willing to pay for hit this gap where suddenly they've got to use it out of pocket, and they just stop taking the drugs, or they break them in half, or what have you. Let's fill that. That costs around $30 billion a year, or $300 billion. And let's make some other changes that would result in actually the 80 percent of seniors who aren't in Medicare Advantage getting a better deal.

So the—we can address some of the broader issues, but I just want to focus on Medicare Advantage, because I haven't seen an independent analyst look at this and say seniors are healthier for it or taxpayers are better off for it. That's what we're talking about reforming. We're not talking about cutting benefits under the Medicare program as is required under law. What we're talking about is Medicare Advantage.

And it may be that some people here think that it's working. I know that there are some Republicans who are sitting at this table who don't think it's working. You can argue and say, okay, let's not do Medicare Advantage, and let's not close the doughnut hole, for example, or there may be other ways you want to spend that money. But I just want to establish whether we've got some agreement that the Medicare Advantage program, which is what we are proposing to reform, is actually not a good deal for taxpayers or for seniors and certainly not a good deal for the 80 percent of seniors who aren't in Medicare Advantage, because, by the way, they're paying an extra premium of about 90 bucks a year to subsidize the 20 percent who are in Medicare Advantage.

Senator A. Mitchell McConnell. Mr. President, John McCain also would like to address that issue.

The President. I'm sorry, so if somebody else wants to address it, if—I——

Senator John S. McCain III. I'd just make one comment. Why in the world, then, would we carve out 800,000 people in Florida that would not be—have their Medicare Advantage cut? Now, I proposed an amendment on the floor to say everybody will be treated the same. Now, Mr. President, why should we carve out 800,000 people, because they live in Florida, to keep the Medicare Advantage program and then want to do away with it?

The President. I think you make a legitimate point.

Sen. McCain. Well, maybe——

The President. I think you do.

Sen. McCain. Thank you. Thank you very much. [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes.

Senator Thomas A. Coburn. Mr. President, let me——

The President. Tom.

Sen. Coburn. ——just jump in for a minute.

The President. I'm going to Xavier—in fairness, I asked a question, so I'm going to let one of the Republicans respond, and then I'll go to Xavier. Okay? Go ahead.

Sen. Coburn. You know, the assumption—I think it's important for the American public to hear—we have Medicare Part D, except no senior in this country ever paid a tax dollar for it. And we're talking about filling a doughnut hole on a program that they're already benefiting from that's—we're going to leave $11 trillion in debt for our children. I'm not sure the seniors want us to leave more debt for their children to fill a doughnut hole.

And when we talk about filling the doughnut hole by taking away from people who can't afford to buy a supplemental policy—that's where Medicare Part A helps poor people in Oklahoma, is they get to buy Medicare Part C—we never call it Part C, but that's what it is—and they don't have to buy a supplemental policy. So consequently, they get lots of the benefits that other people who have better buying power in Medicare with a supplemental policy. So it's a tradeoff of whether or not we say, where are we going to give the benefits? What we really should be doing is saying, we're broke; Medi-

care's broke; we're working, struggling together to try to get there. Let's not add new benefits anywhere, and let's make sure the benefits that we have today get applied more equitably.

The President. Well, I think that's a legitimate point. I would just point out that 80 percent of seniors are helping to pay in extra premiums for the 20 percent who are in this Medicare Advantage. And it's not means-tested, so it's not as if the people who are in Medicare Advantage are somehow the poor people who can't afford supplementals. It's pretty random. And what we also know is—and I just want to point this out, Tom—180 billion of it's going to insurance companies. It's not going to seniors. It's going to insurance companies, including big insurance company profits, without any appreciable improvement in health care benefits. That's not a good way for us to spend money.

I agree with you about the fact that the prescription drug plan added to our deficits, because we didn't pay for it. And I just have to point out, that didn't happen under my watch. That happened under the previous Congress. There's some people—John was—is an example of somebody who was true to his convictions and didn't vote for it.

Sen. Coburn. I didn't vote for it.

The President. But the fact of the matter is, is that that was costly. And we do have to deal with that. On the other hand, that—the problem I don't think is, is that we gave seniors prescription drug benefits. I think the problem is, is that we didn't pay for it. And we should try to find a way to pay for it. Taking some of that money out of Medicare Advantage and putting it into that doughnut hole does pay for it.

All right. I really breached protocol here, but I thought that was important to just get clear. We are talking about Medicare Advantage in terms of where these cuts come from, not Medicare benefits through the traditional Medicare Plan.

Xavier.

Representative Xavier Becerra. Mr. President, thank you very much for bringing us all together. And I do want to address something that my friend Paul Ryan said, because I almost think that we can't have this discussion any further without addressing something Paul said, and that—Paul, you called into question the Congressional Budget Office.

Rep. Ryan. No.

Rep. Becerra. Now, we can all agree to disagree, we could all have our politics, but if there's no referee on the field——

Rep. Ryan. Right.

Rep. Becerra. ——we can never agree how the game should be played.

Rep. Ryan. Let me clarify, just to be clear.

Rep. Becerra. No, no. Let me—if I could just finish. And so I think we have to decide, do we believe in the Congressional Budget Office or not? Now—because, Paul, you and I have sat on the Budget Committee for years together. And you have, on any number of occasions in those years, cited the Congressional Budget Office to make your point, referred to the Congressional Budgets Office's projections to make your points. And today you essentially said you can't trust the Congressional Budget Office.

Rep. Ryan. No, that is not what I'm saying.

Rep. Becerra. Okay, well, that was my interpretation.

Rep. Ryan. No. Let me be clear.

Rep. Becerra. I apologize. I apologize if I misinterpreted——

Rep. Ryan. I am not questioning the quality of the scoring.

Rep. Becerra. Paul, Paul, if I could just finish my——

Rep. Ryan. ——I'm questioning the reality of their score.

Rep. Becerra. Okay, I take your point on your clarification. But if I——

Rep. Ryan. Let me just say it: 10 years of tax increases, 10 years of Medicare cuts to pay for 6 years of spending——

Rep. Becerra. Paul, if I could just try to make my point.

Rep. Ryan. Okay.

Rep. Becerra. Okay. So then I'm assuming, then, that you do believe that the CBO is a legitimate agency to render decisions on spending for the Congress.

Rep. Ryan. Xavier, you know I believe that.

Rep. Becerra. Okay, so then let's work with that, because, quite honestly, if we can't work with CBO numbers, we're lost. We're lost, because then we really will get into a food fight. And so I apologize, Paul, if I misinterpreted——

Rep. Ryan. Yes, look——

Rep. Becerra. ——what I had heard. I appreciate that we left the referee on the field.

Rep. Ryan. I'll just simply say——

Rep. Becerra. And so if the referee is on the field, then we have to at least accept what the referee has said. And the referee said that the bills that are before us reduce the deficit, the Federal Government's deficit, by over $100 billion in the first 10 years. The Congressional Budget Office, the referee—not political parties, the referee—said that these bills reduce the deficit in the succeeding years, after the first 10 years, by over a trillion dollars.

[*Rep. Becerra made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So I believe, Mr. President, what we have is a chance to discuss how we can actually put this country back on a good fiscal track and still do right by our seniors in Medicare and increase the amount of people who get covered by health insurance by about 31 million.

The President. Okay.

Sen. McConnell. Mr. President, we'll now turn to Chuck Grassley.

Senator Charles E. Grassley. First of all, to clarify something, if anybody says that Medicare Advantage is a subsidy going to insurance companies, let me say what the statute says. The statute says that 75—with a big differential where it goes—75 percent goes to beneficiaries and benefits and 25 percent to the Federal Government.

The President. I'm sorry, the—Chuck, I just want to make sure—I don't think that's—that doesn't sound right to me, because that would mean 100 percent of it is going to either benefits or the Federal Government, which means the insurance companies aren't making any money there.

Sen. Grassley. No, 75 percent to beneficiaries and benefits and 25 percent to the Federal Government.

[*Sen. Grassley made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And so there are these things in this bill—Medicare, Medicaid cuts—that—I don't see any future Congress having any more guts than we do to close a rural hospital. So I think that you got to take into consideration—you've got to take into consideration the consequences of the acts or the unproven promises of cuts that aren't going to materialize. That's just the way I see it.

And working in those 31 meetings, hundreds of hours of meetings with Senator Baucus, I learned a lot about health care. Now, we didn't get a bill out of that bipartisan effort, but I'm sure glad I spent all that time there, because I learned a heck of a lot about our health care system that I wouldn't have otherwise known.

The President. Thank you, Chuck. The—I'm going to go to Kent next. I just want to make one point. The—if the notion is, is that we can't make some hard decisions about how entitlements work because it's just not realistic, nobody's going to have the guts to do it, then we're in big trouble, because that means that the Federal budget and State budgets and then business budgets and family budgets are all going to be gobbled up by this thing. So I hope that in fact we've got the courage to make some of these changes.

Now, when I say that Medicare Advantage is not a useful way for us to spend tax dollars to provide health care to seniors, at least the way it's currently structured, as I said, that's not a Democratic idea. I mean, there are a whole bunch of Republican commentators and some of the folks who've sat around this table before who suggested that that's probably right.

You can make an argument that whatever savings we get out of Medicare Advantage should not go to filling the doughnut hole, for example. That's a legitimate argument. You can make an argument that it should go just to deficit reduction. Those are all legitimate arguments. But my point is that the savings that are obtained here are from a program in which insurance companies are making a lot of money but seniors who are in these kinds of programs are not better off, and the 80 percent of the

people who are [not]* in these programs are paying an extra 90 bucks a year to subsidize the folks who are in them. And that just doesn't seem like a good deal for them or for the taxpayer.

Kent Conrad.

Sen. Grassley. Would you give me 30 seconds, please?

The President. Sure.

Sen. Grassley. Yes, I think we've already had it laid out here in four or five different ways how a heck of a lot of money can be saved. And I think that those things that we can agree on we ought to proceed on. But I think that it's legitimate to take into consideration that if you're going to have program cuts that CBO says out there in the second decade could be 15 to 20 percent a year, that you got to have a system left to serve the people that we're promising health insurance to.

The President. But what I'm saying is, Chuck——

Sen. Grassley. And that's the point I'm making.

The President. ——I think it's a legitimate point. What I'm saying is that on Medicare Advantage, that does not have to do with the concerns that you've got about hospitals or doctors getting properly reimbursed. This is a program that's going to insurance companies.

But I want to make sure that Kent gets in here, because Kent knows something about the budget as the chairman of the Budget Committee.

Kent.

Senator G. Kent Conrad. Well, thank you, Mr. President. Thank you for allowing us to come and to visit about what really is the 800-pound gorilla facing the Federal budget, and that is the health care accounts of the United States: Medicare, Medicaid, and the rest.

[*Sen. Conrad made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And my conclusion, after all of these hundreds of hours of hearings and meetings that Senator Grassley and Senator Baucus were part of, and Senator Enzi, was that, indeed, we do—we have a system that is characterized, especially for those people, by chaos. We can do better, and we really don't have a choice, because we've got a debt now, a gross debt, 100 percent of our GDP—headed for 400 percent—that nobody believes is sustainable. So I just pray that we find a way to come together and deal with these things seriously, because if we don't, we will rue the day.

The President. I want to make sure that we're balancing off time between Democrats and Republicans here——

Sen. McConnell. Mr. President, John—oh, I'm sorry.

The President. ——and House and Senate as well.

John, go ahead.

Rep. Boehner. Mr. President, I'm going to say thank you for having us here. I think it's been a useful conversation. And as I listened to you open up this meeting, I thought to myself, I don't disagree with anything that you said at the beginning of the meeting, in terms of the premise for why we're here.

[*Rep. Boehner made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So, Mr. President, what we've been saying for a long time is let's scrap the bill. Let's start with a clean sheet of paper on those things that we can agree on. Let's take a step-by-step approach that will bring down the cost of health insurance in America, because if we bring down the cost of health insurance, we can expand access.

Mr. President, I told you the day after—maybe it was the day you were sworn in as President, that I would never say anything outside of the room that I wouldn't say inside the room. I've been patient. I've listened to the debate that's gone on here. But why can't we agree on those insurance reforms that we've talked about? Why can't we come to an agreement on purchasing across State lines? Why can't we do something about the biggest cost driver, which is medical malpractice and

* White House correction.

the defensive medicine that doctors practice? Let's start with a clean sheet of paper, and we can actually get somewhere, and we can get it into law here in the next several months.

The President. John, the challenge I have here—and this has happened periodically—is we're—every so often we have a pretty good conversation trying to get on some specifics, and then we go back to the standard talking points that Democrats and Republicans have had for the last year. And that doesn't drive us to an agreement on issues. There are so many things that you just said that people on this side would profoundly disagree with and I would have to say, based on my analysis, just aren't true, that I think the conversation would start bogging down pretty quick.

Now, we were trying to focus on the deficit issue. And the fact of the matter is, as we indicated before, that according to the Congressional Budget Office, this would reduce the deficit. Paul has different ideas about it. Other folks may think that there are better ways of doing it. But right now what we're doing is focusing on the issue of Federal entitlements and whether we can make some changes. I will come back to you, I think, at the end of this session to answer a range of the questions that you just asked.

Right now what I want to do is go to Jim Cooper, who I think everybody knows cares pretty deeply about the Federal budget. He's been championing this for a very long time. Jim, do you want to address some of the issues that have been raised in terms of both Medicare and Medicaid?

Representative James H.S. Cooper. Thank you, Mr. President. We're all here, we're dressed up, we're on good behavior, but I think folks back home are wondering how we behave when the camera's off. The deficit, in my opinion, is probably the most important single issue we face. Paul Ryan said it well: Health inflation is driving us off a cliff.

And I'm kind of intrigued by the conversation, because so far, we've heard a lot of folks trying to outdo each other in deficit reduction. I welcome that competition, especially if it's backed up with votes, because it's easy to talk tough on this; it's harder to deliver. I personally like Senator McCain's suggestion. Let's get rid of all the special deals. That's just a starting point.

[*Rep. Cooper made brief remarks.*]

The President. I want to see if there are any Republicans who want to speak. I still have Dick Durbin.

Sen. McConnell. Mr. President, I think John McCain.

Sen. McCain. Thank you, Mr. President. I say to my friend from North Dakota, none of us want to do nothing, but we do want to start over. And we've just had a discussion about the 800,000 carve-out and all of the other special deals and special interests that were included in this bill, which is more than offensive. But I want to talk about one specific issue on deficit reduction, and that is medical malpractice reform.

Last year, Mr. President, you said when you gave—spoke to the Congress, you asked your distinguished Secretary of Health and Human Services to look at ways that we could address the issue, and then again this year, and I pay close attention to all of your speeches.

The President. Thank you. That's more than Michelle does. [*Laughter*]

Sen. McCain. And the point is that we don't have to go very far. There's two examples right now of medical malpractice reform that is working. One's called California; the other called Texas. I won't talk about California, because we Arizonans hate California because they've stolen our water. [*Laughter*] But the fact is that Texas has established a $750,000 cap for noneconomic damages, caps doctors at 250,000, hospitals at 250,000, and any additional institution, 250,000, and patients' harm due to a finding of medical malpractice are not subject to any limitations on recoveries for economic losses. And I hope you'll examine it.

[*Sen. McCain made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And I'd just like to finally mention one other thing. There's an issue that's overhanging this entire conversation. We all know what it is. It's whether the majority leader of the Senate will impose the, quote, "reconciliation," the 51

votes. Now, having been in the majority and the minority—I prefer the majority—I understand the frustration that the majority feels when they can't get their agenda through, and it's real, and I understand it, and I have some sympathy.

But I remember—and I think you do too, Mr. President—the last time when there was a proposal that we Republicans in the majority would adopt a 51-vote majority on the issue of the confirmation of judges. There was a group of us that got together, said, no, that's not the right way to go, because that could deal a fatal blow to the unique aspect in the United States Senate, which is a 60-vote majority. And then we came to an agreement, and it was brought to a halt.

If a 51-vote reconciliation is enacted on one-sixth of our gross national product, never before has there been—there have been reconciliation, but not at the level like—of an issue of this magnitude. And I think it could harm the future of our country and our institution—which I love a great deal—for a long, long time.

The President. Okay. Let me just address two of the points that you've made, and then I'm going to turn to Dick.

This issue of reconciliation's been brought up. Again, I think the American people aren't always all that interested in procedures inside the Senate. I do think that they want a vote on how we're going to move this forward, and I think most Americans think that a majority vote makes sense. But I also think that this is an issue that could be bridged if we can arrive at some agreement on ways to move forward.

Medicare—or the issue of malpractice that you brought up, I've already said that I think this is a real issue. I disagree with John Boehner that—John, when you say that it's the single biggest driver of medical inflation, that's just not the case.

The Congressional Budget Office took a look at the proposal you've got for medical malpractice and estimates that the Government system would save about $50 billion over 10 years, which is $5 billion a year, which is real money, but understand that we've got a $2 trillion system. Let's assume that you extrapolate that into the private marketplace. Let's say it's another 5 billion or another 10 billion. It's still a small portion of our overall health inflation problems.

But having said that, it's still something that I care about, and I've said I care about it. Now, not only have I asked Kathleen to initiate some pilot programs at the State level, but there are some examples of legislation that I actually would be interested in pursuing. Tom Coburn, you and Richard Burr have talked about incentivizing and allowing States to experiment much more vigorously with ways to reduce frivolous lawsuits, to pursue settlements, to reduce defensive medicine. That's something I'd like to see if we could potentially get going.

So I might not agree to what John Boehner has proposed, and it's interesting that I think I've heard a lot today about how we shouldn't have Washington impose on the States' ideas, except when it comes to the ideas that you guys like, in which case it's fine to override what States are doing. There seems to be a little bit of a contradiction on this, but I think there may be a way of doing it that allows States to tackle this issue in a very serious way.

And I'd be interested in working with you, John, and working with Tom to see if we can potentially make that happen, if we can arrive at a package that also deals with the other drivers of health care inflation that are so important.

Now, we're running out of time. I've got Dick Durbin, and then what we're going to just do is go into coverage, and that will—I know that Henry and John and Charles have been interested in talking about it, and, frankly, is something that we haven't spoken a lot about lately, and that is a whole bunch of people who just don't have health care. Okay.

Senator Richard J. Durbin. Mr. President——

The President. Go ahead, Dick.

Sen. Durbin. ——I've been biding my time throughout this entire meeting. I thank you for inviting us on the issue of medical malpractice. Before I was elected to Congress, I worked in a courtroom. For years, I defended doctors and hospitals, and for years, I sued them on behalf of people who were victims of medical

malpractice. So I've sat at both tables in a courtroom.

At least many years ago, I think I kind of understood this area of the law better than some. But I listen time and again as our friends on the other side, when they're asked what are the most important things you can do when it comes to our health care system in America, the first thing they say is medical malpractice. It's the first thing they say; today it was the first thing that was said.

[*Sen. Durbin made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

But step back for a second and look at who we are in this room. As was said many years ago, "The law in its majestic equality forbids both the wealthy and the poor from sleeping under bridges." When it comes to the wealthy and health care, per capita we're the wealthiest people in America. The Federal Employees Health Benefit program, administered by the Federal Government, setting minimum standards for the health insurance that we enjoy as individuals and want for our families, is all we're asking for in this bill for families across America.

If you think it's a socialist plot and it's wrong, for goodness sakes, drop out of the Federal Employees Health Benefit program. But if you think it's good enough for your family, shouldn't our health insurance be good enough for the rest of America? That's what it gets down to. Why have this double standard? Tom Harkin is right. Why do we continue to discriminate against people, when we know that each one of us is only one accident or one diagnosis away from being one of those unfortunate few who can't afford or can't find health insurance?

The President. All right, what I'd like to do is this. The—it is now a quarter to 4. I said we'd try to get out of here at 4:15. We have not spoken about coverage, and we're going to need to wrap this up. I know that some people may be on a tight schedule. I'm going to ask that people are willing to stay until 4:30, which gives us 45 minutes.

And what I'd like to do is to round out this conversation by focusing on what I think is probably at the core one of the bigger philosophical disagreements between the parties in how we address health care moving forward.

I think we've identified one already, which is the issue of insurance and minimum standards. And that was a debate surrounding the exchange; that was a debate that we discussed when it came to being able to buy insurance across interstate lines.

I think the second issue, which Eric Cantor alluded to earlier, John Boehner just alluded to, is the issue of coverage, and that is, can America, the wealthiest nation on Earth, do what every other advanced nation does, which is make sure that every person here can get adequate health care coverage, whether they're young or old, whether they are rich or poor? And I think that the effort in the House and the Senate has been to control costs, to reform the insurance industry, to deal with some of the structural deficit issues surrounding entitlements, and to do that all in a context in which everybody is getting a fair shake.

And right now, frankly, there are 30 million people who don't have health insurance at all. There are a whole bunch of people who aren't added to that list who all they have is a catastrophic plan, and again, they never go visit a doctor unless they're really sick.

The way we tried to do it was not a Government-run health care plan, Paul. I mean, that was some good poll-tested language that has been used quite a bit, but the fact of the matter is, is that, as Dick just alluded to, the way we've structured it through the exchange would be to allow people to pool, allow everybody to join a big group, and for people who can't afford it, to give them subsidies, including small businesses. And so the question is whether there is a way for us to arrive at an agreement that would reach those people.

John, I'm—Boehner, I looked at your bill. I think, as I said, there is some overlap on some issues. But when it comes to the coverage issue, the Congressional Budget Office says yours would potentially increase coverage for 3 million people, and the efforts of the House and the Senate would cover 30 million. So that's a 27-million-person difference.

We can have an honest disagreement as to whether we should try to give some help to

those 27 million people who don't have coverage. And I—so that's, I think, the last aspect of this, and this is probably going to be the most contentious, because there is no doubt that providing those tax credits to families and small businesses costs money. And we do raise revenues in order to pay for that. And it may be that the other side just feels as if, you know what, it's just not worth us doing that.

But one of the things I hope we don't do is to pretend that somehow for free we're going to be able to get those 30 million people covered. We're not. If we think it's important as a society to not leave people out, then we're going to have to figure out how to pay for it. If we don't, then we should acknowledge that we're not going to do that. But what we shouldn't do is pretend that we're going to do it and that there is some magic wand to do it without paying for it.

So with that, what I'm going to do is I will go to whoever you want first, Mitch.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 2:42 p.m. in the Garden Room at the Blair House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius; and Reps. Henry A. Waxman, John D. Dingell, Jr., and Charles B. Rangel.

Remarks on Presenting the National Humanities Medal and the National Medal of the Arts

February 25, 2010

Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. I'm sorry I'm a little late. [*Laughter*] I had this thing I had to do. [*Laughter*] But I understand that people have been drinking and—[*laughter*]—eating the big shrimp around here. And I have to say that the wait will have been worth it because we are honoring an extraordinary group of individuals.

Before I begin, I just want to make a few acknowledgements. First of all, somebody who was busy with me today and is busy every day on behalf of the American people, we have Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who is here.

We have somebody who has been a great entrepreneur of the arts, who we're glad accepted the position of chairman of the NEA, Mr. Rocco Landesman, who is here. Please give him a big round of applause. Another individual who had an extraordinarily distinguished career in Congress and has been a consistent supporter of the arts and the humanities and is somebody who doesn't just talk bipartisanship, but has always walked the bipartisan walk, we're grateful to have him here, Mr. Jim Leach, chairman of the NEH. Where's Jim? There he is.

Two great friends of mine and the Cochairs of the President's commission on the arts and humanities, Mrs.—Ms. Margo Lion and Mr. George Stevens, and all the commission members who are here, will you please stand and let us give you a round of applause.

And two recipients who were not able to be here today, but I want to make mention of them because, obviously, their careers have helped to mark the landscape of American culture for decades, Mr. Bob Dylan and Clint Eastwood, who are both recipients, but could not make it today. So I wanted to make sure that we acknowledge them.

Now, all of us are here to share a recognition of the importance of the arts and the humanities, pursuits and professions that enrich the mind and nourish the soul and strengthen the character of this country. They bring us joy. They bring us understanding and insight. They bring us comfort in good times and, perhaps especially, in difficult times in our own lives and in the life of our Nation.

This recognition is what led to the founding of the Committee on the Arts and Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Each of these institutions plays a vital role in preserving and enhancing America's cultural legacy. They promote works of the past. They cultivate the talent of the future. They deserve our thanks.

And it is one of the special privileges of this office that I have an opportunity, from time to time, to take part in award ceremonies like this, to honor individuals and institutions that are important to me, personally, and important to all of our citizens, to celebrate triumphs of the arts and the humanities that bring us closer to an understanding of what makes us American, but also what makes us human.

And one of the most extraordinary features of America's cultural inheritance is its dynamism and its diversity. It's a culture that produced Mark Twain and Toni Morrison, John Philip Sousa and Louis Armstrong, Marian Anderson and Alvin Ailey. It's a culture in which all of us can find a place, in which all of us can take great pride.

Now, the men and women that we honor today are a part of this unique American tradition. In a cultural moment that too often prizes the sensational over the enduring, the trivial over the profound, it's worth recalling the contributions of the honorees in this room, contributions that at once reflect and rise above the particular moments in which they're made.

With us are actors and authors, singers and sculptors, conductors, curators, collectors, civic leaders, champions of the arts and the humanities. Each has taken a different path to get here. Each has made the most of different gifts. But all of them have reached the peaks of cultural achievement and all of them are a testament to the breadth and depth of the human spirit.

It's through contributions like theirs, as much as anything else, that a nation's legacy is forged. Ancient Greece and Rome are remembered for the rulers who conquered the known world, but also for "The Odyssey" and "The Iliad," for a Forum and a Colosseum. Europe, from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment, is remembered for wars of religion and the stirrings of revolution, but also for the Sistine Chapel and the "Encyclopedia." The China that invented gunpowder and paper is also known for its poetry.

That is the legacy of these civilizations; that's how they are remembered. And we will be remembered, I hope, for what we do in our time to deliver progress for our people and to advance the dreams of all people. But I hope we will be remembered for something else as well. I hope we will be remembered for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for the School of American Ballet, for all that you, the honorees here today, have done to enrich and enhance America's legacy.

And that legacy will be forged by all of us doing our part: by those of us here in Washington doing what needs to be done to improve the lives of people who are—we were elected to serve, by brave men and women fighting under our flag, by citizens and neighborhood organizations and places of worship that are giving back to their communities, and by scientists that are advancing what we know about the workings of the world and the universe. But also by Americans like you, creators, imaginers, entertainers, helping each of us understand the human experience and helping all of us recognize that common humanity.

That task is especially important, I think, right now. It's easy in times like these, with all the talk about what makes us different and what divides us, what keeps us apart, to lose sight of what holds us together, to forget that no matter what our differences, some things speak to all of us.

It doesn't matter whether we're Democrats or Republicans, all of us are profoundly moved by our reflection in black granite. No matter what the color of our skin or what beliefs we hold, all of us can draw lessons from the works of history. No matter what community we call our own, all of us can be moved by a symphony or an aria, all of us can be moved by a soprano's voice, all of us can be moved by a film's score. The arts, the humanities, they appeal to a certain yearning that's shared by all of us, a yearning for truth and for beauty, for connection and the simple pleasure of a good story.

More than 200 years and 25—225 years ago, on February 18, 1784, George Washington sat down at his home in Mount Vernon to write a letter. It was just a month after Congress officially put an end to the war with the British Empire. And it was still years before the Constitutional Convention met in Philadelphia, years before this general ended up becoming President, years before 13 newly independent Colonies became one Nation, indivisible under God.

But the letter Washington sat down to write that day was not about the recent triumph over the British. It was not about what shape a young America might take. Instead, it was a letter to a bookseller. And before requesting a few volumes, Washington expressed a belief, and I quote, "To encourage literature and the arts is a duty which every good citizen owes to his country."

A duty of every good citizen. So speaks the Father of our Country. Even then, amid all the concerns of those heady and dangerous days, Washington took time to reflect on the infinite value of what were then called the elegant arts. Even then, he foresaw the essential role that the arts and the humanities would play in the formation of our country's character. And if Washington were with us today, I think he would agree that all of you have fulfilled your duties, that all of you are good citizens, that all of you have enriched the legacy of the United States of America.

So with that, I now ask the honorees to come up, one by one, as their citations are read.

[*At this point, Lt. Cmdr. Ryan T. Siewert, USCG, Coast Guard Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medals.*]

Ladies and gentlemen, please give a big round of applause to all the honorees. Ladies and gentlemen, that concludes the formal program, but there are some drinks and big shrimp left. [*Laughter*] So we expect you to enjoy the hospitality of the White House. And Michelle and I just want to personally again say what an honor it has been for us to be here at this ceremony. Each and every one of these individuals in some way has touched my life.

I think about Robert Caro and reading "The Power Broker" back when I was 22 years old—[*laughter*]—and just being mesmerized, and I'm sure it helped to shape how I think about politics. I think about Maya Lin and the first time I had a chance to see that extraordinary monument to the courage of our young men and women in uniform. I think about the first time I heard Jessye Norman's voice or saw Rita in "West Side Story"—[*laughter*]—and my great friend Joe Riley, the extraordinary work that he's done in Charleston, and Ted Sorensen, who used up all the good lines—[*laughter*]—for every President remaining, and Frank Stella, who obviously is a legend.

I don't want to mention everybody because each and every one of you in some way have touched our lives. So a personal thanks from Michelle and myself, and I hope all of you have a wonderful evening and continue to enrich the lives of our citizens. It is extraordinarily important. And we will continue to be as big a booster as possible from this office.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:50 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers Bob Dylan, Clint Eastwood, Jessye Norman, and Rita Moreno; Nobel Prize winner and author Toni Morrison; artist and architect Maya Lin; Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., of Charleston, SC; Theodore C. Sorensen, speechwriter for President John F. Kennedy; and printmaker and painter Frank Stella.

Remarks in a Discussion on Insurance Coverage at a Bipartisan Meeting on Health Care Reform

February 25, 2010

Senator A. Mitchell McConnell. Mr. President, Dr. John Barrasso's going to make our opening statement on coverage.

The President. Okay. And then I will call on Henry Waxman, and we'll just go back and forth.

Senator John A. Barrasso. Thank you very much.

The President. And because we are short on time, let's keep our remarks relatively brief.

Sen. Barrasso. Well, thank you very much, Mr. President. For people who don't know

me, I practiced medicine in Casper, Wyoming, for 25 years as an orthopedic surgeon, taking care of families in Wyoming. I've been the chief of staff of the largest hospital in our State. My wife is a breast cancer survivor. Bobbi's been through three operations, a couple of bouts of chemotherapy. We've seen this from all the different sides of care.

[*Sen. Barrasso made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And I have great concerns that people around this table are not listening to the American people and are fearful of the consequences of this large bill, which is why only one in three people of America support what is being proposed here. And that's why so many people, Mr. President, are saying it's time to start over.

The President. John, the—I mean, let me just—there's one thing I've got to—there are a number of issues, as usual, that I've got significant difference with. I just am curious. Would you be satisfied if every Member of Congress just had catastrophic care? Do you think we'd be better health care purchasers? I mean, you think—is that a change that we should make?

Sen. Barrasso. Yes, I think actually we would. We'd really focus on it. You'd have more, as you say, skin in the game——

The President. Yes, because——

Sen. Barrasso. ——and especially if they had a savings account, a health savings account. They could put their money into that.

The President. Would you feel the same way if——

Sen. Barrasso. And they'd be spending the money out of that.

The President. Would you feel the same way if you were making $40,000, or you had—that was your income? Because that's the reality for a lot of folks. I mean, it is very important for us—when you say to listen—to listen to that farmer that Tom mentioned in Iowa, to listen to the folks that we get letters from. Because the truth of the matter, John, is they're not premiers of anyplace; they're not sultans from wherever. They don't fly into Mayo and suddenly decide they're going to spend a couple million dollars on the absolute best health care. They're folks who are left out.

And this notion, somehow, that for them, the system was working, and that if they just ate a little better and were better health care consumers, they could manage, is just not the case. The vast majority of these 27 million people or 30 million people that we're talking about, they work every day. Some of them work two jobs. But if they're working for a small business, they can't get health care. If they are self-employed, they can't get health care.

And you know what? It is a scary proposition for them. And so we can debate whether or not we can afford to help them, but we shouldn't pretend somehow that they don't need help. I get too many letters saying they need help.

And so I want to go to——

Sen. Barrasso. Mr. President, having a high-deductible plan and a health savings account is an option for Members of Congress and Federal employees.

The President. If—that's right, because Members of Congress get paid $176,000 a year.

Sen. Barrasso. Sixteen thousand employees did take advantage of that.

The President. Because they——

Sen. Barrasso. And so it's the same plan——

The President. ——because Members of Congress——

Sen. Barrasso. ——that the Park Rangers get in the Yellowstone National Park.

The President. John, Members of Congress are in the top income brackets of the country. And health savings accounts, I think, can be a useful tool, but every study has shown that the people who use them are folks who've got a lot of disposable income. And the people that we're talking about don't.

So I want to go to Henry. Henry Waxman.

Representative Henry A. Waxman. Mr. President, I just wonder if some of our Republican friends would like to have seniors on Medicare have catastrophic coverage only. I'd say to the seniors in this country—and we've heard mention of them being the people who are worried about this Medicare—this health care bill—they ought to worry if we don't do something. Because not only will we hear ideas of putting them on catastrophic coverage only because that will save a lot of money, Paul Ryan has a proposal right now to say that Medicare

recipients in the future ought to have just a little voucher, and then they can shop for their own insurance. They could be prudent shoppers.

[*Rep. Waxman made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So you can't solve any problem—insurance reform, holding down costs, protecting Medicare, dealing with the deficit—unless you deal with it all. And, Mr. President——

The President. Henry.

Rep. Waxman. ——you're not going to be able to do this piecemeal. And I have doubts about whether the Republicans are going to help you, because I haven't heard a lot of willingness to come and work with you now—or did I hear it a year ago. I hope I'm wrong.

The President. Well, I'm going to be equal opportunity here and say we're not making campaign speeches right now. And I think your points I agree with, but I still think that there's a lot of areas of agreement that we've discussed so far. This is an area, though, that—in which we do have some philosophical disagreements. And so what I—I think it's—I want to go to a Republican.

The question I would ask to my colleagues, my friends on the Republican side, would be, are there areas of coverage for people who don't have health care that you would embrace and agree with, beyond what has been presented in Republican Leader Boehner's bill? There may not be. I mean, that may be, sort of, the threshold at which all of you think we can afford to provide help to people who don't have coverage, but there may be some other ideas that haven't already been presented or aren't embodied in your legislation, John, that I'd be happy to hear about.

Representative John A. Boehner. I want to yield to Peter Roskam from Illinois.

[*Rep. Roskam made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And I think one of the problems, to get to this coverage issue, is that the premise of this bill is that coverage is expanded through Medicaid, welfare. Speaker Pelosi a couple of minutes ago—or a couple of hours ago, actually—said that health care reform is entitlement reform.

Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi. No, no. Yes.

Rep. Roskam. Yes. I would put a brighter light on that and say it's entitlement expansion. Think about what we're doing. The CBO, when they wrote to Harry Reid—wrote to Senator Reid a couple of months ago, they said, look, there's about 15 million people that are going to be put on Medicaid. And Medicaid is a house of cards. Medicaid is not something that is serving the public very well.

[*Rep. Roskam made further remarks, concluding as follows.*]

I'll tell you what, a year's worth of work, and this is what is come up with? The American public, as far as the ones that I have heard from, are vehemently opposed to this. And they say, look, take the Etch A Sketch, go like this, let's start over, let's do incremental things where there's common ground. I yield back.

The President. I want to make sure that everybody gets an opportunity to speak. But I just want to caution everybody, it's now 4:15. There are a number of folks who haven't had a chance to speak. The question I had was, were there ideas about expansion beyond the 3 million that was in Leader Boehner's bill? And I didn't get an answer on it, so in addition to—and it may be that the answer is, that's all we can do.

I should point out this one issue about Medicaid that I think that's important. Most of the people, we'd like to be in the exchange and giving them subsidies. And I think over time what you see is an evolution, if you created a large enough pool, where people could purchase it through an exchange the same way that Members of Congress do.

The problem we've got right now is that very poor people, they've got coverage through Medicaid. And it's somewhat flawed. There are problems with doctor reimbursements; there are problems long term in terms of solvency, both for the State and the Federal level. So all those things need to be fixed. But

the fact of the matter is, if their kid gets sick, they can go to a doctor.

The people who are really left in the cold are working families who make too much for Medicaid and don't have anywhere to go. That's the group that right now is getting the worst deal. They're paying taxes, they're working, but they've got nowhere to go.

Now, for those 15 million people who've got nothing, I promise you they would say to themselves, having some coverage through Medicaid is a pretty good deal. I'd prefer to have them in an exchange where, over time, we've got everybody in a pool, similar to the pool that Members of Congress enjoy. But that's not the situation that we have right now. I just want to remind everybody, though, that the group that is being left out—because you threw out the word "welfare," which is, you know, one that obviously most American people, they don't want to be part of welfare—the fact of the matter is, is that very poor people right now have coverage that is superior to what a lot of folks who make a little more money, are working very hard trying to support their families, do not.

Now, I know that Max has been trying to get in for a while, but there are some other folks that haven't had a chance to speak, so I'm—I want to call on them first. And then if I've got time, Max, I'll allow you to wrap up.

But I'm going to go to Chris and Murray—Chris and Patty Murray on our side, as well as Charlie Rangel, who want to speak, and I'm—and what we'll do is we'll alternate to make sure that we've got—oh, and I know that Joe Barton is interested in speaking as well, and there may be a couple of other Republicans.

Okay. Go ahead.

Senator Christopher J. Dodd. Well, thank you, Mr. President, and I'll try and keep this brief and turn it over to Patty, so we'll take the time for one person and divide it in two.

[*Sen. Dodd made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

But coverage is the critical issue. We know that in the next 10 years—factually, Mr. President—in the next 10 years, every State in this country will have a 10-percent increase in uninsured people. We know that in 30 States in our country, in that same 10-year period, there will be a 30-percent increase in the uninsured. And half the population under the age of 65 will at one point or another in the next 65—in the next 10 years be without insurance.

So it's not some isolated group out there. This is the critical constituency that is the—sort of the lynchpin that holds all of this together. So coverage is absolutely critical.

The President. Joe Barton.

Representative Joseph L. Barton. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President. I want to commend you for asking us to come here, and I will say that never have so many Members of the House and Senate behaved so well for so long before so many television cameras. [*Laughter*] So if we ever get to a conference committee, we may want you to be the moderator.

[*Rep. Barton made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So what we're saying, Mr. President—we're not talking about incrementalism. We're talking about, as Leader Boehner said and Mr. McConnell—Senator McConnell said, let's start over, in the sense that we change the vision and work together to do the things that we agree upon, but do it in a way that doesn't destroy the fundamental market system that's made the American health care system the best in the world. And if we do that, we can make a deal.

The President. Well——

Rep. Barton. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Leader Boehner.

The President. Joe, I'll respond to you right—[*inaudible*]—because I think we should wrap it up.

You're right, the proposal that John Boehner's put forward doesn't radically change the existing system. And that, I think, is why 3 million out of the 30 million who don't have coverage, or 40 million, don't get coverage. The proposal that's been put forward by the House and the Senate Democrats also doesn't radically change it, in the sense that the vast majority of people who currently have health care will still get it; it's just they'll see it a little cheaper. People who do not have coverage will start getting it. So that's—it's not a—neither of these proposals are radical. The question is, which one

works best for the American people? And that's what we'll see if we can determine.

We're running short on time. I know that some folks are going to, at some point, start have to get going. I'm going to reserve the prerogative of making sure that everybody who has not had a chance to speak is allowed to speak, and then I will wrap up. That means that we're probably going to go a little bit later than we had anticipated. But, as I said, by the standards of Washington, we're still in the ballpark here. [*Laughter*]

I'm going to call on Charlie Rangel first. We'll go to one of our Republican colleagues. Patty Murray's going to have an opportunity to speak. Again, there may be some comments—there may be some other Republicans who are interested in speaking. We'll go to—we're going to actually go to Ron Wyden first. Then we're going to go to another Republican. And we're going to end with John Dingell, who was there when the idea of everybody having health care was first introduced by his father many decades ago. So with that——

Rep. Waxman. Mr. President, why don't you just call on Republicans who haven't talked, because some of them have talked numerous times?

The President. I agree, but I want to make sure that they may want to respond to whatever is said. Go ahead, Ron.

Senator Ronald L. Wyden. Thank you very much, Mr. President. And I think this has been a very constructive session. For the last 6 hours, we have essentially heard Republicans talk about incremental coverage and Democrats talk about comprehensive or broader kind of coverage. And I want to outline something that I think could bring both sides together for just a couple of minutes.

[*Sen. Wyden made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So, Mr. President, when you made that offer to all of us today to work with us on this, not only am I going to follow up on what I think is a very gracious offer to try to bring both sides together, it allows us to build on the exchanges that we have today, which begin to empower people with more choices and competition. And if we just keep building on that, starting with this effort to bring both sides together on interstate competition, looking, in my view, at the Federal employee system to do it, I think we can resolve a lot of our differences. So I appreciate the opportunity to speak, Mr. President. I want colleagues to know that I'm going to be following up with both sides of the aisle this afternoon and your administration to bring this group together.

Sen. McConnell. Mr. President——

The President. Yes.

Sen. McConnell. ——all of my members have had a chance to speak at least once, several of them a number of times. Jon Kyl reminds me that the HSAs, for example, are not exactly for rich people; that the median—medium income of a user of a HSA is $69,000 a year. All of us are representatives of the American people, but I have a feeling we haven't been listening to them very carefully.

[*Sen. McConnell made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So this has been a fabulous discussion, Mr. President. We have a lot of experts around the room. But I think it's really important, since we represent the American people, that we not ignore their view on this. They have paid attention to this issue like no other issue since I have been in the United States Senate. Health care is a uniquely personal issue. Obviously, you get more interested in the subject the older you get. But every American cares deeply about the quality of their health care and access to health care and cost of health care. They have followed this debate like no other, and they have rendered a judgment about what we have attempted to do so far.

The solution to that is to put that on the shelf and to start over with a blank piece of paper and go step by step to see what we can agree on to improve the American health care system, which is already—as all of us agree—the finest in the world.

The President. I'm just going to make this remark, and then I'm going to call on Patty Murray. I'm going to save the two lions of the House here for the end, because there's been

a lot of comments from every Republican about the polls and what they're hearing from their constituents. And as I said, I hear from constituents in every one of your districts and every one of your States. And what's interesting is, actually, when you poll people about the individual elements in each of these bills, they're all for them. So you ask them, do you want to prohibit preexisting conditions? Yes, I'm for that. Do you want to make sure that everybody can get basic coverage that's affordable? Yes, I'm for that. Do you want to make sure that insurance companies can't take advantage of you and that you've got the ability, as Ron said, to fire an insurance company that's not doing a good job and hire one that is—but also that you've got some basic consumer protections? Yes, we like that.

So polls, I think, are important in taking a temperature of the public. If you polled people and asked them, is the system working right now, and should we move forward with health reform, they'd also say yes to that. And my hope had been and continues to be that based on this conversation, there might be enough areas of overlap that we could realistically think about moving forward without a situation in which everybody just goes to their respective corners and this ends up being a political fight, because this is something that really has to be solved.

We've got three people who have not had an opportunity to speak today. If you don't mind, I will—would like to, in the interest of time, just go ahead and let each of them speak. If there's an intervention that somebody on the Republican side wants to make, then I will recognize them. And then I will allow anybody of your choice, Mitch, to wrap things up. I think Speaker Pelosi may want to say just a quick summary of what she's thinking. And then I will talk a little bit about next steps. And if everybody could keep their remarks relatively brief, that'd be very helpful.

Patty.

Senator Patricia L. Murray. Mr. President, thank you. And this has been, I think, a very good discussion. And I think all of us come to this table today having heard a lot of stories and talked to a lot of people and bring their passions with us today. And I certainly am one of those. And every time we talk about this, every time I think about this, I remember a little boy that I met last spring who is 11 years old, whose name was Marcelas. And he told me that his mom, single mom, taking care of him and his two younger sisters, was going to work every day, had a job managing a fast food restaurant, was doing okay, but she got sick. And when she got sick, she had to take time off from work, and because she was missing so much work, she lost her job. When she lost her job, she lost her health care. And because she lost her health care, she couldn't get in to see a doctor, and sadly, Marcelas's mom died.

[*Sen. Murray made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And what I have listened for today is whether the alternative proposal that has come before us gives people those choices that they need. And that's what I'm listening for. And I go back to Marcelas, and I think, will that proposal make sure that nobody loses their mom again because they didn't have a choice? And that's why it's so important that we move forward with what we have and open that door for so many Americans.

The President. Thank you, Patty. Mitch, you have somebody?

Sen. McConnell. Mr. President, Dr. Coburn.

The President. Tom.

Senator Thomas A. Coburn. I just was going to summarize shortly, because you were talking about—[*inaudible*]. If we don't think about what the key goal is—the key goal is to reconnect purchase and payment so we become good purchasers. Whether we create a—what system we do, if we don't reconnect the mechanism of payment with purchase, we're not going to get good value out of our health care system. And I outlined one out of every three dollars that doesn't help anybody get well, doesn't prevent them from getting sick. And there's enough potential there in that pool of money that we don't have to have the Government run it. What, in fact, we can do is we can create and allow that money for everybody to have the kind of access that Senator Murray wants that individual to have.

This—the thing that I think is—draws us apart is the level of involvement in the Government in making those choices. And I would just put forward to you that we ought to have another talk like this, as we can get closer and closer on some ideas, because we all want the same thing, but how we get there, whether or not we're in charge of it or the individual patient's in charge of it, personally making their own choices with the asset value that is capable, based on what we're already spending in health care. We don't need to spend a penny more in health care in this country. What we need to do is spend it much more wisely and much more effectively.

The President. Okay, I'll pick up on some themes in my close. Charlie Rangel.

Representative Charles B. Rangel. Thank you, Mr. President, and I appreciate the fact that you saved the best for last.

The President. Absolutely. [*Laughter*]

Rep. Rangel. I had really hoped that when we came here that we were really going to push over the top. We are so close to national health insurance, we are so close to allowing people that go to work every day and don't know what can happen to them when they lose their job and lose their health insurance—I know that the—they call the Senate the upper House, but I was amazed how it seems as though they believe the American people only listen to those from Wyoming and Kentucky. But having said that, for my New Yorkers, even though we have more self-confidence than we need—[*laughter*]—I would want them to know that they are Americans, and we do listen to them, and that the States that oppose this great plan doesn't speak for all of America.

[*Rep. Rangel made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So I just hope that we can change this to a positive thing, where you can say, let's leave here at least talking about what we agree on, let's stop knocking each other as who's the smartest and who's the most patriotic, and let's really, then, confine the public argument to where we disagree.

And rest assured, I can assure you that they won't be concerned with how big the bill was. I have no clue as to how big the Social Security bill was, how large, how many pages was in the Medicare bill. And I don't really think that someone sick in the emergency room is concerned about the size of the bill that we are trying to help them with.

So I appreciate this and——

The President. John Dingell.

Representative John D. Dingell, Jr. Mr. President, thank you. And God bless you for your leadership in this matter. The country desperately needs you and desperately needs this legislation. I saw the cartoon, two people are sitting down, and one of them says: "Terrible news. Our health care rates are going to go up 40 percent." The other guy says: "Don't worry. Good news is you're not concerned because you have preexisting conditions." [*Laughter*] This solves both problems—the bill. And, Mr. President, again, we desperately need your lead.

[*Rep. Dingell made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

We have before us a hideous challenge. The last perfect legislation that was presented to mankind was delivered to the Israelis at the base of Mount Sinai. It was on stone tablets written in the fingers of God. [*Laughter*] Nothing like that has been presented to mankind since. What we're going to do is not perfect, but it's sure going to make it better, and it's going to ease a huge amount of pain and suffering at a cost which we can afford, which has been costed out by the Office of Management and Budget and the Congressional Budget Office saying it's budget-neutral; it, in fact, reduces the budget.

I beg you, my friends, let us go forward on this great task.

The President. Thank you, John.

Rep. Dingell. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Speaker Pelosi wants to say a brief word. John, do you want to say anything in closing? And then I will wrap up.

Nancy.

[*Speaker Pelosi made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Speaker Pelosi. Yes, it's hard to do this. The misrepresentation campaign that has gone on about these bills, it's a wonder anybody would support them, as Mr. Waxman said. But the fact is, as the President said, many of these provisions on their own are largely supported by the American people.

So this will take courage to do. Social Security was hard. Medicare was hard. Health care reform for all Americans—insurance reform is hard. But we will get it done. And as we leave this debate, I think that many of the differences that we have are complicated, and they're legitimate. They're differences of opinion about the role of Government and the rest. But I think it's really clear in one point that the American people understand very clearly: They understand that there should be an end to discrimination on the basis of preexisting conditions. The proposals that we have put forth end discrimination on the basis of preexisting conditions; the Republican bill does not.

With that, Mr. President, I thank you again for the opportunity to discuss the differences and to try to find some common ground on this.

The President. Well, listen, this has been hard work. And I want to, first of all, thank everybody for being here and conducting themselves in an extraordinarily civil tone. And as I said, given the number of folks that were around this table, the fact that we're only an hour late is—it beats my prediction.

Here's what I'd like to do—and I'm going to take about 10 minutes. I want to go through where I think we agree, and I want to summarize where I think we disagree. And then I'll address some of the process issues that have been brought up by a number of the Republicans.

We agree that we need some insurance market reforms. We don't agree on all of them, but we agree on some of them. I think that if you look at the ones that we don't agree on—since there's been a lot of reference to what the American people want—it turns out that the ones that are not included in the Republican plans right now, but are included in the Democratic plans, are actually very popular.

I know there's been a discussion about whether Government should intrude in the insurance market, but it turns out that on things like capping out-of-pocket expenses or making sure that people are able to purchase insurance even if they've got a preexisting condition, overwhelmingly people say the insurance market should be regulated.

And so one thing that I'd ask from my Republican friends is to look at the list of insurance reforms and make sure that those that you have not included in your plans right now are ones, in fact, that you don't think the American people should get. Because I strongly believe in these insurance reforms. I've talked to too many families who have health insurance and find out that what they have does not provide them with the coverage they needed, and they end up being bankrupt, or they end up going without care, or they get care too late, as was the case in the story that Patty Murray mentioned.

The second thing, I think, we agree on is the idea that allowing small businesses and individuals who are right now trapped in the individual market and as a consequence have to buy very expensive insurance and effectively oftentimes just go without insurance could be solved if we allowed them to do what Members of Congress do, which is be part of a large group.

Again, the idea of an exchange is not a Government takeover; it is how the market works, which is, if you have a lot of purchasing power, you get a better deal. That's how Wal-Mart drives its prices down, because everybody who wants to supply Wal-Mart, Wal-Mart tells them, you give me the best deal possible, and as a consequence, the supplier gives them a much better deal than they do the mom-and-pop shop on the corner. Well, we should be able to give small businesses and individuals who are self-employed, who aren't able to get insurance through a large employer, to have that same deal.

It sounds like we've got some philosophical difference as to whether there should be some minimum benefits in that exchange, some baseline of coverage. Again, there's a baseline of coverage for Members of Congress. And the reason we set that up is because we want to make sure that any Federal employee who is

part of this big pool is getting good, quality coverage, not perfect coverage, not gold-plated coverage, but adequate coverage. It may be—and I'd ask my Republican colleagues to look and see is that an area that can be resolved.

There has been a lot of discussion—and one of the main tools the Republicans have offered to drive down costs is purchasing insurance across State lines. This is an idea that is embodied in the House and Senate bill, but, again, the details differ. The approach that John Boehner and some of the Republicans appear to take is to say, let's just open things up; anybody can buy anything, anywhere, regardless of what State insurance laws are, and that will drive competition and cost.

The philosophical concern I have on that is that you potentially get what's been referred to as a race to the bottom. And for people who may not be following the intricacies of the insurance market, let me give an example that people understand, and that's credit cards.

In the credit card market, part of what happened was, is we ended up allowing people to get credit cards from every other—whatever State, and there were a few States that decided, you know what, we're going to have the least restrictions on credit card companies that we could have. And what ended up happening was that every single credit card company suddenly, lo and behold, started locating in that State which had the absolute worst regulations in consumer protections, and all these fees and practices that people don't like, folks weren't happy about.

So the question I'm going to have is, is there a way for us to deal with the interstate purchase of health insurance, but in a way that provides, again, some baseline protections? Because what we don't want is a race to the bottom. We want everybody to have the basic protections that make sense.

And that's not a big Government takeover. That is a standard thing that we do in almost every area of life. We protect people with respect to the food that they buy, with respect to the drugs that they purchase. We license and regulate the medical profession because we don't think anybody should just be able to cut somebody open. We want somebody like Tom or John to actually know what they're doing before they start practicing medicine. And the same should apply when it comes to how we think about insurance.

Medical malpractice has been mentioned. Now, look, let me be honest. This is something, historically, that Democrats have been more resistant to than Republicans. I will note that when we had a Republican President and Republican control of the House and the Republican control of the Senate, somehow it didn't happen, and I'm surprised, but be——

Senator Lamar Alexander. We needed 60 votes in the Senate too, Mr. President. [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, the—see there? So as a consequence, what I have suggested is that we explore building on what we've already done administratively without law, asking Kathleen to help States come up with new ideas. I've suggested, well, let's take a look at, Tom, the suggestion you had that gives States even more incentive to start thinking about reducing defensive medicine. I have to tell you, Joe Barton, that how you got from 5 billion to 150 billion, I didn't quite follow the math. It sounded—I'm not sure you did either, but it's okay. [*Laughter*] But here's my commitment, is that if folks were serious about getting this done, I'd be interested in seeing if we could work on something.

I actually agree with Dick Durbin with respect to hard caps, because of the story that he told about the woman who burned her face. I think there are situations in which there is actually a very severe problem, and I would distinguish that between some of the frivolous lawsuits that are out there that really do create a defensive medical problem. And ob-gynies are the ones who get hit the hardest, because people are so sympathetic when a child is born with severe disabilities, and it can just be crippling on ob-gynies. The same is true on—for neurologists and so forth. So there may be some ways that we can work on that.

Now, I guess what I'm saying is, I've put forward, then, very substantial ideas that are embraced by Republicans. Peter, they're not—I forget what metaphor you used

about—before you popped it in the microwave, whether it was bacon bits or sprinkles or—breadcrumbs, that was what it was. When it comes to the exchange, that is a market-based approach; it's not a Government-run approach. There were criticisms about the public option—that's when, supposedly, there was going to be a Government takeover of health care—and even after the public option wasn't available, we still hear the same rhetoric. And it turns out that what we're now referring to is we have an argument about how much we should regulate the insurance industry.

We have a concept of an exchange, which previously has been an idea that was embraced by Republicans before I embraced it, and somehow suddenly it became less of a good idea.

With respect to the most contentious issue, I'm not sure we can bridge the gap, and that's what we're going to have to explore, and that's the issue of how do we provide coverage not only for people who don't have health insurance right now, but also for people who have preexisting conditions and are being priced out of the market or potentially lose their jobs and will find themselves in a situation where they don't get coverage.

An interesting thing happened a couple of weeks ago, and that is, a report came out that for the first time, it turns out that more Americans are now getting their health care coverage from Government than those that are getting it from the private sector. And you know what, that's without a bill from the Democrats or from President Obama—has nothing to do with, quote, unquote, "Obamacare." It has to do with the fact that employers are shedding employees from health care plans. And more and more, folks, if they can, are trying to get into the Social Security system and the Medicare system earlier, through disability or what have you, so that they can get some help.

The point that Tom Harkin made, the point that Chris Dodd made, the point that Henry made, and a number of other people made, I think, is very important to understand. I did not propose—and I don't think any of the Democrats proposed—something complicated just for the sake of being complicated. We'd love to have a five-page bill. It would save a awful lot of work. The reason we didn't do it is because it turns out that baby steps don't get you to the place where people need to go. They need help right now.

And so a step-by-step approach sounds good in theory, but the problem is, for example, we can't solve the preexisting condition problem if we don't do something about coverage.

Now, it is absolutely true—and I think this is important to get on the table, because we dance around this sometime—in order to help the 30 million, that's going to cost some money. And the primary way we do it is to say that—for example, people who currently get all their income in capital gains and dividends, they don't pay a Medicare tax, even though the guy who cleans the building for them does on his salary or his wages. And so what we say is, if you make more than 200—$250,000 a year if you're a family and your income is from those sources, then you should do—you should have to do the same thing that everybody else has to do. Somebody mentioned the fact that we say to small businesses—I think Jon or—Jon Kyl, you said we're taxing small businesses. Look, we exempt 95 percent of small businesses from any obligations whatsoever because we understand that small businesses generally have a tough time enough. They don't need any more Government burden.

What we do say is, if you can afford to provide health insurance, you have more than 50 employees, meaning you're in the top 4 percent of businesses, and you're not providing coverage and you're forcing other businesses or other individuals to pick up the tab because your employees are either going into the Medicaid system or they're going to the emergency room, we don't think that's fair. So we say, you've got to pony up some. It's not an employer mandate. It just says you've got to pay your fair share, because otherwise, all of us have to pick up the tab. And that, by the way, contributes to the overall deficit that Medicaid is running.

In fact, most small businesses through this program get huge subsidies by becoming members of the exchange. That's where the money's going. The money's not going to some big welfare program; the money's going to give tax

credits to small businesses, tax credits to those who are self-employed to buy into this pool. And that's not a radical proposition; it's consistent with the idea of a market-based approach.

And finally, with respect to bending the cost curve, we actually have a lot of agreement here. This is an area where if I sat down with Tom Coburn, I suspect we could agree on 95 percent of the things that have to be done. Because the things you talk about in terms of—and I wrote some of them down—in terms of reducing medical errors, in terms of incentivizing doctors to coordinate better and work in groups better, in terms of price transparency, improving prevention, those are all things that not only do I embrace, but we've included every single one of those ideas in these bills.

Now, the irony is that that's part of where we got attacked for a Government takeover, because what happened was when we set up the idea of a MedPAC, which is basically a panel of doctors and health care experts who would recommend ways to make the delivery system better so that we can squeeze out that one-third in Medicare and Medicaid that's wasted—a Republican idea—that was part of the ammunition you all used to say that the Government is going to take away your health care.

So if we're serious about delivery system reform, if we're serious about squeezing out the waste that Tom Coburn referred to, you should embrace those mechanisms that are in this bill.

I will end by saying this. I suspect that if the Democrats and the administration were willing to start over and then adopt John Boehner's bill, we'd get a whole bunch of Republican votes. And I don't know how many Democratic votes we'd get, but we'd get a whole bunch of Republican votes.

The concern, I think, that a lot of the colleagues, both in the House and the Senate, on the Democratic side have is that after a year and a half—or more appropriately, after five decades—of dealing with this issue, starting over, they suspect, means not doing much or doing the proposal that John Boehner or other Republicans find acceptable, and that it's not possible for our Republican colleagues to move in the direction of, for example, covering more than 3 million people; it's not possible to move more robustly in the direction of dealing with the preexisting condition issue in a realistic way; it's not possible to make sure that we get people out of a high-risk pool and get them into a situation where, as Tom Harkin put it, healthy people, young people, rich people, poor people, old people, sick people—everybody is part of a system that works.

That, I think, is the concern. Having said that, what I'd like to propose is that I've put on the table now some things that I didn't come in here saying I supported, but that I was willing to work with potential Republican sponsors on. I'd like the Republicans to do a little soul searching and find out are there some things that you'd be willing to embrace that get to this core problem of 30 million people without health insurance and dealing seriously with the preexisting condition issue.

I don't know frankly whether we can close that gap. And if we can't close that gap, then I suspect Mitch McConnell and Harry Reid, Nancy Pelosi and John Boehner, are going to have a lot of arguments about procedures in Congress about moving forward. I will tell you this, that when I talk to the parents of children who don't have health care because they've got diabetes or they've got some chronic heart disease, when I talk to small-businesspeople who are laying people off because they just got their insurance premium, they don't want us to wait. They can't afford another five decades.

And the truth of the matter is, is that, politically speaking, there may not be any reason for Republicans to want to do anything. I mean, we can debate what our various constituencies think. I know that—I don't need a poll to know that most of Republican voters are opposed to this bill and might be opposed to the kind of compromise we could craft. So it would be very hard for you politically to do this.

But I thought it was worthwhile for us to make this effort. We've got a lot of other things to do. I don't think, Tom, that we're going to have another one of these, because

we—people don't have 7, 8 hours a day to work some of these things through.

What I do know is this: If we saw movement—significant movement, not just gestures—then you wouldn't need to start over, because essentially, everybody here knows what the issues are. And procedurally, it could get done fairly quickly. We cannot have another year-long debate about this.

So the question that I'm going to ask myself and I ask of all of you is, is there enough serious effort that in a month's time or a few weeks' time or 6 weeks' time, we could actually resolve something? And if we can't, then I think we've got to go ahead and make some decisions, and then that's what elections are for. We have honest disagreements about the vision for the country, and we'll go ahead and test those out over the next several months till November.

All right? But I very much appreciate everybody being here. Thank you for being so thoughtful. And hopefully, we'll all keep our constituents in mind as we move forward. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 3:51 p.m. in the Garden Room at the Blair House. In his remarks, he referred to Sens. Thomas R. Harkin and Max S. Baucus; and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 26.

Remarks on Signing an Executive Order Concerning Historically Black Colleges and Universities

February 26, 2010

Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. Thank you very much. Well, it is wonderful to be here. And thank you for the outstanding introduction by Mr. Smart. And I was complimenting him on his bow tie—[*laughter*]—as well as the excellent scholarship that he's showing. I want to thank all the student leaders from HBCUs and some of the fantastic men and women that I've named to serve on my HBCU Advisory Board. So thank you, all of you, for what you are contributing to this important cause.

I have a few Members of Congress that are in the audience that I want to acknowledge. At least I think they're here. I haven't spotted everybody. First of all, one of our outstanding leaders in the House of Representatives, and the whip in the House of Representatives, James Clyburn—James Clyburn is right here. One of the deans of the Congress and the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, John Conyers is in the house; a great friend from the great State of Maryland, Elijah Cummings; the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, Barbara Lee; a champion on behalf of DC statehood, or at least voting rights, Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton; Congressman Bobby Scott from the great State of Virginia; and one of our foremost exports—experts on foreign policy, Congressman Donald Payne from New Jersey.

I also want to acknowledge Dr. Earl Richardson, who is finishing tenure as president of Morgan State University. Please, sir. And a great friend, president of Hampton University for more than 30 years, Dr. William Harvey; I promised him I'd come back to Hampton, so I'm going to be speaking at his commencement this year.

And then the Trojan Explosion Drumline from Virginia State University. I'm told this is the first time there's been a drumline in the White House. [*Laughter*] This is what I've been told. [*Laughter*]

Before the Civil War and the creation of what we now call the Historically Black Colleges and Universities, an education, much less a higher education, just wasn't possible for most African Americans. Where it was happening, reading and writing were often taught in secret. But as the Civil War ended and the 13th and 14th and 15th Amendments were signed, a freed people demanded a freed mind, and the war on illiteracy and ignorance began.

There were some, like Booker T. Washington, a freed slave who walked 500 miles from the mines of West Virginia to study at Hamp-

ton, who argued that these colleges should focus on teaching Blacks skilled trades and vocations. There were others, like W.E.B. DuBois, who studied at Fisk and became the first African American to earn a doctorate from Harvard, who advocated for education in the arts and the sciences to cultivate the leaders and teachers of the next generation.

Today, at America's 105 Historically Black Colleges and Universities, our young men and women prepare to do both. They're the campuses where a people were educated, where a middle class was built, where a dream took hold. They're places where generations of African Americans have gained a sense of their heritage, their history, and their place in the American story.

But like all colleges and universities, HBCUs face tough challenges today. Endowments and State budgets are shrinking, too many facilities are deteriorating, enrollment is falling, and the cost of education keeps going up. And these schools feel the pain more acutely. They do more with less, and they enroll higher proportions of low- and middle-income students. And that's why the Recovery Act that was passed last year invested in their infrastructure and technology and nearly doubled the Pell grant award. And that's why the budget I've proposed this year increases HBCU funding by nearly $100 million at the Department of Education alone.

But helping HBCUs chart a new path in this new century will require much more on all of our parts. And that's why today I'm signing an Executive order strengthening the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

This initiative originated in President Carter's administration, it expanded under President Reagan's, and it's been renewed by each President since to help these schools give their students every chance to live up to their full potential. And I've asked Dr. John S. Wilson, a Morehouse man, to lead it under my administration, and Dr. Harvey to serve as Chairman of its advisory board.

And I want to be clear: Strengthening America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities isn't a task that falls to these men or to the Department of Education alone; I expect agencies across the Federal Government to help support this mission.

We're not doing this because these schools—well, we're not only doing this because these schools are a gateway to a better future for African Americans; we're doing it because their success is vital to a better future for all Americans. We know that Americans with college degrees far outearn those without. We know that our businesses too often can't find qualified candidates for open positions. We know that other countries are outeducating their kids to outcompete ours. And yet year after year, a stubborn gap persists between how well African Americans are doing compared to their white classmates. Year after year, American students trail their foreign peers in too many areas. And year after year, those students who do make it to college often find themselves unprepared for its rigors.

That's why education reform has been a top priority of my administration. We launched a national competition to improve our schools by investing only in reform that closes the achievement gap and inspires students to excel in math and science and turns around failing schools that steal the future from too many young Americans. We're working with States and Governors to develop and implement standards that better position all our students to graduate high school prepared for college and careers.

I've urged the Senate to pass a bill that will make college more affordable by ending unnecessary taxpayer subsidies that go to financial intermediaries for student loans, revitalize our community colleges that serve as career pathways for the children of so many working families, and invest more than $2 billion in minority-serving institutions, including HBCUs. All of this will help achieve our goal of ensuring that America once again has the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020, and keeping our HBCUs strong is vital to achieving that goal.

Still, there are some who question the continued relevance of HBCUs, who say that they've fulfilled their purpose, who say that after all the progress that we've made, their rea-

son for being is now somehow obsolete. But it was because of these schools that a young prankster discovered the sense of purpose that led him ultimately to sit on the Supreme Court. It was because of these schools that a young broadcaster with a funny name—Oprah—[*laughter*]—could make that name into an empire. It was because of HBCUs that a young preacher grew into a king that shared his dream with all of America.

It was because of these schools that America's middle class was filled with Black doctors and educators and judges and lawyers and engineers and entrepreneurs. And today, it's because of these schools that one out of every two wide-eyed freshmen who arrives on their campuses with big backpacks and bigger dreams is the first in his or her family to go to college.

And that's why we're here today to ensure that these schools remain the beacons that they've been for more than a century and a half: crucibles of learning where students discover their full potential and forge the character required to realize it; catalysts of change where young people put their hands on the arc of history and move this Nation closer to the ideals of its founding; and the cradles of opportunity where each generation inherits the American Dream and keeps it alive for the next.

That's what HBCUs are about, and that's why I'm proud to now sign this Executive order.

[*At this point, the President signed the Executive order.*]

There we go.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:54 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Bryan Smart, president, Howard University Student Association; John S. Wilson, Executive Director, White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities; William R. Harvey, Chair, President's Board of Advisers on Historically Black Colleges and Universities; and talk show host Oprah Winfrey. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on the Resignation of Desiree Rogers as White House Social Secretary

February 26, 2010

We are enormously grateful to Desiree Rogers for the terrific job she's done as the White House Social Secretary. When she took this position, we asked Desiree to help make sure that the White House truly is the people's house, and she did that by welcoming scores of everyday Americans through its doors, from wounded warriors to local schoolchildren to NASCAR drivers. She organized hundreds of fun and creative events during her time here, and we will miss her. We thank her again for her service and wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

NOTE: This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary as a statement by the President and the First Lady.

Statement on Dominican Republic National Day

February 26, 2010

On behalf of the American people, I send my warmest wishes to those, both in the Dominican Republic and here in America, that are celebrating Dominican Republic National Day. The United States values the cooperation and positive relations it enjoys with the Dominican Republic. Here at home, we honor the contributions that Dominican Americans across the country make in all facets of our national life and join them in celebrating their heritage.

The President's Weekly Address
February 27, 2010

As the Winter Olympics draw to a close this weekend, I just want to take a minute to congratulate all the athletes who competed in these games. And I especially want to say how proud I am of all that the American men and women have achieved over the last few weeks.

Whether it was the men's hockey team's stunning upset of the Canadians on their way to the gold-medal game, or Lindsey Vonn's heroic gold-medal comeback from a shin injury, or Apolo Ohno becoming the most decorated American winter Olympian of all time, you can't help but be inspired by the sheer grit and athletic prowess on display in Vancouver.

And it's not just the medal count that's inspiring, though we've certainly done great on that score. What's truly inspiring is the character of the men and women who have won those medals, the sacrifices they've made, the integrity they've shown, the indomitable Olympic spirit that says no matter who you are or where you come from or what difficulties you may face, you can work hard and train hard and still triumph in the end. That's why we watch. That's why we cheer. That's why in the middle of an extremely challenging time for America, we've been able to come together as one Nation for a few weeks in February and swell with pride at what our citizens have achieved.

Now, when it comes to meeting the larger challenges we face as a nation, I realize that finding this unity is easier said than done, especially in Washington. But if we want to compete on the world stage as well as we've competed in the world's games, we need to find common ground. We need to move past the bickering and the game-playing that holds us back and blocks progress for the American people.

I know it's possible to do this. And we were reminded of that last week when Democrats and Republicans in the Senate came together to pass a jobs bill that will give small businesses tax credits to hire more workers. We also saw it when Democrats and Republicans in the House came together to pass a bill that would force insurance companies to abide by commonsense rules that prevent price-fixing and the other practices that drive up health care costs.

We need that same spirit of cooperation and bipartisanship when it comes to finally passing reform that will bring down the cost of health care and give Americans more control over their insurance. On Thursday, we brought both parties together for a frank and productive discussion about this issue. In that discussion, we heard many areas of agreement. Both sides agreed that the rising cost of health care is a serious problem that plagues families, small businesses, and our Federal budget. Many on both sides agreed that we should give small businesses and individuals the ability to participate in a new insurance marketplace, which Members of Congress would also use, that would allow them to pool their purchasing power and get a better deal from insurance companies. And I heard some ideas from our Republican friends that I believe are very worthy of consideration.

But still, there were differences. We disagreed over whether insurance companies should be held accountable when they deny people care or arbitrarily raise premiums. I believe they should. We disagreed over giving tax credits to small businesses and individuals that would make health care affordable for those who don't have it. This would be the largest middle class tax cut for health care in history, and I believe we should do it. And while we agreed that Americans with preexisting conditions should be able to get coverage, we disagreed on how to do that.

Some of these disagreements we may be able to resolve. Some we may not. And no final bill will include everything that everyone wants. That's what compromise is. I said at the end of Thursday's summit that I am eager and willing to move forward with members of both parties on health care if the other side is serious about coming together to resolve our differences and get this done. But I also believe that we can't lose the opportunity to meet this

challenge. The tens of millions of men and women who can't afford their health insurance, they can't wait another generation for us to act. Small businesses can't wait. Americans with preexisting conditions can't wait. State and Federal budgets can't sustain these rising costs.

It's time for us to come together. It's time for us to act. It's time for those of us in Washington to live up to our responsibilities to the American people and to future generations. So let's get this done.

And thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:10 p.m. on February 26 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on February 27. In the address, the President referred to Lindsey Vonn, skier, and Apolo Anton Ohno, short-track speedskater, 2010 U.S. Olympic team. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 26, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 27. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on the Earthquake in Chile
February 27, 2010

Good morning, everybody. Earlier today a devastating earthquake struck the nation of Chile, affecting millions of people. This catastrophic event was followed by multiple aftershocks and has prompted tsunami warnings across the Pacific Ocean. Earlier today I was briefed by my national security team on the steps that we're taking to protect our own people and to stand with our Chilean friends.

Early indications are that hundreds of lives have been lost in Chile, and the damage is severe. On behalf of the American people, Michelle and I send our deepest condolences to the Chilean people. The United States stands ready to assist in the rescue and recovery efforts, and we have resources that are positioned to deploy should the Chilean Government ask for our help. Chile is a close friend and partner of the United States, and I've reached out to President Bachelet to let her know that we will be there for her should the Chilean people need assistance and our hearts go out to the families who may have lost loved ones.

We're also preparing for a tsunami that could reach American shores later today, particularly in Hawaii, American Samoa, and Guam. A tsunami warning is in place, and people have been alerted to evacuate coastal areas. I urge citizens to listen closely to the instructions of local officials, who will have the full support of the Federal Government as they prepare for a potential tsunami and recover from any damage that may be caused.

I also urge our citizens along the West Coast to be prepared as well, as there may be dangerous waves and currents throughout the day. Again, the most important thing that you can do is to carefully heed the instructions of your State and local officials.

Once again, we've been reminded of the awful devastation that can come at a moment's notice. We can't control nature, but we can and must be prepared for disaster when it strikes. In the hours ahead, we'll continue to take every step possible to prepare our shores and protect our citizens. And we will stand with the people of Chile as they recover from this terrible tragedy.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:48 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Michelle Bachelet Jeria of Chile. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on United States Engagement With Iran
February 26, 2010

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with section 1241 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 (Public Law 111–84), I am providing a classified report prepared by my Administration on U.S. engagement with Iran.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 1.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Zimbabwe
February 26, 2010

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe's democratic processes or institutions is to continue in effect beyond March 6, 2010.

The crisis constituted by the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe's democratic processes or institutions has not been resolved. These actions and policies continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue this national emergency and to maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 26, 2010.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 1. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at an America's Promise Alliance Education Event
March 1, 2010

Thank you. Everybody please have a seat. Let me begin by acknowledging some of the extraordinary people who are working on this extraordinary project. First of all, I want everybody to know, in case you haven't already met him, somebody who is working tirelessly on behalf of the young people of America, my Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan.

I want to acknowledge Marguerite Kondracke, the CEO of America's Promise, who is going to be implementing so much of the terrific work that's been discussed today. Marguerite—there she is, right there.

I want to thank Tom Donohue for your hospitality in this extraordinary venue; thank you very much, and thanks for the chamber's sup-

port for this terrific effort. I want to acknowledge Margaret Spellings, Arne's predecessor, who helped to lead a lot of the improvement that's been taking place and we're building on.

And obviously, I want to thank the Powells, and I will start with the more important Powell, Alma. [*Laughter*] I want to say a word about the remarkable woman who introduced me, a champion of children, a dedicated public servant, and the recipient of numerous awards. And Alma has poured herself into America's Promise Alliance, helping make it the largest partnership of its kind to improve education and help children in this country.

And perhaps that's not surprising, because being an educator seems to run in the family, as I understand. Even though one of her mother's parents was born into slavery and the other just after abolition, both went to college, became teachers, four of their children followed them into the education profession. So her family has educated and enriched generations of Americans, and our Nation is better off for it. And so we are very grateful to you for your extraordinary leadership. Thank you.

There's not much more we can say about the man that Alma succeeds as chair of the Alliance that most people don't already know anyway. I will say that I'm grateful for his friendship, for his counsel, and like so many Americans, I continue to be inspired by his leadership and by his life's story.

It's a story of a son of Jamaican garment workers, a student from the South Bronx; like me, wasn't always at his best in high school, but who went on to City College of New York, thanks to the support of his family and his friends and his community. It's a story of a ROTC cadet who went on to distinguish himself first in Vietnam, then in the Pentagon, in the White House, and in the State Department, and who, after spending a lifetime fighting on behalf of America, has now taken up the fight for America's children.

So the leadership of Colin and Alma are—that they are showing by spearheading the Grad Nation campaign to end America's dropout crisis is just the latest chapter in their service to this Nation. And so I want to publicly commend them and thank them for their extraordinary service. Thank you very much.

One last person I want to make mention of, because I think it bears on the extraordinary public-private partnership that's taking place here, we have the CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service, Patrick Corvington, who is here. Where's Patrick? There he is back there. And so we are hoping to make sure we get a whole bunch of volunteers engaged in this effort.

Now, it's fitting that we're talking about education here at the Chamber of Commerce. After all, for America to compete and to win in the 21st century, we know that we will need a highly educated workforce that is second to none. And we know that the success of every American will be tied more closely than ever before to the level of education that they achieve. The jobs will go to the people with the knowledge and the skills to do them. It's that simple. In this kind of knowledge economy, giving up on your education and dropping out of school means not only giving up on your future, but it's also giving up on your family's future and giving up on your country's future.

And yet that's what too many of America's children are doing today. Over 1 million students don't finish high school each year, nearly one in three. Over half are African American and Latino. The graduation gap in some places between white students and classmates of color is 40 or 50 percent. And in cities like Detroit and Indianapolis and Baltimore, graduation rates hover around 30, 40 percent, roughly half the national average.

Now, it's true that not long ago, you could drop out of high school and reasonably expect to find a blue-collar job that would pay the bills and help support your family. That's just not the case anymore. In recent years, a high school dropout has made, on average, about $10,000 less per year than a high school graduate. In fact, during this recession, a high school dropout has been more than three times as likely to be out of work as someone with at least a college degree.

Graduating from high school is an economic imperative. That might be the best reason to get a diploma, but it's not the only reason to get a

high school diploma. As Alma mentioned, high school dropouts are more likely to be teen parents, more likely to commit crime, more likely to rely on public assistance, more likely to lead shattered lives. What's more, they cost our economy hundreds of billions of dollars over the course of a lifetime in lower wages and higher public expenses.

So this is a problem we cannot afford to accept and we cannot afford to ignore. The stakes are too high, for our children, for our economy, and for our country. It's time for all of us to come together, parents, students, principals and teachers, business leaders and elected officials from across the political spectrum, to end America's dropout crisis.

This is a problem that I've actually been fighting for years. Way back when, when I was a community organizer in Chicago, I saw what happened to a family or to a school or to a community when a student dropped out. So I helped work with local churches in the region to—and public school officials to get State funding for dropout prevention programs and brought together African American and Latino leaders to help set up after-school programs, because when we help keep kids off the street, when we give them a productive way to spend their time, then graduation rates go up.

So that's a commitment that I've carried with me to the Oval Office. And today I want to announce steps my administration will take to help end the dropout crisis in the African American community, in the Latino community, and in the larger American community. Because we know that about 12 percent of America's schools produce 50 percent of America's dropouts, we're going to focus on helping States and school districts turn around their 5,000 lowest performing schools in the next 5 years, and Arne will be amplifying and providing details on how we can do this.

We'll not only challenge States to identify high schools with graduation rates below 60 percent, we're going to invest another $900 million in strategies to get those graduation rates up. Strategies like transforming schools from top to bottom, by bringing in a new principal and training teachers to use more effective techniques in the classroom. Strategies like closing a school for a time and reopening it under new management or even shutting it down entirely and sending its students to a better school. And strategies like replacing a school's principal and at least half of its staff.

Now, replacing school staff should only be done as a last resort. The public servants who work in America's schools, whether they're principals or teachers or counselors or coaches, work long and hard on behalf of our children, and they deserve our gratitude. Keep in mind, I've got a sister who's a teacher; my mother spent time teaching. It's one of the most important jobs that we have in this country. We've got an obligation as a country to give them the support they need, because when principals and teachers succeed, then our children succeed.

So if a school is struggling, we have to work with the principal and the teachers to find a solution. We've got to give them a chance to make meaningful improvements. But if a school continues to fail its students year after year after year, if it doesn't show signs of improvement, then there's got to be a sense of accountability.

And that's what happened in Rhode Island last week at a chronically troubled school, when just 7 percent of 11th graders passed State math tests—7 percent. When a school board wasn't able to deliver change by other means, they voted to lay off the faculty and the staff. As my Education Secretary, Arne Duncan, says, our kids get only one chance at an education, and we need to get it right.

Of course, getting it right requires more than just transforming our lowest performing schools. It requires giving students who are behind in school a chance to catch up and a path to a diploma. It requires focusing on students, from middle school through high school, who face factors at home, in the neighborhood, or in school that put them at risk of dropping out. And it requires replicating innovative ideas that make class feel engaging and relevant, because most high school dropouts in a recent study said the reason they dropped out was that they weren't interested in class and they weren't motivated to do their work.

So that's why we'll build on the efforts of places like Communities In Schools that make sure kids who are at risk of dropping out have one-on-one support. That's why we'll follow the example of places like the Met Center in Rhode Island that give students that individual attention, while also preparing them through real-world, hands-on training—the possibility of succeeding in a career.

And that's why we'll invest in accelerated instruction in reading and math to help students who've fallen behind make up credits and ultimately graduate on time. It's also why we'll foster better alternative high schools and transfer schools, where students who have dropped out and who are at risk of dropping out can return to the classroom and earn their diploma.

That's how we can curb dropout rates and boost graduating rates. I have to point out, in the 21st century, high schools shouldn't just make sure students graduate; they should make sure students graduate ready for college, ready for a career, and ready for life. And that's why we'll foster what are called early college high schools that allow students to earn a high school diploma and an associate's degree or college credit at the same time. We want to learn from successful charter schools, where students can take advanced and college-level courses.

So government has a responsibility. Government can help educate students to succeed in college and a career. Government can help provide the resources to engage dropouts and those at risk of dropping out. And when necessary, government has to be critically involved in turning around lowest performing schools. And nobody has been more passionate about this than Arne Duncan.

But as I've said before, education is not and cannot be the task of government alone. It's going to take nonprofits and businesses doing their part through alliances like America's Promise. It will take parents getting involved in their children's education, consistently, going to parent-teachers conferences, helping their children with their homework. I have to point out I just went to my daughter's parent-teachers conference last week. She's doing very well, by the way. [*Laughter*] It will take students as well, showing up to school on time and paying attention to classes and staying out of trouble. They're not let off the hook. Education isn't a passive activity, it's an active one.

So educating America's sons and daughters is a task for all Americans. And that's what this alliance, that's what this effort is all about, making sure that none of us think that it's somebody else's job, but rather we all accept our role to play in making sure that we have the best educated citizenry in the world. That's what has made the 20th century the American century; that's what will make the 21st century the American century.

Now, there's an old story that Colin has told about a man named George Ellis, who lived about a hundred years ago. And George Ellis was a janitor. His job was to clean up after the artist Daniel Chester French. Some of you may have heard of French; he's the one who carved the figure of Abraham Lincoln for the Lincoln Memorial.

So day after day, week after week, month after month, Ellis went about his job, barely uttering a word to Mr. French, other than saying the occasional hello or goodbye. And then one day, just when French had nearly completed his masterpiece, Ellis spoke up. He said, "Mr. French, I have a question for you." So the artist said, "What is it?" "Well, what I want to ask is how you knew all along that Mr. Lincoln was sitting inside that block of marble."

And as Colin pointed out, that wasn't a silly question. Because sometimes in this country and in our lives, we see blocks of marble, and some people can see what's inside and some people can't. It was a question profound—it was a profound question about how we recognize the potential within each of us and chisel away at what's keeping it locked inside.

I'm absolutely confident that because of the work of Colin and Alma Powell, because of the work that Grad Nation campaign is going to be doing and America's Promise Alliance is going to be doing, because of the work that we're doing across this Nation to give our children the best education the world has to offer, from cradle to classroom, from college through career, that we are chiseling away at the obstacles that

lie in our path, that block our children's potential. We want to unlock that potential, carve it out so that our economy succeeds, so that this country succeeds, and so that our children and grandchildren succeed.

So thank you very much for the extraordinary work you're doing. Thank you all for your participation. May God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:18 a.m. at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas J. Donohue, president and chief executive officer, U.S. Chamber of Commerce; former Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings; and Alma J. Powell, chair, America's Promise Alliance, and her husband, former Secretary of State Colin L. Powell. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

Remarks at Savannah Technical College in Savannah
March 2, 2010

The President. Hello, everybody. Well, thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat, have a seat. Thank you. It is good to be back in Georgia. It is good to be back in Georgia, although where's the Sun, guys? [*Laughter*] I was looking forward to——

Audience member. Fired up!

The President. I'm still fired up, but we've been getting a lot of snow in Washington, DC, so I was looking forward to maybe 60, 70 degrees. [*Laughter*] But I guess I'll take 50.

I want to first of all just make some acknowledgments of some wonderful leaders who are here. First of all, I want to thank President Kathy Love and the entire Savannah Tech community for their hospitality. I want to thank your Governor, who I just had a chance to see recently, host him in the White House with the other Governors, Mr. Sonny Perdue. Your mayor, Otis Johnson, is in the house. Congressman John Barrow—you're in his district. [*Applause*] That's right. Congressman Jack Kingston, Congressman Sanford Bishop, and Congressman Hank Johnson are all in the house.

Well, thank you so much for taking the time to be here today. I really appreciate the opportunity to visit here at Savannah Tech. And I just took a brief tour of some of the classrooms where students are learning about clean energy. They're learning about solar cells; they're learning about efficient heating and cooling systems. You've got young people here who, through the YouthBuild program, are gaining job skills that will help them the rest of their lives. And by the way, they're building a house right now while they're at it.

And so from the instructors to the students, you saw just an incredible enthusiasm for America's future. And I was just talking to President Love about the focus of Savannah Tech on clean energy, the idea that this can be a real model for green energy as a way of linking students to the enormous job opportunities and business opportunities that exist in the future. These are the skills that will help our country transform the way we produce and use energy.

And that's so important, especially as families in Georgia and across America continue to experience the painful consequences of the worst economic crisis that we've had in generations.

Now, I had also had a chance to meet with some business owners who told me what I've heard time and again, that it's tough out there. Unemployment in Georgia is still above 10 percent. That doesn't include folks who have had to accept part-time jobs or in some cases have given up finding a job altogether. And when it comes to domestic policy, I have no more important a job as President than seeing to it that every American who wants to work and is able to work can find a job and a job that pays a living wage. That was my focus last year, and that is my focus this year: to lay a foundation for economic growth that will create jobs, that raises incomes, that will foster a secure economic future for middle class families.

Now, this depends on not just spurring hiring, but doing so in the areas that will create

lasting opportunities and prosperity. That's why we've invested in roads and railways so that our economy has room to grow and we're laying the infrastructure for the future. In fact, because of the Recovery Act, there are more than 300 transportation projects underway in Georgia right now.

That's why we invested in schools and prevented layoffs of hundreds of thousands of teachers and public school workers, including thousands of educators in this State, because we know we will not be able to compete in new industries unless we've got workers ready to fill jobs in those industries. And I'd also point out that I've proposed the largest ever investment in community colleges and technical schools like this one, to produce millions more graduates who are ready to meet the demands of a 21st-century economy.

And to spur hiring and sustain growth, we've placed a big emphasis on energy. Now, just a few weeks ago, I announced a loan guarantee to break ground on the first new nuclear power plant in our country in nearly three decades, a project right here in Georgia—right here in Georgia—a project that's going to create more than 3,000 construction jobs in the next few years and, ultimately, 800 permanent jobs operating the plant. We're on track to create 700,000 jobs across America building advanced batteries for hybrid cars and modernizing our electric grid and doubling our capacity to generate clean energy.

And in fact, here at Savannah Tech, the Recovery Act provided a grant to YouthBuild to help provide training in these very fields. Because I'm convinced that the country that leads in clean energy is also going to be the country that leads in the global economy. And I want America to be that nation. I don't want us to be second place or third place or fourth place when it comes to the new energy technologies; I want us to be in first.

So we have the potential to create millions of jobs in this sector. These are jobs building more fuel-efficient cars and trucks to make us energy independent. These are jobs producing solar panels and erecting wind turbines. These are jobs designing and manufacturing and selling and installing more efficient building materials, because 40 percent of the energy we use is used by our homes and buildings. Think about that. All of us know that we use a lot of gas in our cars. But in terms of energy usage, 40 percent of it goes to our homes and our buildings.

So as we're looking for additional initiatives to spur hiring, I think we ought to embrace what's happening on this campus. I think we ought to continue to embrace the incredible potential that awaits us across America in clean energy. So in my State of the Union Address, I called on Congress to pass a set of initiatives for homeowners who make their homes more energy efficient, to continue the energy transformation that's already begun. So today I want to explain the details of this program. And I also want to thank the Members of the House and the Senate who are helping to usher this proposal through Congress.

Now, many of you have heard of ENERGY STAR. How many people have heard of ENERGY STAR? You've seen that ENERGY STAR sticker on a computer or on a microwave? The ENERGY STAR program was created to promote energy efficiency by letting consumers know which appliances, which electronics, would save electricity and therefore would save them money over time. The program I'm describing today applies this concept not to the appliances, but to the home itself, and it takes it further. So we're going to call it Home Star just to make it easy to remember.

All right, here's how it would work. We'd identify the kinds of building supplies and systems that would save folks energy over time. And here's one of the best things about energy efficiency, it turns out that energy-efficient windows or insulation, those things are products that are almost exclusively manufactured right here in the United States of America. It's very hard to ship windows from China. [*Laughter*] And so a lot of these materials are made right here in America.

So we take these materials, and if a homeowner decides to do work on his or her house—to put in new windows, to replace a heating unit, to insulate an attic, to redo a roof—the homeowner would be eligible for a rebate from the store or the contractor for 50 percent of the cost of each upgrade up to

$1,500. Now, if you decided to retrofit your whole house to greatly reduce your energy use, you'd be eligible for a rebate of up to $3,000.

Now, these are big incentives. And you'd get these rebates instantly from the hardware store or the contractor. So if you went to Lowe's or Home Depot's or wherever you went, right there when you paid at the cash register you'd get that money. You wouldn't have to mail in a long form, wait for a check to arrive months later.

Now, we know this will save families as much as several hundred dollars on their utilities. We know it will make our economy less dependent on fossil fuels, helping to protect the planet for future generations. But I want to emphasize that Home Star will also create business and spur hiring up and down the economy.

I was just meeting with a number of business leaders in different segments of this industry. We've got some manufacturers making insulation and windows and other products; we've got folks who are contractors. So—stand up, guys—the guys I just met with. See, they're already—they're ready to work. They're ready to go. So we were just talking about how they are geared up, and they've got the capacity to guarantee a homeowner that if they're willing to do this work on their house, they will get their money back, not just through the rebate, but in the energy savings that you're seeing each year.

So let's say you decide to use this rebate to seal up and insulate your attic, because you want to save electricity, but also because you're tired of a drafty house. Think about all the ways in which that will stimulate jobs and growth. Now, if you really knew what you were doing, you might do it yourself, but you're probably going to have somebody come to the house to carry out the installation work, because you did the smart thing, and you refused to let your husband do it himself. [*Laughter*] That's the smart thing. He'll be stubborn. He'll tell you he can do it, but don't listen to him. [*Laughter*]

So that creates work for small businesses and contractors like some of the folks who are here today. And obviously, construction work is—that's been as hard hit as anything during this recession, so you've got a lot of skilled contractors ready to go. And that in turn means that the contractors start hiring some of these folks who may have been laid off. Some of them may have been trained right here at Savannah Tech. Now, you also have to buy the insulation and the other materials, and that means you're producing business for your local retailer. And that retailer has to purchase those supplies from manufacturers, as I said, most of them located right here in the United States of America. And I mentioned these domestic manufacturers who are in the crowd, they would benefit from this program. And then there's this huge amount of capacity—excess capacity—in construction and related industries to meet any surge in demand that was out there.

So the fact is that there's nearly 25 percent unemployment in the construction industry so far, so construction companies, hardware stores, contractors, manufacturers, they faced a rapid decline in demand in the wake of the mortgage crisis. And to make matters worse, these businesses have seen the same decline in credit that has hurt every sector of our economy.

So these are companies ready to take on new customers, their workers eager to do new installations and renovations, factories ready to produce new building supplies. All we've got to do is create the incentives to make it happen. And this is not a Democratic idea or a Republican idea, this is a commonsense approach that will help jump-start job creation while making our economy stronger.

So ultimately, that's what we're called to do. Just like a responsible homeowner will invest in their homes in the near term to fortify their economic security in the long term, we've got to do the same as a country. It will have some costs on the front end. You know, you buy a new boiler or you get some insulation or you get some new windows, that's going to have an initial cost, and the same is true from a government perspective. And it's going to be politically difficult to do some of this, but it's what's right to plan for our future.

The same is true when it comes to reforming our education system. The same is true when it comes to trying to make our health care system more affordable. The same is true when it comes to energy. Each of these things are hard. Some of them have some costs on the front end, and working stuff through Congress is more than a notion. [*Laughter*] But by taking these steps we'll help foster the kind of broadly shared growth that will serve us in the years and the decades to come.

That's how we'll create the conditions for businesses to expand and hire. That's how we'll truly grow our middle class again. That's how we'll not only rebuild our economy, but we'll rebuild it stronger than it was before this crisis.

I am confident that we can do it. Savannah Tech is leading the way, a whole bunch of folks in this room are leading the way, and I just hope that Washington stands alongside you in making sure that we've got the kind of energy future that we need.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:31 p.m.

Remarks Following a Tour of Meddin Studios and an Exchange With Reporters in Savannah

March 2, 2010

Q. Mr. President, what has impressed you about Meddin Studios? What do you see here that——

The President. Well, look, the—if you think about the two businesses we just visited, on the one hand you've got old-line manufacturing at a steel company that is in its third generation, but they've been able to adapt to a tough manufacturing environment and succeed, mainly around customer service, being able to turn around orders very quickly, specialized orders.

These guys here at Meddin, I think, are doing a similar concept, which is that whatever the customer needs in terms of film production, digital production, sound, you name it, they've got it all under one roof. And what it means is that anybody who comes here is going to be able to, from soup to nuts, do what they need to do very effectively.

The main reason that we wanted to highlight what they're doing is they took advantage of an SBA loan to get this thing started. And I was just finding out how that experience was. I'm sort of doing a customer satisfaction survey here—[*laughter*]—with our SBA loans, and it sounds like it really was helpful in terms of making sure that these guys could get started with the business idea that they had, and it doesn't sound like, without it, they would have been able to get moving as quickly as they did.

So it's a testimony, I think, to the good work that the SBA is doing. It's an example of the kinds of additional capital we want to get out to small businesses and medium-sized businesses as part of the jobs package that hopefully will be working its way through Congress in the next several weeks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:46 p.m. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Senate Passage of Legislation Temporarily Extending Unemployment Insurance and Other Programs

March 2, 2010

During these difficult economic times, supporting American workers, their families, and our small businesses must be everyone's focus. The bill passed tonight by the Senate will extend access to health care benefits for workers who have lost their jobs, help small businesses

get loans so they can grow and hire, and extend unemployment insurance benefits for millions of Americans who are looking for work. I'm grateful to the Members of the Senate on both sides of the aisle who worked to end this roadblock to relief for America's working families.

NOTE: H.R. 4691, approved March 2, was assigned Public Law No. 111–144.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Health Care Reform
March 2, 2010

*Dear*_____:

Thank you again for the time, energy, and preparation you invested in last Thursday's bipartisan meeting on health insurance reform. I have always believed that our legislative process works best when both sides can discuss our differences and common goals openly and honestly, and I'm very pleased that our meeting at Blair House offered the American people and their elected representatives a rare opportunity to explore different health reform proposals in extraordinary depth.

The meeting was a good opportunity to move past the usual rhetoric and sound-bites that have come to characterize this debate and identify areas on which we agree and disagree. And one point on which everyone expressed agreement was that the cost of health care is a large and growing problem that, left untended, threatens families, businesses and the solvency of our government itself.

I also left convinced that the Republican and Democratic approaches to health care have more in common than most people think.

For example, we agree on the need to reform our insurance markets. We agree on the idea of allowing small businesses and individuals who lack insurance to join together to increase their purchasing power so they can enjoy greater choices and lower prices. And we agree on the dire need to wring out waste, fraud and abuse and get control of skyrocketing health care costs.

But there were also important areas of disagreement. There was a fundamental disagreement about what role the oversight of the health insurance industry should play in reform. I believe we must insist on some common-sense rules of the road to hold insurance companies accountable for the decisions they make to raise premiums and deny coverage. I don't believe we can afford to leave life-and-death decisions about health care for America's families to the discretion of insurance company executives alone.

No matter how we move forward, there are at least four policy priorities identified by Republican Members at the meeting that I am exploring. I said throughout this process that I'd continue to draw on the best ideas from both parties, and I'm open to these proposals in that spirit:

1. Although the proposal I released last week included a comprehensive set of initiatives to combat fraud, waste, and abuse, Senator Coburn had an interesting suggestion that we engage medical professionals to conduct random undercover investigations of health care providers that receive reimbursements from Medicare, Medicaid, and other Federal programs.
2. My proposal also included a provision from the Senate health reform bill that authorizes funding to states for demonstrations of alternatives to resolving medical malpractice disputes, including health courts. Last Thursday, we discussed the provision in the bills cosponsored by Senators Coburn and Burr and Representatives Ryan and Nunes (S. 1099) that provides a similar program of grants to states for demonstration projects. Senator Enzi offered a similar proposal in a health insurance reform bill he sponsored in the last Congress. As we discussed, my Administration is already moving forward in funding demonstration projects through the Department of Health and Human Services, and Secre-

tary Sebelius will be awarding $23 million for these grants in the near future. However, in order to advance our shared interest in incentivizing states to explore what works in this arena, I am open to including an appropriation of $50 million in my proposal for additional grants. Currently there is only an authorization, which does not guarantee that the grants will be funded.

3. At the meeting, Senator Grassley raised a concern, shared by many Democrats, that Medicaid reimbursements to doctors are inadequate in many states, and that if Medicaid is expanded to cover more people, we should consider increasing doctor reimbursement. I'm open to exploring ways to address this issue in a fiscally responsible manner.

4. Senator Barrasso raised a suggestion that we expand Health Savings Accounts (HSAs). I know many Republicans believe that HSAs, when used in conjunction with high-deductible health plans, are a good vehicle to encourage more cost-consciousness in consumers' use of health care services. I believe that high-deductible health plans could be offered in the exchange under my proposal, and I'm open to including language to ensure that is clear. This could help to encourage more people to take advantage of HSAs.

There are provisions that were added to the legislation that shouldn't have been. That's why my proposal does not include the Medicare Advantage provision, mentioned by Senator McCain at the meeting, which provided transitional extra benefits for Florida and other states. My proposal eliminates those payments, gradually reducing Medicare Advantage payments across the country relative to fee-for service Medicare in an equitable fashion (page 8). My proposal rewards high-quality and high-performing plans.

In addition, my proposal eliminates the Nebraska FMAP provision, replacing it with additional federal financing to all states for the expansion of Medicaid.

Admittedly, there are areas on which Republicans and Democrats don't agree. While we all believe that reform must be built around our existing private health insurance system, I believe that we must hold the insurance industry to clear rules, so they can't arbitrarily raise rates or reduce or eliminate coverage. That must be a part of any serious reform to make it work for the many Americans who have insurance coverage today, as well as those who don't.

I also believe that piecemeal reform is not the best way to effectively reduce premiums, end the exclusion of people with pre-existing conditions or offer Americans the security of knowing that they will never lose coverage, even if they lose or change jobs.

My ideas have been informed by discussions with Republicans and Democrats, doctors and nurses, health care experts, and everyday Americans—not just last Thursday, but over the course of a yearlong dialogue. Both parties agree that the health care status quo is unsustainable. And both should agree that it's just not an option to walk away from the millions of American families and business owners counting on reform.

After decades of trying, we're closer than we've ever been to making health insurance reform a reality. I look forward to working with you to complete what would be a truly historic achievement.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi, and House Minority Leader John A. Boehner; and Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid, and Senate Minority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Remarks on Health Care Reform
March 3, 2010

Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. Thank you so much, all of you, for joining us today. And I want to thank Julie, Barbara, Roland, Stephen, Renee, and Christopher, standing behind me—physicians, physician assistants, and nurses who understand how important it is for us to make much needed changes in our health care system.

I want to thank all of you who are here today. I want to specially recognize two people who have been working tirelessly on that—on this effort, my Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, as well as our quarterback—[*laughter*]—for health reform out of the White House, Nancy-Ann DeParle.

We began our push to reform health insurance last March in this room, with doctors and nurses who know the system best. And so it's fitting to be joined by all of you as we bring this journey to a close.

Last Thursday, I spent 7 hours at a summit where Democrats and Republicans engaged in a public and very substantive discussion about health care. This meeting capped off a debate that began with a similar summit nearly 1 year ago. And since then, every idea has been put on the table. Every argument has been made. Everything there is to say about health care has been said—[*laughter*]—and just about everybody has said it. [*Laughter*] So now is the time to make a decision about how to finally reform health care so that it works, not just for the insurance companies, but for America's families and America's businesses.

Now, where both sides say they agree is that the status quo is not working for the American people. Health insurance is becoming more expensive by the day. Families can't afford it; businesses can't afford it; the Federal Government can't afford it. Smaller businesses and individuals who don't get coverage at work are squeezed especially hard. And insurance companies freely ration health care based on who's sick and who's healthy, who can pay and who can't. That's the status quo. That's the system we have right now.

Democrats and Republicans agree that this is a serious problem for America. And we agree that if we do nothing, if we throw up our hands and walk away, it's a problem that will only grow worse. Nobody disputes that. More Americans will lose their family's health insurance if they switch jobs or lose their job. More small businesses will be forced to choose between health care and hiring. More insurance companies will deny people coverage who have preexisting conditions, or they'll drop people's coverage when they get sick and need it most. And the rising cost of Medicare and Medicaid will sink our Government deeper and deeper and deeper into debt. On all of this, we agree. So the question is, what do we do about it?

On one end of the spectrum, there are some who've suggested scrapping our system of private insurance and replacing it with a Government-run health care system. And though many other countries have such a system, in America, it would be neither practical nor realistic.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are those—and this includes most Republicans in Congress—who believe the answer is to loosen regulations on the insurance industry, whether it's State consumer protections or minimum standards for the kind of insurance they can sell. The argument is, is that that will somehow lower costs. I disagree with that approach. I'm concerned that this would only give the insurance industry even freer rein to raise premiums and deny care.

So I don't believe we should give government bureaucrats or insurance company bureaucrats more control over health care in America. I believe it's time to give the American people more control over their health care and their health insurance. I don't believe we can afford to leave life-and-death decisions about health care to the discretion of insurance company executives alone. I believe that doctors and nurses and physician's assistants like the ones in this room should be free to decide what's best for their patients.

Now, the proposal I've put forward gives Americans more control over their health insurance and their health care by holding insurance companies more accountable. It builds on the current system, where most Americans get their health insurance from their employer. If you like your plan, you can keep your plan. If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. I can tell you, as the father of two young girls, I would not want any plan that interferes with the relationship between a family and their doctor.

Essentially, my proposal would change three things about the current health care system. First, it would end the worst practices of insurance companies. No longer would they be able to deny your coverage because of a preexisting condition. No longer would they be able to drop your coverage because you got sick. No longer would they be able to force you to pay unlimited amounts of money out of your own pocket. No longer would they be able to arbitrarily and massively raise premiums like Anthem BlueCross recently tried to do in California, up to 39-percent increases in 1 year in the individual market. Those practices would end.

Second, my proposal would give uninsured individuals and small-business owners the same kind of choice of private health insurance that Members of Congress get for themselves, because if it's good enough for Members of Congress, it's good enough for the people who pay their salaries.

The reason Federal employees get a good deal on health insurance is that we all participate in an insurance market where insurance companies give better coverage and better rates because they get more customers. It's an idea that many Republicans have embraced in the past, before politics intruded.

And my proposal says that if you still can't afford the insurance in this new marketplace, even though it's going to provide better deals for people than they can get right now in the individual marketplace, then we'll offer you tax credits to do so, tax credits that add up to the largest middle class tax cut for health care in history. After all, the wealthiest among us can already buy the best insurance there is, and the least well off are able to get coverage through Medicaid. So it's the middle class that gets squeezed, and that's who we have to help.

Now, it is absolutely true that all of this will cost some money, about $100 billion per year. But most of this comes from the nearly $2 trillion a year that America already spends on health care, but a lot of it is not spent wisely; a lot of that money is being wasted or spent badly. So within this plan, we're going to make sure the dollars we spend go towards making insurance more affordable and more secure. We're going to eliminate wasteful taxpayer subsidies that currently go to insurance and pharmaceutical companies, set a new fee on insurance companies that stand to gain a lot of money and a lot of profits as millions of Americans are able to buy insurance, and we're going to make sure that the wealthiest Americans pay their fair share on Medicare.

The bottom line is, our proposal is paid for. And all the new money generated in this plan goes back to small businesses and middle class families who can't afford health insurance. It would also lower prescription drug prices for seniors, and it would help train new doctors and nurses and physician's assistants to provide care for American families.

Finally, my proposal would bring down the cost of health care for millions: families, businesses, and the Federal Government. We have now incorporated most of the serious ideas from across the political spectrum about how to contain the rising cost of health care, ideas that go after the waste and abuse in our system, especially in programs like Medicare. But we do this while protecting Medicare benefits and extending the financial stability of the program by nearly a decade.

Our cost-cutting measures mirror most of the proposals in the current Senate bill, which reduces most people's premiums and brings down our deficit by up to a trillion dollars over the next two decades—brings down our deficit. Those aren't my numbers; those are the savings determined by the Congressional Budget Office, which is the Washington acronym for the nonpartisan, independent referee of Congress in terms of how much stuff costs.

So that's our proposal. This is where we've ended up. It's an approach that has been debat-

ed and changed and, I believe, improved over the last year. It incorporates the best ideas from Democrats and Republicans, including some of the ideas that Republicans offered during the health care summit, like funding State grants on medical malpractice reform and curbing waste and fraud and abuse in the health care system. My proposal also gets rid of many of the provisions that had no place in health care reform, provisions that were more about winning individual votes in Congress than improving health care for all Americans.

Now, despite all that we agree on and all the Republican ideas we've incorporated, many—probably most—Republicans in Congress just have a fundamental disagreement over whether we should have more or less oversight of insurance companies. And if they truly believe that less regulation would lead to higher quality, more affordable health insurance, then they should vote against the proposal I've put forward.

Now, some also believe that we should, instead of doing what I'm proposing, pursue a piecemeal approach to health insurance reform, where we tinker around the edges of this challenge for the next few years. Even those who acknowledge the problem of the uninsured say we just can't afford to help them right now, which is why the Republican proposal only covers 3 million uninsured Americans, while we cover over 31 million.

The problem with that approach is that unless everyone has access to affordable coverage, you can't prevent insurance companies from denying coverage based on preexisting conditions, you can't limit the amount families are forced to pay out of their own pockets. The insurance reforms rest on everybody having access to coverage. And you also don't do anything about the fact that taxpayers currently end up subsidizing the uninsured when they're forced to go to the emergency room for care, to the tune of about a thousand bucks per family. You can't get those savings if those people are still going to the emergency room. So the fact is, health reform only works if you take care of all of these problems at once.

Now, both during and after last week's summit, Republicans in Congress insisted that the only acceptable course on health care reform is to start over. But given these honest and substantial differences between the parties about the need to regulate the insurance industry and the need to help millions of middle class families get insurance, I don't see how another year of negotiations would help.

Moreover, the insurance companies aren't starting over; they're continuing to raise premiums and deny coverage as we speak. For us to start over now could simply lead to delay that could last for another decade or even more. The American people and the U.S. economy just can't wait that long. So no matter which approach you favor, I believe the United States Congress owes the American people a final vote on health care reform.

We have debated this issue thoroughly, not just for the past year, but for decades. Reform has already passed the House with a majority. It has already passed the Senate with a supermajority of 60 votes. And now it deserves the same kind of up-or-down vote that was cast on welfare reform, that was cast on the Children's Health Insurance Program, that was used for COBRA health coverage for the unemployed, and by the way, for both Bush tax cuts, all of which had to pass Congress with nothing more than a simple majority.

I therefore ask leaders in both Houses of Congress to finish their work and schedule a vote in the next few weeks. From now until then, I will do everything in my power to make the case for reform. And I urge every American who wants this reform to make their voice heard as well. Every family, every business, every patient, every doctor, every nurse, every physician's assistant, make your voice heard.

This has been a long and wrenching debate. It has stoked great passions among the American people and their representatives. And that's because health care is a difficult issue. It is a complicated issue. If it was easy, it would have been solved long ago. As all of you know from experience, health care can literally be an issue of life or death. And as a result, it easily lends itself to demagoguery and political gamesmanship and misrepresentation and misunderstanding.

But that's not an excuse for those of us who were sent here to lead. That's not an excuse for us to walk away. We can't just give up because the politics are hard. I know there's been a fascination, bordering on obsession, in this media town about what passing health insurance reform would mean for the next election and the one after that. How will this play? What will happen with the polls? I will leave it to others to sift through the politics, because that's not what this is about. That's not why we're here.

This is about what reform would mean for the mother with breast cancer whose insurance company will finally have to pay for her chemotherapy. This is about what reform would mean for the small-business owner who will no longer have to choose between hiring more workers or offering coverage to the employees she has. This is about what reform would mean for middle class families who will be able to afford health insurance for the very first time in their lives and get a regular checkup once in a while and have some security about their children if they get sick.

This is about what reform would mean for all those men and women I've met over the last few years who've been brave enough to share their stories. And when we started our push for reform last year, I talked to a young mother in Wisconsin named Laura Klitzka. She has two young children. She thought she had beaten her breast cancer, but then later discovered it had spread to her bones. She and her husband were working and had insurance, but their medical bills still landed them in debt. And now she spends time worrying about that debt when all she wants to do is spend time with her children and focus on getting well. This should not happen in the United States of America. And it doesn't have to.

In the end, that's what this debate is about. It's about what kind of country we want to be. It's about the millions of lives that would be touched and, in some cases, saved by making private health insurance more secure and more affordable.

So at stake right now is not just our ability to solve this problem, but our ability to solve any problem. The American people want to know if it's still possible for Washington to look out for their interests and their future. They are waiting for us to act; they are waiting for us to lead. And as long as I hold this office, I intend to provide that leadership. I do not know how this plays politically, but I know it's right. And so I ask Congress to finish its work, and I look forward to signing this reform into law.

Thank you very much, everybody. Let's get it done.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:50 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to registered nurse Julie Babich; Barbara Crane, member, American Nurses Association Political Action Committee Board of Trustees; Roland A. Goertz, president-elect, American Academy of Family Physicians; Stephen Hanson, president, American Academy of Physician Assistants; Renee Jenkins, professor of pediatrics, Howard University College of Medicine, Washington, DC; Christopher Lillis, internist, Chancellor Internal Medicine, Fredericksburg, VA; and Nancy-Ann DeParle, Director, White House Office of Health Reform.

Remarks at Opower in Arlington, Virginia
March 5, 2010

Okay, good morning, everybody. It is great to be here at Opower, and just looking around, this looks like a fun place to work. [*Laughter*] The work you do here, as we just heard, is making homes more energy efficient, it's saving people money, it's generating jobs, and it's putting America on the path to a clean energy future. And I understand, last year, that you doubled your workforce thanks to Donnie—[*applause*]—you're hoping to hire another 100 workers this year. And so this is a model of what we want to be seeing all across the country. Our goal for the economy is to show similar job growth in the months ahead.

This morning we learned that in February, our economy lost an additional 36,000 jobs. Now, this is actually better than expected, considering the severe storms all along the East

Coast are estimated to have had a depressing effect on the numbers. And it shows that the measures that we're taking to turn our economy around are having some impact. But even though it's better than expected, it's more than we should tolerate.

Far too many Americans remain out of work. Far too many families are still struggling in these difficult economic times. And that's why I'm not going to rest and my administration's not going to rest in our efforts to help people who are looking to find a job, to help business owners who want to expand feel comfortable hiring again. And we're not going to rest until our economy is working again for the middle class and for all Americans.

And that's why my immediate priority is not only providing relief to people who are out of work, but also to help the private sector create jobs and put America back to work. Earlier this week, after breaking through a political logjam that some of you probably saw if you were watching TV, Congress passed and I signed into law a bill that extends unemployment insurance to help people who've been laid off get through these hard times. It also extended COBRA so that folks who've lost their jobs don't lose their health insurance, and it extended financing for small businesses, and makes it possible for 2,000 furloughed transportation workers to go back to work.

So signing this bill and getting relief out the door swiftly is absolutely essential. But it's only a temporary step. The relief I signed into law will last about a month. And that's why I'm calling Congress to extend this relief through the end of the year. And because the best form of economic relief is a quality job, I'm also calling on Congress to pass jobs measures that cut taxes, increase lending, incentivize expansion for businesses, both large and small.

Now, both the House and the Senate have passed a bill that would give businesses a payroll tax refund for every person hired this year. And for companies that are considering expanding, this credit could help them decide to bring an extra employee or two this year. So for companies like Opower that are doing pretty well and already expanding, the tax credit may help them decide to hire even more workers more quickly. So instead of a hundred, maybe we get 110, 115. [*Applause*] Yes, we'll see.

Now, this bill would also encourage small companies to expand by permitting them to write off expenses for new equipment. And while it's by no means enough, this legislation's an important step on the road to recovery, and I look forward to signing it into law.

Now, even as we fight to help the private sector create more jobs, and even as we fight to bring about a full economic recovery, we know that there have been success stories all across America. Opower is one of those success stories. This is a company that works with utilities to help folks understand their energy costs and how they can save money on their energy bills. And for the press, if you weren't able to hear, this board testifies to the number of kilowatt-hours that have been saved, the amount of money that's gone back into consumers' pockets, and the amount of carbon that has been taken out of the atmosphere as a consequence of the great work that these people here at Opower are doing.

Now, part of the reason I suspect you're growing is that you're doing your jobs well. But I also know that a big part of the reason is that you're seizing the opportunities of the future. The jobs of tomorrow will be jobs in the clean energy sector, and this company is a great emblem for that. That's why my administration's taking steps to support a thriving clean energy industry across this country, an industry that's making solar panels and building wind turbines, producing cutting-edge batteries for fuel-efficient cars and trucks, and helping consumers get more control over their energy bills.

And that's also why, earlier this week, I urged Congress to enact a new initiative we're calling Home Star that would offer homeowners rebates for making their homes more energy efficient—rebates worth up to $1,500 for individual home upgrades and up to $3,000 for retrofitting their entire home. So if they're getting this good information from Opower and they see that, boy, that drafty window is costing me a couple of hundred bucks a year, they're now going to have an incentive to go to

Home Depot or go to Lowes, to hire a certified contractor and make the changes that will ultimately pay for themselves, improve our environment, and improve our economy.

I want to thank, by the way, your homestate Senator, Mark Warner, for his great work on Home Star in the Senate.

Think about the way that the rebates we're talking about could help spur private sector job growth. It could not only help businesses like Opower to help consumers make their homes more energy efficient, it's also going to create business for the local contractors and the companies hired to upgrade homes. These companies then, in turn, have to purchase supplies, and that creates business for retailers. And these retailers would need to restock their shelves, and that creates business for manufacturers. And almost all the goods that are required to make homes more energy efficient are actually produced right here in the United States of America. It's very hard to ship an energy-efficient window across an ocean.

So yes, people who are out of work right now need some immediate relief. Yes, we need to extend unemployment insurance and COBRA to help Americans weather these tough times. And yes, we've got to do everything we can to help the private sector create jobs right now.

But even as we do, we also need to replicate the success of clean energy companies like Opower. We need to invest in the jobs of the future and in the industries of the future, because the country that leads in clean energy and energy efficiency today, I'm absolutely convinced, is going to lead the global economy tomorrow. I want that country to be the United States of America. I want companies like Opower to be expanding and thriving all across America. It's good for consumers; it's good for our economy; it's good for our environment.

It's wonderfully exciting to be here. And I think when you look at this group that's gathered here, you can see the future in this company. So thanks for the great work you guys are doing. Let's see if we can replicate your success all across the country.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:43 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to La Donica M. "Donnie" Small, recruiting manager, Opower.

Statement on the 40th Anniversary of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty

March 5, 2010

Forty years ago today, in the midst of a cold war, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) entered into force, becoming the cornerstone of the world's efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. Today, the threat of global nuclear war has passed, but the danger of nuclear proliferation endures, making the basic bargain of the NPT more important than ever: Nations with nuclear weapons will move toward disarmament, nations without nuclear weapons will forsake them, and all nations have an "inalienable right" to peaceful nuclear energy.

Each of these three pillars—disarmament, nonproliferation, and peaceful uses—are central to the vision that I outlined in Prague of stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and seeking a world without them.

To promote disarmament, the United States is working with Russia to complete negotiations on a new START Treaty that will significantly reduce our nuclear arsenals. Our forthcoming Nuclear Posture Review will move beyond outdated cold war thinking and reduce the number and role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy, even as we maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent. In addition, we will seek to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and negotiate a treaty to end the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons.

To prevent proliferation, we will build on the historic resolution that we achieved at the United Nations Security Council last September by bringing together more than 40 nations at our nuclear security summit next month with the

goal of securing the world's vulnerable nuclear materials in 4 years. At this spring's treaty review conference and beyond, we will continue to work with allies and partners to strengthen the NPT and to enforce the rights and responsibilities of every nation, because the world cannot afford additional proliferation or regional arms races.

Finally, to ensure the peaceful use of nuclear energy, the United States seeks a new framework for civil nuclear cooperation among nations, including an international fuel bank and the necessary resources and authority to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency. For nations that uphold their responsibilities, peaceful nuclear energy can help unlock advances in medicine, agriculture, and economic development.

It took years of focused effort among many nations to bring the NPT into force four decades ago and to sustain it as the most widely embraced nuclear agreement in history. On this 40th anniversary, the United States reaffirms our resolve to strengthen the nonproliferation regime to meet the challenges of the 21st century as we pursue our ultimate vision of a world without nuclear weapons.

The President's Weekly Address
March 6, 2010

This week, I asked Congress to schedule a final vote on reform that will give families and businesses more control over their health care by holding insurance companies more accountable. This comes after nearly a year of debate, as well as a 7 hour summit with Democrats and Republicans, where we had a public and substantive discussion on health care. Since then, I've said that I'm willing to incorporate some ideas offered by Republicans, and we're eliminating special provisions that had no place in health care reform.

Now, despite all the progress and improvements we've made, Republicans in Congress insist that the only acceptable course on health care is to start over. But you know what, the insurance companies aren't starting over. I just met with some of them on Thursday, and they couldn't give me a straight answer as to why they keep arbitrarily and massively raising premiums—by as much as 60 percent in States like Illinois. If we don't act, they will continue to do this. They'll continue to drop people's coverage when they need it. They'll continue to refuse coverage based on preexisting conditions. These practices will continue. And that's why we have to act now. That's why the United States Congress owes the American people an up-or-down vote on health insurance reform.

The proposal we've put forward would end the worst practices of the insurance industry, lower costs for millions of Americans, and give uninsured individuals and small businesses the same kind of choice of private health insurance that Members of Congress get for themselves. And while it will take a few years to fully implement these reforms, there are numerous protections and benefits that would start to take effect this year.

This year, small-business owners will receive tax credits to purchase health insurance. This year, thousands of uninsured Americans with preexisting conditions will finally be able to purchase coverage. Insurance companies will no longer be allowed to deny coverage to children with preexisting conditions. And they'll no longer be allowed to drop your coverage when you get sick.

This year, all new insurance plans will be required to offer free preventive care to their customers so that we can start catching preventable illnesses and diseases on the front end. There will no longer be lifetime limits or restrictive annual limits on the amount of care you receive. Young adults will be able to stay on their parent's insurance policy until they're 26 years old. And there will be a new, independent appeals process for anyone who feels they were unfairly denied a claim by their insurance company. Finally, seniors who fall into the gap in coverage known as the doughnut hole will receive $250 to help them pay for their prescriptions.

What won't change when this bill is signed is this: If you like the insurance plan you have now, you can keep it. If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor, because nothing should get in the way of the relationship between a family and their doctor.

If we act now, all this will happen this year. Millions of lives will improve; some will be saved. Many families and small-business owners will have health insurance for the very first time in their lives. Doctors and patients will have more control over their health care decisions, and insurance company bureaucrats will have less. This future is within our grasp.

But we also know what the future will look like if we don't act, if we let this opportunity pass for another year or another decade or another generation. More Americans will lose their family's health insurance if they switch jobs or lose their job. More small businesses will be forced to choose between health care and hiring. More insurance companies will raise premiums and deny coverage. And the rising cost of Medicare and Medicaid will sink our Government deeper and deeper into debt.

I don't accept that future for the United States of America. I know it's been a long and hard road to this point, and we're not finished with our journey just yet. But we are close, very close. So I ask Congress to finish its work. I ask them to give the American people an up-or-down vote. Let's show our citizens that it's still possible for Washington to look out for the people's interests and the people's future.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:25 p.m. on March 5 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on March 6. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 5, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 6.

Remarks on the Parliamentary Elections in Iraq
March 7, 2010

Good afternoon, everybody. Today the people of Iraq went to the polls to choose their leaders in Iraq's second national election. By any measure, this was an important milestone in Iraqi history. Dozens of parties and coalitions fielded thousands of parliamentary candidates, men and women. Ballots were cast at some 50,000 voting booths. And in a strong turnout, millions of Iraqis exercised their right to vote with enthusiasm and optimism.

Today's voting makes it clear that the future of Iraq belongs to the people of Iraq. The election was organized and administered by Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission, with critical support from the United Nations. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis served as poll station workers and as observers.

As expected, there were some incidents of violence as Al Qaida in Iraq and other extremists tried to disrupt Iraq's progress by murdering innocent Iraqis who were exercising their democratic rights. But overall, the level of security and the prevention of destabilizing attacks speaks to the growing capability and professionalism of Iraqi security forces, which took the lead in providing protection at the polls.

I also want to express my admiration for the thousands of Americans on the ground in Iraq, for our civilians and our men and women in uniform who continue to support our Iraqi partners. This election's also a tribute to all who have served and sacrificed in Iraq over the last 7 years, including many who have given their lives.

We are mindful, however, that today's voting is the beginning and not the end of a long electoral and constitutional process. The ballots must be counted. Complaints must be heard, and Iraq, with the support of the United Nations, has a process in place to investigate and adjudicate any allegations of fraud. A parliament must be seated, leaders must be chosen, and a new Government must be formed. All of these important steps will take time, not weeks, but months.

In this process, the United States does not support particular candidates or coalitions. We support the right of the Iraqi people to choose their own leaders. And I commend the Iraqi

Government for putting plans into place to ensure security and basic services for the Iraqi people during this time of transition.

We know that there will be very difficult days ahead in Iraq; there will probably be more violence. But like any sovereign, independent nation, Iraq must be free to chart its own course. No one should seek to influence, exploit, or disrupt this period of transition. Now's the time for every neighbor and nation to respect Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

A new Iraqi Government will face important decisions about Iraq's future. But as today's voting demonstrates, the Iraq people want disagreements to be debated and decided through a political process that provides security and prosperity for all Iraqis.

And as they go forward, the Iraqi people must know that the United States will fulfill its obligations. We will continue with the responsible removal of United States forces from Iraq. Indeed, for the first time in years, there are no—now fewer than 100,000 American troops serving in Iraq. By the end of August, our combat mission will end. As I said last year when I announced our new strategy in Iraq, we will continue to advise and assist Iraqi security forces, carry out targeted counterterrorism operations with our Iraqi partners, and protect our forces and civilians. And by the end of next year, all U.S. troops will be out of Iraq.

In the weeks and months ahead, the United States will continue to work closely with the Iraqi people as we expand our broad-based partnership based on mutual interest and mutual respect. And in that effort, I'm pleased that Vice President Biden will continue to play a leading role.

On behalf of the American people, I congratulate the Iraqi people on their courage throughout this historic election. Today, in the face of violence from those who would only destroy, Iraqis took a step forward in the hard work of building up their country. And the United States will continue to help them in that effort as we responsibly end this war and support the Iraqi people as they take control of their future.

Thanks very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:09 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Parliamentary Elections in Iraq
March 7, 2010

I congratulate the people of Iraq for casting their ballots in this important parliamentary election. I have great respect for the millions of Iraqis who refused to be deterred by acts of violence and who exercised their right to vote today. Their participation demonstrates that the Iraqi people have chosen to shape their future through the political process.

I commend the Iraqi Government and Iraqi security forces for providing security at nearly 50,000 voting booths at more than 8,000 polling stations across Iraq. We mourn the tragic loss of life today, and honor the courage and resilience of the Iraqi people who once again defied threats to advance their democracy. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi poll workers contributed to the effort, as well as domestic party and civil society observers. Iraqi citizens around the world also participated in these elections, including Iraqis living in the U.S. who voted in Arlington, VA, Chicago, Dallas, Dearborn, Nashville, Phoenix, San Diego, and San Francisco.

The important work of Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) will continue in the days to come as it counts ballots, tabulates results, and investigates complaints. We also salute the invaluable assistance provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI).

Statement on the 45th Anniversary of the 1965 Voting Rights March
March 7, 2010

On this day, 45 years ago, hundreds of brave men and women gathered in the small town of Selma, Alabama, to announce to the world that they, too, sang America. As they marched from Selma to Montgomery, fully aware of the danger that lay ahead, these heroes let their feet speak in a way that their voices alone could not.

Today as we gather in this hallowed place on the anniversary of what would come to be known as Bloody Sunday, let us honor the memory of all those who were shoved and beaten within an inch of their lives because they believed in the simple truth that every American, regardless of race, had the right to cast a vote, had the right to live free, had the right to reach for their dreams.

It would take the marchers three tries to make it to Montgomery in March of 1965, and even longer to secure the rights they fought so hard for. Along the way, leaders were born, men like John Lewis, who endured taunts and beatings with the same quiet grace and dignity and determination that so many of us admire today. For Congressman Lewis and so many like him, no sacrifice was too great to make in freedom's cause.

The movement also had a partner in the White House, a President who declared "we shall overcome," and who understood that our Nation could not move forward as long as any of its citizens were held back. President Johnson helped deliver on that promise by signing the Voting Rights Act in August of that year, a law that aligned this Nation more closely with its founding ideals of justice and equality for all.

Today we stand on the shoulders of all the Moses generation that made the Voting Rights Act possible, that made the Civil Rights Act possible, that made the civil rights movement possible. Yet with all of the progress that has been made since that terrible day in Selma, we also know that there is still much work to be done by us, the Joshua generation.

Since taking office, I have never forgotten that responsibility. That's why the first bill I signed as President helped ensure that never again will someone be forced to do the same work for less pay simply because of their gender. That's why we continue to give the Department of Justice, led by Attorney General Holder, the tools to protect voting rights and defend fair practices across our Nation. And that's why last month, we sought final resolution with the Nation's Black farmers who had suffered indignation for years because of the misguided actions of their Government.

But we must also remember that the mission at the heart of the civil rights movement was never simply about obtaining the right to sit at a lunch counter or ride on a bus. It was about giving Americans of every race, faith, and station the right to fulfill their God-given potential. That's why we are making unprecedented investments in the education of our children, in guaranteeing quality, affordable health care for every American, and in working to create good, well-paying jobs that will help build the economy of the 21st century.

So let us honor the men and women who marched into history so many years ago, both those who are with us today and those who long ago gave their lives to perfect our Union. Let us remember their courage in the face of danger and recommit ourselves to the journey ahead. Because I am confident that if we stand together in the Joshua generation, as the Moses generation did before us, then, in the words of a song we know so well, "We will face the rising Sun of a new day begun." Thank you.

Remarks in Glenside, Pennsylvania
March 8, 2010

The President. Thank you. Hello, Pennsylvania! Thank you very much. This is a nice crowd. Thank you. Well, what a wonderful crowd.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. Love you back. I am—I'm kind of fired up. I'm kind of fired up. So listen, we—this is just an extraordinary crowd, and I—but——

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back. I want—there's some people I want to point out who are here who've just been doing great work. First of all, give Leslie a great round of applause for her wonderful introduction.

Somebody who's been working tirelessly on your behalf, doing a great job, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, is in the house. One of the finest Governors in the country, Ed Rendell is in the house. Everybody notice how good Ed's looking, by the way? Huh? He's been on that training program, eating egg whites and keeping his cholesterol down. [*Laughter*]

Your senior Senator, who's just been doing outstanding work in the Senate, Arlen Specter's in the house. One of my great friends, somebody who supported me when nobody could pronounce my name, Bob Casey—in the house. Your Congressman, the person who gave me confidence that I could win even though nobody could pronounce my name, Chaka Fattah is in the house. I figured if they could elect a "Chaka"—[*laughter*]—then they could elect a "Barack." [*Laughter*]

A couple of other outstanding Members of Congress—first of all, from Pennsylvania, Allyson Schwartz is in the house. Somebody who rendered outstanding service to our Nation before he was in Congress, Joe Sestak is in the house. One of the sharpest Members of Congress—technically not his State, but he—it's just from right next door, New Jersey, so he's practically—[*applause*]. See, we got some Jersey folks here—Rob Andrews in the house; and the great mayor of Philadelphia, Michael Nutter.

I'm a little warm here, so—all right. It's a little hot up here.

Audience member. To Arcadia.

The President. And to Arcadia University—[*applause*]—thank you, thank you guys for hosting us. I was asking about that castle on the way in, by the way. That's a—I thought the White House was pretty nice, but that castle, that's—[*laughter*].

Well, it is great to be back here in the Keystone State. It's even better to be out of Washington, DC. [*Laughter*] First of all, the people of DC are wonderful. They're nice people; they're good people; love the city, the monuments, everything. But when you're in Washington, folks respond to every issue, every decision, every debate, no matter how important it is, with the same question: Well, what does this mean for the next election? [*Laughter*] What does it mean for your poll numbers? Is this good for the Democrats or good for the Republicans? Who won the news cycle?

That's just how Washington is. They can't help it. They are obsessed with the sport of politics. And so that's the environment in which elected officials are operating. And you've seen all the pundits pontificating and talking over each other on the cable shows, and they're yelling and shouting. They can't help themselves. That's what they do.

But out here and all across America, folks are worried about bigger things. They're worried about how to make payroll. They're worried about how to make ends meet. They're worried about what the future will hold for their families and for our country. They're not worrying about the next election. We just had an election. They're worried about the next paycheck or the next tuition payment that's due. They're thinking about retirement. You want people in Washington to spend a little less time worrying about our jobs, a little more time worrying about your jobs.

Despite all the challenges we face—two wars, the aftermath of a terrible recession—I want to tell everybody here today, I am absolutely confident that America will prevail, that

we will shape our destiny as past generations have done. That's who we are. We don't give up. We don't quit. Sometimes we take our lumps, but we just keep on going. That's who we are. But that only happens when we're meeting our challenges squarely and honestly. And I have to tell you, that's why we are fighting so hard to deal with the health care crisis in this country, health care costs that are growing every single day.

I want to spend some time talking about this. The price of health care is one of the most punishing costs for families and for businesses and for our Government. It's forcing people to cut back or go without health insurance. It forces small businesses to choose between hiring or health care. It's plunging the Federal Government deeper and deeper and deeper into debt.

The young people who are here, you've heard stories—some of you guys still have health care while you're in school, some of you may still be on your parents' plans, but some of the highest uninsurance rates are among young people. And it's getting harder and harder to find a job that's going to provide you with health care. And a lot of you right now feel like you're invincible, so you don't worry about it. [*Laughter*] But let me tell you, when you hit 48—[*laughter*]—you start realizing, things start breaking down a little bit. [*Laughter*]

And the insurance companies continue to ration health care based on who's sick and who's healthy, on who can pay and who can't pay. That's the status quo in America, and it is a status quo that is unsustainable for this country. We can't have a system that works better for the insurance companies than it does for the American people. We need to give families and businesses more control over their own health insurance. And that's why we need to pass health care reform: not next year, not 5 years from now, not 10 years from now, but now.

Now, since we took this issue on a year ago, there have been plenty of folks in Washington who've said that the politics is just too hard. They've warned us we may not win. They've argued now is not the time for reform. It's going to hurt your poll numbers. How's it going to affect Democrats in November? Don't do it now. My question to them is, when's the right time? If not now, when? If not us, who?

Think about it. We've been talking about health care for nearly a century. I'm reading a biography of Teddy Roosevelt right now. He was talking about it—Teddy Roosevelt. We have failed to meet this challenge during periods of prosperity and also during periods of decline. Some people say, "Well, don't do it right now because the economy's weak." When the economy was strong, we didn't do it. We've talked about it during Democratic administrations and Republican administrations. I got all my Republican colleagues out there saying, "Well, no, no, no, we want to focus on things like cost." You had 10 years. What happened? What were you doing?

Every year, the problem gets worse. Every year, insurance companies deny more people coverage because they've got preexisting conditions. Every year, they drop more people's coverage when they get sick, right when they need it most. Every year, they raise premiums higher and higher and higher.

Just last month, Anthem BlueCross in California tried to jack up rates by nearly 40 percent—40 percent. Anybody's paycheck gone up 40 percent?

Audience members. No!

The President. I mean, why is it that we think this is normal? In my home State of Illinois, rates are going up by as much as 60 percent. You just heard Leslie, who was hit with more than 100-percent increase—100 percent. One letter from her insurance company and her premiums doubled, just like that. And because so many of these markets are so concentrated, it's not like you can go shopping. You're stuck. So you've got a choice: Either no health insurance, in which case you're taking a chance if somebody in your family gets sick that you will go bankrupt and lose your home and lose everything you've had, or you keep on ponying up money that you can't afford.

See, these insurance companies have made a calculation. Listen to this. The other day, there was a conference call that was organized by Goldman Sachs. You know Goldman Sachs. You've been hearing about them. [*Laughter*] All right. So they organized a conference call in

which an insurance broker was telling Wall Street investors how he expected things to be playing out over the next several years. And this broker said that insurance companies know they will lose customers if they keep on raising premiums, but because there's so little competition in the insurance industry, they're okay with people being priced out of the insurance market because, first of all, a lot of folks are going to be stuck, and even if some people drop out, they'll still make more money by raising premiums on the customers that they keep.

And they will keep on doing this for as long as they can get away with it. I mean, this is no secret; they're telling their investors this: "We are in the money. We are going to keep on making big profits even though a lot of folks are going to be put under hardship."

So how much higher do premiums have to rise until we do something about it? How many more Americans have to lose their health insurance? How many more businesses have to drop coverage? All those young people out here, after you graduate, you're going to be looking for a job. Think about the environment that's going to be out there when a whole bunch of potential employers just tell you, "You know what, we just can't afford it," or, "You know what, we're going to have to take thousands of dollars out of your paycheck because the insurance company's just jacked up our rates."

How many years—how many more years can the Federal budget handle the crushing costs of Medicare and Medicaid? That's the debt you're going to have to pay, young people. When's the right time for health insurance reform?

Audience members. Now!

The President. Is it a year from now or 2 years from now or 5 years from now or 10 years from now?

Audience members. No!

The President. I think it's right now. And that's why you're here today.

Now, Leslie is a single mom—just like my mom was a single mom—trying to put her daughter through college. She knows that the time for reform is now.

Natoma Canfield, self-employed cancer survivor from Ohio, she wrote us a letter. Last year, her insurance company charged her over $6,000 in premiums; paid about $900 worth of care. Now they've decided to jack up her rates 40 percent next year. So she's had to drop her insurance, even though it may cost her the house that her parents built. Natoma knows it's time for reform.

Laura Klitzka—this is a friend of mine, somebody I met when I was campaigning in Wisconsin—Green Bay, Wisconsin. She's a young mother; she's got two kids. She thought she had beaten her breast cancer, but later discovered it had spread to her bones. She and her husband had insurance, but their medical bills still landed them with tens of thousands of dollars' worth of debt, and now she spends her time worrying about that debt when all she wants to do is spend time with her children. I just talked to Laura this past weekend, and let me tell you, she knows that the time for reform is right now.

So what should I tell these Americans? That Washington's not sure how it will play in November? That we should walk away from this fight? Or do something like some on the other side of the aisle have suggested—well, we'll do it incrementally; we'll take baby steps; we'll do——

Audience members. No!

The President. Well—so they want me to pretend to do something that doesn't really help these folks.

We have debated health care in Washington for more than a year. Every proposal has been put on the table. Every argument has been made. I know a lot of people view this as a partisan issue, but both parties have found areas where we agree. What we've ended up with is a proposal that's somewhere in the middle, one that incorporates the best from Democrats and Republicans—best ideas.

Think about it along the spectrum of how we could approach health care. On one side of the spectrum, there were those at the beginning of this process who wanted to scrap our system of private insurance and replace it with a Government-run health care system, like they have in some other countries. Look, it

works in places like Canada, but I didn't think it was going to be practical, realistic to do it here.

On the other side of the spectrum, there are those who believe that the answer is just to loosen regulations on insurance companies. This is what we heard at the health care summit. They said, "Well, you know what, if we had fewer regulations on the insurance companies"——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. ——"whether it's consumer protections or basic standards on what kind of insurance they sell, somehow market forces will make things better." Well, we've tried that. I'm concerned that would only give insurance companies more leeway to raise premiums and deny care.

So the bottom line is, I don't believe we should give Government or insurance companies more control over health care in America. I believe it's time to give you, the American people, more control over your own health insurance.

And that's why my proposal builds on the current system, where most Americans get their health insurance from their employer. If you like your plan, you can keep your plan. If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. But I can tell you, as the father of two young girls, I don't want a plan that interferes with the relationship between a family and their doctor. So we're going to preserve that.

Essentially, my proposal would change three things about the current health care system. Listen up. First, it would end the worst practices of insurance companies. Within the first year of signing health care reform, thousands of uninsured Americans with preexisting conditions would suddenly be able to purchase health insurance for the very first time in their lives, or the first time in a long time.

This year, insurance companies will be banned forever from denying coverage to children with preexisting conditions. This year, they will be banned from dropping your coverage when you get sick. And they will no longer be able to arbitrarily and massively hike your premiums, just like they did to Leslie or Natoma or millions of others Americans. Those practices will end.

If this reform becomes law, all new insurance plans will be required to offer free preventive care to their customers starting this year, free checkups so that we can catch preventable illnesses on the front end. Starting this year, there will be no more lifetime or restrictive annual limits on the amount of care that you can receive from your insurance companies. There's a lot of fine print in there that can end up costing people hundreds of thousands of dollars because they hit a limit.

If you're a young adult, which many of you are, you'll be able to stay on your parent's insurance policy until you're 26 years old. And there will be a new, independent appeals process for anybody who feels they were unfairly denied a claim by their insurance company. So you'll have recourse if you're being taken advantage of. So that's the first thing that would change, and it would change fast. Insurance companies would finally be held accountable to the American people. That's number one.

Number two, second thing that would change about the current system is this: For the first time in their lives—or oftentimes, in a very long time—uninsured individuals and small-business owners will have the same kind of choice of private health insurance that Members of Congress get for themselves. If it's good enough for Congress, it should be good enough for the people paying Congress's salaries—that's you.

Now, the idea is very simple here, and it's one——

[*At this point, there was an disruption in the audience*.]

——I'm sorry, go ahead. Let me explain how this would work, because it's an idea that a lot of Republicans have embraced in the past. What my proposal says is that if you aren't part of a big group, if you don't work for a big company, you can be part of a pool, which gives you bargaining power over insurance companies. It's very straightforward. Suddenly, just like the Federal employees—there are millions of them, so they can drive a harder bargain with insurance companies—you, as an individual or a small-business owner, could be part of this pool, which would give you more negotiating power

with the insurance companies for lower rates and a better deal. Right?

Now, if you still can't afford the insurance that's offered—even though it's a better deal than you can get on your own, but you still just can't get it—then what we're going to do is give you a tax credit to do so. And these tax credits add up to the largest middle class tax cut for health care in history. Because the wealthiest among us, they can already afford to buy the best insurance there is; the least well off are already covered through Medicaid. It's the middle class that gets squeezed. That's who we need to help with these tax credits. That's what we intend to do.

Now, I want to be honest. Let's be clear: This will cost some money. It's going to cost about $100 billion per year. Most of this comes from the nearly $2.5 trillion a year that America already spends on health care. It's just that right now a lot of that money is being wasted, or it's being spent badly. So with this plan, we're going to make sure that the dollars we spend go to making insurance more affordable and more secure.

So I'll give you an example. We're going to eliminate wasteful taxpayer subsidies that currently go to insurance and pharmaceutical companies. They are getting billions of dollars a year from the Government, from taxpayers, when they're making a big profit. I'd rather see that money going to people who need it.

We'll set a new fee on insurance companies that stand to gain as millions of Americans are able to buy insurance. They're going to have 30 million new customers; there's nothing wrong with them paying a little bit of the freight. And we'll make sure that the wealthiest Americans pay their fair share of Medicare, just like everybody else does.

So the bottom line is this: Our proposal is paid for. All the new money generated in this plan goes back to small-business owners and individuals in the middle class who right now are having trouble getting insurance. It would lower prescription drug prices for seniors. It would help train new doctors and nurses to provide care for American families and physician's assistants and therapists. I know there are—got great programs here at Arcadia. I was hearing about the terrific programs you have at Arcadia in the health care field. Well, you know what, we're going to need more health care professionals of the sorts that are being trained here, and we want to help you get that training. And that's in this bill.

Now—so I've mentioned two things now: insurance reform and making sure the people who don't have health insurance are able to get it.

Finally, my proposal would bring down the cost of health care for millions: families, businesses, and the Federal Government. As I said, you keep on hearing from critics, and some of the Republicans on these Sunday shows say, "Well, we want to do more about cost." We have now incorporated almost every single serious idea from across the political spectrum about how to contain the rising cost of health care, ideas that go after waste and abuse in our system, including in programs like Medicare. But we do this while protecting Medicare benefits, and we extend the financial stability of the program by nearly a decade.

Our cost-cutting measures mirror most of the proposals in the current Senate bill, which reduces most people's premiums and brings down our deficit by up to $1 trillion over the next decade because we're spending our health care dollars more wisely. Those aren't my numbers, they are the savings determined by the Congressional Budget Office, which is the nonpartisan, independent referee of Congress for what things cost.

So that's our proposal: insurance reform, making sure that you can have choices in the marketplace for health insurance and making it affordable for people, and reducing costs.

Now, think about—I think—how many people would like a proposal that holds insurance companies more accountable? How many people would like to give Americans the same insurance choices that Members of Congress get? And how many would like a proposal that brings down costs for everyone? That's our proposal, and it is paid for, and it's a proposal whose time has come.

So the United States Congress owes the American people a final, up-or-down vote on health care. It's time to make a decision. The

time for talk is over. We need to see where people stand. And we need all of you to help us win that vote. So I need you to knock on doors, talk to your neighbors, pick up the phone. When you hear an argument by the water cooler and somebody is saying this or that about it, say, "No, no, no, hold on a second." You—we—and we need you to make your voices heard all the way in Washington, DC.

They need to hear your voices, because right now the Washington echo chamber is in full throttle. It is as deafening as it's ever been. And as we come to that final vote, that echo chamber's telling Members of Congress, wait, think about the politics, instead of thinking about doing the right thing.

That's what Mitch McConnell said this weekend. His main argument was, "Well, this is going to be really bad for Democrats politically." Now, first of all, I generally wouldn't take advice about what's good for Democrats. [*Laughter*] But setting aside that, that's not the issue here. The issue here is not the politics of it.

But that's what people—that's what Members of Congress are hearing right now on the cable shows and in the—sort of the gossip columns in Washington. It's telling Congress, comprehensive reform's failed before. Remember what happened to Clinton. It may just be too politically hard.

Yes, it's hard. It is hard. That's because health care is complicated. Health care is a hard issue. It's easily misrepresented; it's easily misunderstood. So it's hard for some Members of Congress to make this vote. There's no doubt about that. But you know what else is hard? What Leslie and her family are going through, that's hard. The possibility that Natoma Canfield might lose her house because she's about to lose her health insurance, that's hard. Laura Klitzka in Green Bay having to worry about her cancer and her debt at the same time, trying to explain that to her kids, that's hard. What's hard is what millions of families and small businesses are going through because we allow the insurance industry to run wild in this country.

So let me remind everybody: Those of us in public office were not sent to Washington to do what's easy. We weren't sent there because of the big fancy title. We weren't sent there to—because of a big fancy office. We weren't sent there just so everybody can say how wonderful we are. We were sent there to do what was hard. We were sent there to take on the tough issues. We were sent there to solve the big challenges. And that's why we're there. And at this moment, we are being called upon to fulfill our duty to the citizens of this Nation and to future generations.

So I'll be honest with you. I don't know how passing health care will play politically, but I do know that it's the right thing to do. It's right for our families. It's right for our businesses. It's right for the United States of America. And if you share that belief, I want you to stand with me and fight with me. And I ask you to help us get us over the finish line these next 2 weeks. The need is great. The opportunity's here. Let's seize reform. It's within our grasp.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:23 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to author Leslie Esdaile Banks.

Remarks Honoring the 2009 NCAA Football Champion University of Alabama Crimson Tide

March 8, 2010

The President. Hello, everybody. Please have a seat. Have a seat, Crimson Tide.

Audience member. Go Tide!

The President. Go Tide. [*Laughter*] Well, welcome to the White House, and congratulations on your 13th—let me check that—13th national championship, the first in 17 years. I think it's safe to say that the Tide is back.

I've got to tell you, everyone was really excited about this team coming today, except for my Press Secretary, Robert Gibbs—[*laughter*]—because he was born and raised in Au-

burn. He's hiding in his office right now. [*Laughter*] But we do have some Tide fans here that are worth a little bit of acknowledgment.

I want to start by thanking Robert Witt, the president of the University of Alabama. I also want to acknowledge the mayor of Tuscaloosa, Walter Maddox. You can give them a round of applause. I want to recognize Senator Shelby and Senator Sessions, who are here. Stand up, please. And our terrific Surgeon General, who's an Alabama native, Regina Benjamin, is in the house. Where's Regina? There she is over there.

And to all those who make this program what it is—the students and the trainers and the staff and the ticket takers, fans in Tuscaloosa and all across the country—you should all be very proud, and I want to congratulate you.

Obviously, I want to congratulate Coach Saban and thank him and his wife Terry for being with us today. There is no question that this team is here in large part because of what Coach Saban has done. There aren't too many coaches in the country who have the knowledge, the motivational skills, the program discipline to win two national championships in 6 years, let alone at two different schools. And I think it's a testimony to his incredible skills as a coach.

I've got to congratulate Mark Ingram for becoming the first Heisman Trophy winner in Alabama history. [*Applause*] That's it. Mark rushed for over 1,500 yards last season, the most ever by a Crimson Tide running back. And I know his selflessness and dedication has made his team and his family very, very proud.

I also want to recognize your captains, Rolando McClain, Mike Johnson, and Javier Arenas, and all the upperclassmen for their leadership on this team. Congratulations to all of you. I especially want to congratulate Rolando for winning the Butkus Award as the Nation's top linebacker. And I know that part of Rolando's talent comes from his intelligence and his judgment. In fact, one of his teammates was asked to describe him. He said, "Just picture Coach Saban being huge and being able to play football." [*Laughter*]

Now, one of the trademarks of this team has always been its unwavering focus on what's important. And I know shortly after the 2008 season ended, Coach hung a picture of the Florida Gators winning the national championship in the locker room—not too subtle what he was saying. He asked his players if they wanted to work hard enough to beat their teammates in a drill or if they wanted to work hard enough to be the best team in the country. And it's pretty clear what choice they made.

And that's the kind of tone this team sets, both on and off the field. It's why these young men—and this is something I'm very proud of—had the second highest graduation rate of any team ranked in the top 25. It shows that these guys have their priorities straight. Together, they contributed more than 3,500 hours of community service that Alabama students—student athletes performed last year.

And that spirit continued earlier today when the team met with a group of kids from one of DC's roughest neighborhoods and helped teach them about the importance of staying in school and making healthy choices. That's how champions act, in football and in life. As Coach Bryant once said, "I think the most important thing of all for any team is a winning attitude." I think this team would make him proud, because they've got that winning attitude.

So congratulations to all of you. The best of luck next season. I know spring practice starts on Friday—woo, man. [*Laughter*] Next Friday, huh? So enjoy these last few days off. [*Laughter*] And congratulations to all of you for just an extraordinary season. Roll Tide.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:59 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mark Ingram, Jr., running back, Rolando McClain, linebacker, Michael P. Johnson, offensive lineman, and Javier E. Arenas, defensive back, University of Alabama football team.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena of El Salvador

March 8, 2010

President Obama. Hello, everybody. I want to welcome President Funes and the First Lady of El Salvador to the United States. *Bienvenido*. We are very grateful and honored by his visit. I've been following the President since his election 9 months ago and have been very favorably impressed by the steps that he's taking to try to break down political divisions within the country and move it forward with a spirit of progress and focusing on prosperity at every level of Salvadoran society.

Obviously, the friendship between our two countries in part is the result of the 2 million Salvadorans who are here in the United States working, sending remittances back to El Salvador. Those ties provide an outstanding foundation for continuing cooperation between our two countries.

That cooperation has to be based on mutual interest and mutual respect. We've discussed ways that we can continue to improve our trading relationship. Over half of El Salvador's exports go to the United States and over one-third of its imports come from the United States, so we already have strong economic ties there. But I very much applaud the President's vision that growth in El Salvador has to be balanced and reach all aspects of Salvadoran society, that it has to be socially inclusive. And we want to assist in any way we can in making sure that there's adequate credit and infrastructure and other tools that can bring about the long-term prosperity within El Salvador.

And there are some wonderful projects that we can do multilaterally. For example, I know the United States, Brazil, and El Salvador jointly are interested in pursuing additional measures that can expand biofuels and energy development that could be good for all three countries.

We also discussed security issues in the region. I think that there has been progress within Central America, but we still have concerns, obviously, about drug trafficking, about gangs. The security challenges, obviously, are connected to the economic challenges within the region, and we want to be supportive not only in addressing the symptoms that we see in terms of crime, but also the root causes, and I know that's something that the President cares deeply about as well.

And finally, I want to congratulate President Funes in the leadership that he's already shown both regionally and internationally. His pragmatic and wise approach to the situation in Honduras, I think, helped to contribute to a solution in that country that promises long-term stability and peace. The generosity of the Salvadoran people towards Haiti in the aftermath of the terrible earthquake there, I think, is another example of his vision for a region that supports each other.

And so my main goal today is communicating how interested the United States is in continuing to be an equal partner with El Salvador and other countries in the region, a relationship based on mutual interest and mutual respect. And I wish him all the best as he continues to pursue his goals for a more prosperous and secure El Salvador.

President Funes. Friends of the press, I am extremely surprised about this excellent summary. After 20 years of being a journalist, I thought that I could summarize our interview of more than an hour in a better way, but President Obama has surprised me in how he has summarized the meeting.

I would like to talk about two or three things. I have spoken to President Obama about this, and I want to commend him because he shares the same democratic values, and his new vision of how he is dealing with the hemisphere and particularly in Central America.

Traditionally, Central America has been seen as a migratory problem for the United States. But Central America, and in particularly El Salvador, needs to generate the opportunities of work in order to be able to keep people back in El Salvador. And as they have a better job generation and people have better health and education, people will be able to remain in the countries and have a better life.

We have spoken with President Obama about how to make a strategic alliance and face common problems that we have in the nation, such as drug traffic and organized crime. And the alliance that we wish to make is in order to combat poverty and to get people out of marginal situations and out of the exclusion. This has to be a regional effort, and we have to—and they have social policies that we need to build together.

The U.S. needs to be a strategic—or we hope it will be a strategic partner for our country. And in this way, the people will have better social well-being and we will be able to combat drug traffic, organized crime, because they will not find—as we have new policies, they will not find fertile grounds.

I'm not here to ask President Obama to do for us what we haven't been able to do for such a long time. We have a big challenge on our hands, and one of our challenges is to have better tax collection in order to have more resources for the use of our Government. This has been going on for many decades, but basically, what we're looking for is funding for the poor and small and medium enterprises in order to be able to create a better economic situation in El Salvador.

We have to restrengthen the productive network, and we have to have a different vision. But we definitely cannot blame the United States for the situation that we are in. And instead, we are looking for the United States to become a strategic partner, as President Obama so well said, not a bigger partner or a lesser partner, but an equal partner and an efficient partner.

And as President Obama's administration, we hope that there will be a good alliance and it will be a better world for us and for all—and a better administration.

President Obama. Muchas gracias. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:56 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vanda Pignato, wife of President Funes. President Funes spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at an International Women's Day Reception
March 8, 2010

Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. Let me begin by just thanking some of the people who are participating here today. Michelle mentioned my outstanding Cabinet members, the extraordinary Members of Congress, and people who are in our senior White House team.

I also want to thank Ms. Kerry Washington for emceeing today. Give Kerry a big round of applause. Where is she? There she is. Ms. Katharine McPhee, who's going to be performing a song in the program—where's Katharine? She's around. She's practicing, getting her—she's here; I just saw her. Secretary Madeleine Albright is here today. And Ms. Mozhdah Jamalzadah is also going to be here performing a song in the program, so we want to thank her. Give her a big round of applause.

And there—then there's this lady here. [*Laughter*] FLOTUS, that's what we call her—FLOTUS. [*Laughter*] She is—I'm biased, I acknowledge, but I think she's a pretty good First Lady. Don't you think? She's pretty good. And I'm very sincere when I look at you adoringly. [*Laughter*] Yes.

Now, the story of America over the past 200 years—past 233 years is one of laws becoming more just, of a people becoming more equal, of a Union being perfected. It's a story of captives being set free and a movement to fulfill the promise of that freedom. It's a story of waves of weary travelers reconsecrating America as a nation of immigrants. It's a story of our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters making the most of that most American of demands, to be treated the same as everybody else. And it's a story of women, from those on the *Mayflower* to the one I'm blessed to call my wife, who looked across the dinner table and thought, I'm smarter than that guy. [*Laughter*]

The story of America's women, like the story of America itself, has had its peaks and val-

leys. But as one of our great American educators once said, if you drew a line through all the valleys and all the peaks, that line would be drawn with an upward curve. That upward curve—what we call progress—didn't happen by accident.

It came about because of daring, indomitable women. Women like Abigail Adams, who brought on the ridicule of her husband John by advising him to "remember the ladies" in our founding documents. Women like the pioneers and settlers who, in the words of one, said, "I thought, where he could go, I could go." Women like Dorothy Height and Sylvia Mendez and Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem and Sandra Day O'Connor and Madeleine Albright, upending assumptions and changing laws and tearing down barriers. Women like Hillary Rodham Clinton, who, throughout her career, has put millions of cracks in America's glass ceiling. And it's because of them and so many others—many who aren't recorded in the history books—that the story of America is ultimately one of hope and one of progress, of a upward journey.

But even as we reflect on the hope of our history, we must also face squarely the reality of the present, a reality marked by unfairness, marked by hardship for too many women in America. The statistics of inequality are all too familiar to us: how women just earn 77 cents for every dollar men make; how one in four women is the victim of domestic violence at some point in her life; how women are more than half the population, but make up only 17 percent of the seats in Congress and less than 3 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs.

These and any number of other facts and figures reflect the fundamental truth that in 2010, full gender equality has not yet been achieved, that the task of perfecting America goes on, and that all of us, men and women, have a part to play in bending the arc in America's story upward in the 21st century.

Now, I'm proud of the extraordinary women—and the extraordinary Americans—I've appointed to help take up this task. In addition to our outstanding Secretary of State, we've got Hilda Solis serving where the first female Cabinet Secretary, Frances Perkins, once served, at the Labor Department. We've got Kathleen Sebelius leading our Health and Human Services Department; Janet Napolitano running the Department of Homeland Security. Susan Rice is our Ambassador to the United Nations. The Chair of my Council of Economic Advisers is Christy Romer. We got Lisa Jackson, who's doing great work at the EPA.

We have just extraordinary talent all across this administration. And from health insurance reform to climate and energy to matters of domestic policy, I'm seeking the counsel of brilliant women. And that list doesn't include, by the way, the Justice I appointed to the Supreme Court, Ms. Sonia Sotomayor.

So yes, I'm very proud to have appointed so many brilliant women to so many essential posts in our Government. But I'm even prouder of what each of them is doing, and what all of us are doing, to make life better in America and around the world, because lifting up the prospects of our daughters will require all of us doing our part. And that's why we've established a new White House Council on Women and Girls, chaired by my friend and senior adviser, Valerie Jarrett, that will help make sure that every part of our Government is working to address the challenges faced by women and girls.

At a time when women are on the verge of making up the majority of America's workforce, the very first bill I signed into law—a bill named after Lilly Ledbetter—was designed to help keep America's promise: If you do the same work as a man, you ought to be paid the same wage as a man. To help parents balance work and family, we're offering States more support for quality, affordable childcare and paid family leave.

At a time when we are waging two wars and fighting a global network of hatred and violence, we need the service of all those patriotic Americans who are willing to do their part. And that's why Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mullen and top Navy officers decided to end an old barrier against women so our skilled and brave Navy women, as well as men, can serve on submarines.

At a time when it's still legal for health insurance companies to discriminate against the victims of domestic violence in eight States plus

the District of Columbia, we're seeking health insurance reforms that would finally rein in the worst practices of the insurance industry. And I'm also proud to note that I've appointed the first White House Adviser on Violence Against Women, Lynn Rosenthal.

At a time when the jobs of tomorrow will go to workers with the knowledge and skills to do them, we're ramping up efforts to educate our young people in science and technology, engineering and math, and we're making a special effort to recruit women to those fields, because I want to see more teenage astronomers like Caroline Moore. In fact, Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood has launched a new partnership with Spelman College to train women engineers and help put them to work rebuilding our highways and our infrastructure.

And since today happens to be International Women's Day, it's also worth mentioning what Secretary Clinton and Ambassador Rice and this administration are doing on behalf of women around the globe. We lifted what's called the global gag rule that restricted women's access to family planning services abroad. We're pursuing a global health strategy that makes important investments in child and maternal health. We sponsored a U.N. resolution to increase protection for women and girls in conflict-torn countries to help make it possible for more women like Mozhdah, who traveled from Afghanistan to join us here today, to reach for their dreams. We created the first Office of Global Women's Issues at the State Department and appointed Ambassador Melanne Verveer to run it. We're investing $18 million to combat the unconscionable cruelties being committed against girls and women in the Democratic Republic of Congo. And next month, I'll host an entrepreneurship summit to help fulfill a commitment I made in Cairo, a summit that will focus, in part, on the challenges facing women entrepreneurs in Muslim communities around the world.

We're doing all of this not only because promoting women's empowerment is one of the best ways to promote economic development and economic success, we are doing it because it's the right thing to do. I say that not only as a President, but also as the father of two daughters, as a son and a grandson, and as a husband.

Growing up, I saw my mother dedicate most of her life to promoting the rights and well-being of women overseas, to empowering them to take more control over their economic lives and be able to empower their families as well. I saw my grandmother work her way up to become vice president at a bank in Hawaii—starting as a secretary, never had more than a high school education. But I also saw how she hit a glass ceiling and had to watch as men no more qualified than she was rise up the corporate ladder.

Before we got to the White House—where we are grateful for the extraordinary support that we receive from the White House staff—I'd see the challenges Michelle faced as a working mom. And as usual, she handled it with grace and skill, but she'd be the first one to tell you it wasn't always easy balancing the responsibilities of being a hospital executive with those of being a mother and sometimes worrying about the girls when she was at work and sometimes worrying about work when she was with the girls.

And today, as I see Sasha and Malia getting older, I think about the world that they and all of America's daughters will inherit. And I think about all the opportunities that are still beyond the reach for too many young women and too many of our brothers and—too many of our sisters and mothers and aunts, all of the glass ceilings that have yet to be shattered.

We have so much more work to do, and that's why we're here today. I think about this because it reminds me of why I'm here. I didn't run for President so that the dreams of our daughters could be deferred or denied. I didn't run for President to see inequality and injustice persist in our time. I ran for President to put the same rights, the same opportunities, the same dreams within the reach of our daughters and our sons alike. I ran for President to put the American Dream within the reach of all of our people, no matter what their gender or race or faith or station.

And if we can stay true to that cause, if we can stay true to our founding ideals, then I'm

absolutely confident that the line that runs through America's story will, in the future, as it has in the past, be drawn with an upward curve. And I'm especially pleased that these young ladies are here today, because they're the ones who are going to help bend that curve towards justice and equality.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:52 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers Kerry Washington, Katharine McPhee, and Mozhdah Jamalzadah; former Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright; civil rights activists Dorothy I. Height and Sylvia Mendez; women's rights activist Gloria M. Steinem; former Supreme Court Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor; and Lilly Ledbetter, former employee, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President.

Remarks at a Celebration of Greek Independence Day
March 9, 2010

Thank you so much. Well, good evening, everybody, and welcome to the White House. I can't imagine a better way to celebrate the independence of Greece than with the Prime Minister of Greece. [*Laughter*] So Prime Minister Papandreou, to your lovely wife, Mrs. Papandreou, we are honored by your presence here today. And we are pleased that you were able to bring the—your extraordinary delegation from Athens.

Now, like his father and his grandfather before him, the Prime Minister is leading Greece through challenging times. But as I told him during our meeting in the Oval Office today, whether in good times or in bad times, the people of Greece will always have a friend and a partner in the United States of America.

Thank you, Your Eminence, for your very kind introduction and for the wisdom and compassion that has always defined your ministry. Archbishop Demetrios marks his second decade guiding the Greek Orthodox Church and community in America, four decades as a bishop, and recently, his 82d birthday. And he is looking really good so—[*applause*]. I need to find out what he's eating. [*Laughter*]

Last year, His Eminence tried to compare me with Alexander the Great. [*Laughter*] I thought this would get me more respect from Michelle and the girls. [*Laughter*] It did not. [*Laughter*] They reminded me instead that Greek literature is full of very strong women. [*Laughter*]

I want to acknowledge the fact that we're joined by leaders who have strengthened the bonds between us, including our Ambassador, Kaskarelis, and from Cyprus, Ambassador Kakouris. Please stand up. Do we have our other Ambassador there? There he is.

We have some outstanding Members of Congress who are here, and we've got at least one potential Member of Congress—Alexi, stand up—from the State of Illinois. We've got, in fact—in addition to Alexi, we've got a lot of Greek American friends here who've been great friends and supporters of mine, including folks here from Chicago. I think we've got just about all of Greektown here. [*Laughter*] And we also have some of the outstanding Greek Americans who are serving in my administration.

Now, Greek Independence Day isn't for another few weeks. But I'll be on a trip to Asia, so I appreciate you coming early, not that Greeks have ever needed an excuse to celebrate, let's face it. [*Laughter*] But on that day, we'll remember how 189 years ago, another bishop stood up, in a monastery in the mountains, raised the Greek flag, declared independence, and began the struggle to restore democracy to its birthplace.

But on that day, we'll not only celebrate a singular moment in time, we'll be reminded of the spirit that has defined Greece and its people for all time. There's a concept that captures it, and it doesn't translate easily; it doesn't really have an equivalent in English. But it's a virtue that all of you know well, because it's the very

essence of being Greek—and you will forgive me if my pronunciation is just so-so—*philotimo*, all right? Literally—*philotimo*—literally, it translate as "love of honor." I love that concept, love of honor. But, of course, it means much more than that.

It's a sense of love to family and to community and to country and the notion that what we're here on this Earth to do is to be all in this together. We all have obligations to each other and to work together. And so it was that the democratic example of a small group of city-states more than 2,000 years ago could inspire the founding generation of this country, that led one early American to imagine that "the days of Greece may be revived in the woods of America."

It's the sense of nobility and morality written in the pages of those timeless Greek texts, which have instructed students—and tormented them—[*laughter*]—down the ages, in every corner of the world. Indeed, when I was living in Indonesia as a child, when my mother would wake me up early in the morning to teach me, among the books that she used to pull off the shelf were the legends of Greek mythology.

Philotimo, it's a sense of right and wrong and a duty to do what's right. And so 189 years ago, Americans of Greek origin crossed the oceans and fought for Greek independence. Greek Americans, in turn, served and fought to preserve our Union. And through two World Wars and a long cold war, America stood with our Greek allies and friends.

And since the Prime Minister is here, let me acknowledge Greece's efforts to extend this security and stability in our time, toward a just and final settlement in Cyprus, fully integrating the Balkans into Europe, and the Prime Minister's personal work to improve relations with Turkey. We thank you for your leadership.

And let me commend Greece, our close NATO ally, for standing up for the security and opportunity of people around the world, from the Balkans to Afghanistan, where Greek servicemembers are helping to give people who have known too much war the chance to live in peace and security.

This solidarity continues today, whether it's the close counterterrorism efforts between our Governments or the deep partnerships between our people. Indeed, as the Prime Minister and I discussed this afternoon, Greece's participation in the Visa Waiver Program will strengthen security in both our countries, and whether it's to do business or visit family and friends, it will now be easier for our Greek friends to visit the United States.

And *philotimo* is a sense of dignity and respect as well. It's the determination that has driven generations of Greek Americans, like those here tonight, to struggle and sacrifice for the same things that all Americans want: to pursue our dreams, to realize our God-given potential, and to give our children an even better life.

That's the simple hope that caused a bishop to raise that flag on a mountaintop so many years ago. That's the profound sense of friendship that will guide our work in the years ahead, because what one patriot of Greek independence wrote to John Quincy Adams nearly 200 years ago remains true today: We are "friends, copatriots, and brothers."

So thank you all for coming. God bless you. God bless America. And *zito i Ellas*.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:06 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Georgios Andreas Papandreou of Greece and his wife Ada; Archbishop Demetrios, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in America; Greece's Ambassador to the U.S. Vassilis Kaskarelis; Cyprus's Ambassador to the U.S. Andreas Kakouris; and Illinois Democratic senatorial candidate Alexi Giannoulias. The related proclamation of March 24 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Rene Garcia Preval of Haiti
March 10, 2010

President Obama. Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody, and on behalf of the American people, I want to welcome President Preval, the First Lady, and their delegation to the United States. The President and I have just concluded a very productive meeting in the Oval Office on the urgent and overriding challenges before us: helping the people of Haiti as they recover and rebuild after one of the most devastating natural disasters ever to strike our hemisphere.

Mr. President, as I did when I spoke to you in those first days after the earthquake, I again want to express to you and to the Haitian people the deepest condolences of the American people. Your grief is shared by our strong and vibrant Haitian American community, some of whom join us here today and who continue to mourn the loss of their loved ones back in Haiti. To you and to our fellow Americans, please know that you remain in our thoughts and in our prayers.

The United States joins in mourning the loss of American citizens, as more than 100 Americans died in this earthquake, and our hearts also go out to their loved ones. We also remember that this natural disaster was an international tragedy, taking the lives of Dominicans and Canadians, French, Brazilians, and people from dozens of nations around the world.

President Preval and his delegation offered an update on the status of relief, recovery, and reconstruction efforts, the progress so far, and the daunting challenges ahead in a disaster that, even now, defies comprehension. To offer just some perspective on the awful scale of Haitian loss, it's as if the United States, in a terrible instant, lost nearly 8 million people. Or, it's as if one-third of our country, 100 million Americans, suddenly had no home, no food or water. That gives you a sense of, relative to the populations, what has happened in Haiti. No nation could respond to such a catastrophe alone. It would require a global response. And that's exactly what we have seen these past 2 months.

Mr. President, even as you and other Haitian leaders have endured your personal tragedies—losing your own homes, your loved ones—you have carried on with great courage and determination. You've persevered, leading an international effort with critical support from the United Nations, many partner nations, and countless nongovernmental organizations. Representatives of some of the NGOs are here today, and for the extraordinary work that you've done to uplift lives every day, in Haiti and around the world, often at great risk to your own lives, we salute you as well.

In this international response, the United States has been proud to play a leading role. Mr. President, we are joined today by men and women representing all the Americans who answered Haiti's call in its hours of need, including Members of Congress and many State and local officials, who we thank for their support, and leaders from across my administration: the Department of State, USAID, Homeland Security, FEMA, Health and Human Services, Transportation, and the Department of Defense, including our great folks at Southern Command. Today I want to thank all of them for leading a swift and coordinated response during one of the most complex humanitarian efforts ever attempted.

We're joined by Ambassador Ken Merten and some of our heroic Embassy staff, who worked around the clock. We're joined by our disaster response teams, who were on the scene within 24 hours; our military personnel, who quickly reopened the airport and the port, making way for a massive humanitarian effort; our search-and-rescue teams, who crawled into the rubble to pull survivors out to safety, Haitian and American; the volunteer physicians and nurses and paramedics, who treated tens of thousands of patients with life-threatening injuries; and all our men and women in uniform, who have helped to distribute desperately needed food and water and medicine to millions of people—our remarkable soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coast guardsmen.

I just want to personally say how extraordinarily proud I am of each and every one of you, because I think you represent what's best in

America. And I could not be prouder of the response that all of you were engaged in during this humanitarian crisis.

Now, no relief effort of this magnitude is without its difficulties, but there should be absolutely no doubt in anybody's mind, along with their Haitian and international partners, these men and women made a difference. They saved lives—countless lives—of men and women and children.

So, Mr. President, if you will permit us this moment to briefly express once again our admiration for all those who stepped forward, who volunteered, who represent the true character of our country, and who projected to the world the best face of America, a face of compassion and generosity. Each and every one of you can take enormous pride at your service, and every single American thanks you for making us so proud.

I also want to acknowledge the enormous generosity of so many individual Americans who gave what they could to support Haiti, even in difficult economic times. That help makes possible an extraordinary response from the courageous and capable nongovernmental organizations that have been at the scene and that support all kinds of efforts that the Government is engaged in. And I know that the support of the American people will continue to be essential as Haiti tries to recover and rebuild.

As President Preval and I discussed, the situation on the ground remains dire, and people should be under no illusions that the crisis is over. Many Haitians are still in need, desperate need in some cases, of shelter and food and medicine. And with the spring rains approaching, those needs will only grow. The challenge now is to prevent a second disaster.

And that's why, at this very moment, thousands of Americans, both civilian and military, remain on the scene at the invitation of the Haitian Government. And that's why, even as the U.S. military responsibly hands off relief functions to our Haitian and international partners, America's commitment to Haiti's recovery and reconstruction must endure and will endure. This pledge is one that I made at the beginning of this crisis, and I intend for America to keep our pledge. America will be your partner in the recovery and reconstruction effort.

Toward that end, the international donors' conference at the United Nations later this month will be an opportunity—an important opportunity for all parties. Haiti can lead the way and will lead the way with a strong vision for its future. The international community can pledge the resources that will be necessary for a coordinated and sustained effort. And working together, we can ensure that assistance not simply delivers relief for the short term, but builds up Haiti's capacity to deliver basic services and provide for the Haitian people over the long term.

So, Mr. President, in the face of devastation that shocked the world, the people of Haiti responded with resolve and faith that inspired the world, in song and in prayer and in the determination to carry on. As you declared during last month's national day of mourning, "It is time to wipe away the tears; it is time for Haiti to rebuild."

And to you and to the Haitian people, I say today, as you embark on the heavy work ahead, you will continue to have a steady and reliable partner in the United States of America.

So with that, let me turn this over to President Preval.

President Preval. Mr. President, dear friends in Congress, members of the organizations that helped Haiti in this moment of need, the Haitians of Washington: The damages caused in Haiti by the earthquake of January 12, 2010, are unimaginable. But the response from the international community—from Asia to Africa, from the United States, from Canada, from all of Latin America, from the Caribbean, from Europe, all the way to the Middle East—this response, thanks to its swiftness, thanks to its size, was commensurate with the disaster.

Today, here and now, I would like to thank the American people, I would like to thank Congress, I would like to thank the administration, and you, in particular, Mr. President, as well as your wife, not only for the material aid, but also for the moral support, the psycho-

logical support that helped us realize that we were not alone and that provide us great comfort in our distress.

You, thanks to your statements, sent a message to all of those who provided help to Haiti; needless for me to repeat that which you said. So I would like to thank you for having made it possible for these people to come to help us.

Mr. President, for me, this is also an opportunity to express my sympathy, my condolences, to all of the American families for whom members of their families were killed, injured in Haiti during this earthquake.

Dear friends, we must draw the lessons from what occurred in Haiti. These are lessons for all of mankind. The Haiti earthquake was immediately followed by the earthquake in Chile, as well as other earthquakes throughout the world. And the countries that have seismic risks are not merely those countries which are located on top of seismic faults. In fact, the tsunamis, which are the repercussions of break in faults, threaten other regions as well as the United States.

In addition to earthquakes and tsunamis, global warming is a major concern for the entire planet. We must draw the lessons from what occurred in Haiti. The massive, spontaneous, generous help was a good response to the disaster; however, its effectiveness must be improved, because effectiveness depends on the quality of coordination.

This is why I support the idea of the creation of so-called red helmets within the United Nations, and these would be an observatory, a warning system, a provision system for natural disaster and a humanitarian force which would be the equivalent of the blue helmets. It was proposed that there should be so-called red helmets, a humanitarian force in order to intervene and that would work in a coordinated manner as soon as the first minutes after a disaster, which are fundamental to saving lives.

Mr. President, during our meeting, I mentioned what Haiti's preoccupations and priorities were. Our priorities are, first and foremost, as you said, protection of those people who today are homeless and who must be relocated. And in parallel, we must prepare the rainy season, which just last week has already caused the deaths of 15 people.

And at the same time, much more basically, we must deal with the need of rebuilding Haiti, thanks to an effective decentralization policy, namely offering health care, education, jobs to all Haitians, men and women, regardless of where they live in the country, in order to prevent migratory flows towards the big cities, towards Port-au-Prince, and that will help avoid that disaster such as the earthquake would cause so many victims.

On March 31, there will be at the United Nations an international conference in order to support the reconstruction of Haiti. I do hope that all participants will share this philosophy, this vision, of decentralization.

And at the same time, just as the first-responders, I do recommend the concept of a coordination via the creation of a trust fund, a donors trust fund, whose implementation would be done—followed according to a unique procedure carried out by one executing agency. We talked about this, and I do know that we can already count on your support to be the advocate of that idea during this conference in support of our vision.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:01 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Elisabeth Debrosse Delatour, wife of President Preval; and U.S. Ambassador to Haiti Kenneth H. Merten. President Preval spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at St. Charles High School in St. Charles, Missouri
March 10, 2010

The President. Hello, Missouri. Well, it is good to see you. I know you guys been waiting a little bit here. It's a little bit warm in here; you're all fanning yourself off, woo! It is good to see everybody here today. How's everybody doing?

I've got a couple of acknowledgments I want to make. First of all, mayor of St. Charles, Patti York—where's Patti? Thank you, Madam Mayor. Thanks for the great weather. The—we also have the St. Charles School District superintendent, Randy Charles is here. Where's—where did Randy go? He—I just saw him. There he is, back there.

It is great to be here, great to be back in the "Show Me" State, great to be back in St. Charles. Some of you may remember, it was—that it was from this town that Lewis and Clark began their journey into a harsh and unforgiving landscape. And I can relate—[*laughter*]—because the first time I came here, I was trying to get to Washington, DC, a harsh and unforgiving landscape. [*Laughter*]

Now, a big part of our campaign was about changing the way Washington works. It was about transforming a politics that's driven by cynicism and a 24-hour news cycle and the cable chatter and always focused on the next election instead of the next generation. Our campaign was about meeting the looming challenges—in education and in energy, in our health care system, in our financial system—that helped bring about the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. And it still threatens our prosperity. It was about making our Government actually work for you, the people, a Government that lives up to its responsibilities, including the responsibility to live within its means.

Now, there's been a lot of discussion about Government over the last several months. And let's face it, people have lost faith in Government. They had lost faith in Government before I ran, and it's been getting worse. You know, President Lincoln said that "the legitimate object of government is to do for the people what needs to be done, but which they cannot . . . do at all, or do so well, by themselves." That pretty much sums up my attitude. You let people do for themselves what they can do for themselves, and then, if there are some things that we do better together, we should do them together. And I believe that in everything Government does, we've got a special responsibility to be wise stewards about how Americans' hard-earned tax dollars are spent. And I know you agree with that too. Doesn't matter whether you're a Democrat or a Republican, you don't like seeing your money wasted—or an Independent—don't like seeing your money wasted.

That's a responsibility that my administration is seeking to fulfill every single day. Over the last year, we've gone through the budget line by line looking for places to trim the fat out of Government. And we've found a lot of fat to trim, I got to admit. Last year, we pushed Congress to cut nearly $20 billion by streamlining or eliminating more than a hundred and twenty Government programs. This year, we put another $20 billion in cuts on the table, targeting dozens of additional programs that were wasteful or duplicative or in some cases just plain ridiculous.

For example, we decided not to fund an office maintained by the Department of Education in Paris, France. [*Laughter*] Now, I'm sure that was nice work if you could get it. [*Laughter*] But I didn't think that was a real good use of our money. We eliminated a decades-old radio navigation system which cost $35 million a year. And some people might say, well, why did you do that? We need that navigation system. Well, the thing is, we got this thing called GPS now, and satellites. [*Laughter*] So the whole radio navigation thing wasn't working so well.

So we've been pushing for cuts on things that we don't need, that Government doesn't do so well. And we're also reforming the way Government contracts are awarded. Think about this: Between 2002 and 2008, the amount spent annually on Government con-

tracts more than doubled to half a trillion dollars. Those are contracts with private contractors. And the amount spent on no-bid contracts jumped by 129 percent—no-bid contracts. That's an inexcusable waste of your money. So last March, I ordered Federal departments to come up with plans to save as much as $40 billion a year in contracting.

Now, this brings me to the person standing right over here, the lady in pink. You know before Claire was your Senator, she was your State auditor. She's—she just pinches pennies. I mean, she's just—[*laughter*]—she—you think I'm—I don't like waste, but Claire, she just—every dime, she's—[*laughter*].

So thanks to Claire, we're going to have a new tool to help us meet this goal of eliminating some of these wasteful contracts and no-bid contracts. In the coming weeks, we're going to be rolling out a new online database, which Claire McCaskill proposed and helped pass into law. And we'll be able to see, before any new contract is awarded, whether a company plays by the rules, how well they've performed in the past: Did they finish the job on time? Did the company provide good value? Did the company blow their budget? It's your money, so you deserve to know how it's spent and who these contracts are going to.

And that's an example of the kind of service that Claire McCaskill is providing, not just to the people of Missouri, but people all across the country. In every way but one, Claire McCaskill's the new Harry Truman—[*laughter*]—in the United States Senate. One difference is that she's a she. [*Laughter*]

But just as the Truman commission prevented billions of dollars of wasteful spending during the war—and saved lives in the process—through tough and fair-minded oversight of contracting during World War II, Claire's been a relentless force for rooting out scams and making Government more efficient. Harry Truman also said in the commission's final report that in completing the mission, "where necessary, heads must be knocked together." And let me tell you, Claire loves knocking some heads together. [*Laughter*] She's never been afraid to do that.

As we were driving in, I was saying, boy, it's just good to be back in the Midwest. This is about as close as I've been to home in a while. And part of the reason it's just good to be back is because Washington's a place where tax dollars are often treated like Monopoly money—they're bartered and traded, and they're divvied up among the lobbyists and special interests—and where waste, even billions of dollars of waste, is accepted as the price of doing business. When we proposed, by the way, those $20 billion in cuts last year, we were ridiculed by the press, said, "Ah, that's just a spit in the bucket." Now, I don't know about—here in St. Charles, $20 billion, that's real money, isn't it?

Audience members. Yes.

The President. That's real money. But Claire doesn't accept business as usual. I don't accept business as usual. You don't accept business as usual. The American people don't accept business as usual, especially when we're facing these enormous long-term deficits that threaten to leave our children with a mountain of debt.

Now, this brings me to the primary topic I want to talk about today. Nowhere is reform more needed than when it comes to our health care system—nowhere. Nowhere. The health care system has billions of dollars that should go to patient care, and they're lost each and every year to fraud, to abuse, to massive subsidies that line the pockets of the insurance industry.

Let me just give you one example. This is a long-recognized but long-tolerated problem called improper payments. That's what they call them. Washington always has a name for these things; this is "improper payments." And as is often the case in Washington, the more innocuous the name, the more worried you should be. So these are payments mostly made through Medicare and Medicaid that are sent to the wrong person, sent for the wrong reason, sent in the wrong amount. Sometimes they're innocent errors. Sometimes they're because nobody is bothering to check to see where the money's going, and they're abused by scam artists and fly-by-night operations.

[*At this point, the President coughed.*]

I—look, health care—[*laughter*]—this health care debate's been hard on my health, I got to tell you. [*Laughter*]

It's estimated that improper payments cost taxpayers almost a hundred billion dollars last year alone. Think about that. That, by the way—just that abuse in improper payments is more than we spend on the Department of Education and the Small Business Administration combined. If we created a department of improper payments, it would be one of the largest agencies in our Government.

Now, for the past few years, there's actually been a pilot program that uses a system of tough audits to recover some of this lost money. And even though these audits, they were just operating in—mainly in three States, they already found a billion dollars in improper payments. So these results were both disturbing and encouraging. They're disturbing because it shows you how much waste there is out there in the health care system. But it's encouraging because we can do something about it.

So earlier today, with Claire looking over my shoulder—one of our auditors in chief—I signed an order calling on all Federal agencies to launch these kinds of audits all across the country—all across the country. So agencies would hire auditors to scour the books, go through things line by line. Auditors are paid based on how many abuses or errors they uncover. So it's a win-win. The auditor, if they do a good job they get a small percentage as a reward. And the taxpayer wins by getting huge sums of money that would otherwise be lost that we can then spend to provide care to people who really need it or we can use to reduce the deficit.

Now, through this effort, we expect to more than double the amounts we would've otherwise recovered—couple billion dollars over the next few years. And I'm announcing my support for the "Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act"—that's a mouthful—but this is a bipartisan bill to expand our ability to do these audits, so that we can prevent even more fraud and abuse and waste.

Now, the reason I'm bringing all this stuff up is because there's been a lot of talk about health care lately. And look, I'll be honest, a lot of people are—they're confused, they're saying, "Well, how can you help people get insurance who don't have it without it adding to our deficit?" It's a legitimate question.

Well, the reason is, is because so much of the money currently in our health care system is being misspent. Look, if you've got a house and the roof is leaking and the windows are all letting through a bunch of draft and you get that cold winter and all the heat seeping out, and if you decide to spend on some new windows and to fix your roof, that's going to spend a little money. But you'd save money in the long run because you don't have heating expenses, and those leaks aren't ruining your furniture.

The same thing is true with our health care system. We've got leaks everywhere that you pay for, directly or indirectly. And if we can have a smarter health care system, then yes, we can provide help to middle class folks who need it and, at the same time, actually reduce the burden on taxpayers.

Now, I know that during the health care debate, opponents have tried to scare people, especially our seniors, into thinking that we are going after seniors' Medicare benefits; that's how Obama's going to pay for his plan.

When you look at the facts, that's just plain wrong. In fact, by saving billions of dollars of the sort we just talked about—waste and abuse—in Medicare, reining in waste and inefficiencies, we're going to be able to help ensure Medicare's solvency for an additional decade. This is just one example that speaks to how we're going to stop wasting money through the health care system on things that don't make people healthy—in fact, often take away from the care we receive—and take that money and make it work for the American people. So Medicare will work better, provide better care because of these reforms. Senior citizens who are dealing with the doughnut hole in the prescription drug plan, that plan will be filled, in part because we're not wasting money on stuff that doesn't work. That's common sense.

You know, I get a lot of letters from constituents. I get about 40,000 every day, and I don't read all 40,000—somebody does—but what I've done is I've asked my staff to collect a sampling of 10 letters that I read every night. And I will tell you that my staff is very evenhanded, because about half of these letters call me an idiot. [*Laughter*]

And at least half of them talk about health care. And when the health care reform debate was really heating up, one of the things that I heard from a lot of seniors was, "Keep your Government hands out of my Medicare." [*Laughter*] No, I heard this from a bunch of seniors. They say, "I don't want your Government-run health care plan, and don't touch my Medicare."

And so I'd have to write back, and I'd say, "Ma'am," or "Sir, Medicare is a Government program." [*Laughter*] "But we're not going go weaken it. We're going to make it stronger."

But I think those letters tell you something about what sometimes happened in this health care debate, because people have been hit with a lot of bad information. And health care's really important. And so people get worried, and they get nervous. But when you get past the divisive and the deceptive rhetoric, it turns out that most Americans are happy that two generations ago, we made the decision that seniors and the poor should not be saddled with unaffordable health care costs or forced to go without needed care. That was a decision that we made decades ago. And it was the right decision to make.

And by the way, when we made those decisions, folks were saying the exact same thing about Medicare: "That's socialized medicine. This is Government-run care," and blah, blah, blah.

Audience member. Medicare rules!

The President. Now, today we face a different choice, but it's a similar choice to the one that previous generations faced, and that is whether we should help middle class families and business owners that are being pummeled by the rising costs of health care. See, back when the Medicare debate was taking place, seniors were having problems because they were no longer working, and people were getting their health care through their jobs. And so it made sense to help them. It made sense to help the poor who might not be employed. But back then, middle class folks, they were pretty secure. If you were working, you had health care that was affordable.

But you know what's happened over the last several decades. What's happened is, is that more and more businesses are saying, "We can't afford to provide health care to our workers because the costs are skyrocketing." So they just drop health care altogether if—a lot of small businesses, they don't provide health care to their employees anymore. And large businesses, what are they doing? They're saying to you, "We're going to jack up your premiums. We got to increase your deductibles." If you're self-employed, you are completely out of luck. If you've got a preexisting condition, you are completely out of luck. And by the way, those of us who are lucky enough to have health care today, we don't know if we're the ones who are going to lose our job tomorrow or suddenly it turns out that our child has a preexisting condition. And we'll be stuck in the exact same situation, even if we've got good health insurance.

Now, everything I just said, if you talk to my opponents, they'll agree. They'll say, you're right, the health care system's broken. For too many people it's getting worse. They will acknowledge that the status quo is unsustainable. But you know what they tell me? We had that big health care summit. I know you guys watched all 7 hours of it. [*Laughter*] Yes, absolutely. It was scintillating. [*Laughter*] But you heard what they said. They said, "Well, we agree with you that the current system's unsustainable, but this is just not the right time to do it." They said, "Let's start over." That's what they said. "We just got to start from scratch."

Audience members. No!

The President. Well, let me tell you something. The insurance industry's not starting over. They just announced a 39-percent rate increase in California and a rate increase of up to 60 percent right across the border in my home State of Illinois—60 percent in 1 year. That's the future. That's the future if we fail to act.

And by the way, I don't recall any of these Republicans trying to do anything about insurance companies' abuses during all the years

they were in charge. Do you, Claire? I don't remember. I don't remember them doing anything about folks who needed some help when the Government was running surpluses.

So I get a sense with some of these folks, it's just never going to be the right time. But the truth is, we have debated health care in Washington not just this past year, we've been debating it for 70 years. You know who was pushing health care reform? Harry Truman. Harry Truman was pushing health care reform. And by the way, you know what they said? They said, "He's pushing socialized medicine." Harry Truman.

And over this past year, we've been talking about it, every proposal has been put on the table. Every argument has been made, and everybody has made it. And I know that people view this as a partisan issue, but the truth is, is that if you'd set aside the politics of it and what was good for election day, it turns out that parties have plenty of areas where they agree. And the plan that I've put forward is a proposal that's basically somewhere in the middle, one that incorporates the best ideas of Democrats and Republicans, even though the Republicans have a hard time acknowledging it.

Now, there are some folks who wanted to scrap the system of private insurance and replace it with a Government-run health care program, like they have in some other countries. We've got a couple—[*applause*]—some applause here. And look, it works well for those countries. But I'll just be honest with you: It was not practical or realistic to do here, to completely uproot and change a system where the vast majority of people still get their health care from employer-based plans.

And on the other side of the spectrum, there are those who believe that the answer is to simply unleash the insurance industry and provide less oversight and fewer rules——

Audience member. No!

The President. ——and that somehow that's going to drive down prices for everybody. This is called the "putting the foxes in charge of the henhouse" approach to health care reform. So whatever State regulations were in place, we'd get rid of those, and so insurance companies could basically find a State that had the worst regulations and then, from there, sell insurance everywhere, and that somehow that was going to be helpful to you. All this would do would give insurance companies more leeway to raise premiums and deny care.

So I don't believe we should give either the Government or the insurance companies more control over health care in America. I want to give you more control over health care in America.

So my proposal builds on the current system, where most Americans get their health care from their employers. If you like your plan, you can keep your plan. If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. But my proposal would change three important things about the current health care system. And I want everybody to pay attention. I know it's a little warm in here, but I want you to pay attention, so that when you are talking to your friends and your neighbors and folks at work, and they're wondering what's going on, I want you to be able to just say, here are the three things Obama's trying to do.

First, it would end the worst practices of insurance companies, and it would begin to do so this year. This year, thousands of uninsured Americans with preexisting conditions will be able to purchase health insurance for the very first time in their lives or since they got sick. This year, insurance companies would be banned from denying coverage to children with preexisting conditions—this year. Insurance companies would be banned from dropping your coverage when you get sick. Insurance companies would no longer be able to arbitrarily and massively raise premiums. They would be subject to review. Those practices will end as a consequence of health care reform.

All new insurance plans would be required to offer free preventive care to their customers. And if you buy a new plan, there will be no more lifetime limits on the amount of care you receive from your insurance company, all that fine print that ends up getting folks into trouble. If you're a uninsured young adult, you'll be able to stay on your parent's insurance policy until you're 26 years old. So a lot of folks, as they're transitioning into the workplace, will

have insurance. All right? So that's part one of the plan: insurance reform.

Part two: For the first time, uninsured individuals and small businesses will have the same kind of choice of private health insurance that Members of Congress get. If it's good enough for Members of Congress, it's good enough for the people who pay their salaries.

Now, this should not be a controversial idea. The reason that Federal employees usually have pretty good insurance is because they're part of a pool of millions of people. So what happens is, they can negotiate for really good rates because the insurance companies really want those millions of customers. So what we're talking about is setting up a pool for people who don't work for the Federal Government; you, individuals, small businesses, they can be part of this pool. And this is an idea that a lot of Republicans embraced in the past until I said it was a good idea. Suddenly—[*laughter*].

So all this would drive down rates for those individuals and small businesses who aren't part of a big company that get good rates. And my proposal says, if you still can't afford it, even though now the premiums are lower than you can buy on your own, then we'll offer you some tax credits to make it affordable. And those tax credits would add up to the largest middle class tax cut for health care in history.

So—now, it's estimated that this would drive down the costs for folks who don't work for big companies—so they don't get as good of a deal—by 14, 20 percent. This is before the subsidies, before the tax credits.

Now, it's true that this will cost some money. It's going to cost about a hundred billion dollars per year. That's real money, that's a lot of money. But most of that money comes from the nearly $2.5 trillion a year that America already spends on health care that we're not spending well, that we're spending badly right now.

So we pay for this proposal by getting at the abuse that we just talked about. We eliminate wasteful taxpayer subsidies that go to the insurance companies. Do you know that through the Medicare program, we are giving insurance companies close to $20 billion a year, about $18 billion every year of taxpayer money through the Medicare system? And we're saying, well, why do we do that? They're making a profit on their own. And while some of what we save goes to helping the uninsured, most of it goes back to small businesses and the middle class, who right now just aren't getting a good deal. It doesn't make sense to me that people who are really poor are able to get Medicaid, but people who are working really hard and just not quite as poor, they don't get a decent deal. That doesn't make sense to me.

All right, that's the second part. First part: insurance reform. Second part: creating this marketplace where small businesses and individuals can get a good deal.

Third part, bringing down the cost of health care for families and businesses and for the Federal Government: cost control. Now, when you listen to the other side, they'll tell you, we want to do more about cost, we want to do more about cost. Well, let me tell you, we've incorporated almost every serious idea from across the political spectrum about how to contain rising health care costs. There's not an idea out there that we have not worked on, that we have not included in this proposal.

And according to the Congressional Budget Office—this is the office that is supposed to be the independent referee for how things cost; it's not supposed to be Democrat or Republican—according to the Congressional Budget Office, people buying health plans in the individual market right now, they'd see their premiums go down 14 to 20 percent. I already mentioned that.

Now, here's another thing: A recent study by the Business Roundtable—that's made up of all these big companies out there; they don't—they're nonpartisan, but it's not like they're just dyed-in-the-wool liberal Democrats, let's put it that way; these are company CEOs. They commissioned a study and said the reforms could reduce premiums by as much as $3,000 per employee. That's their study, not mine.

Then the Congressional Budget Office said that the Government would save a trillion dollars, reduce the deficit by a trillion dollars. So think about it: You're saving money, employers are saving money, the Federal Government is saving money, not according to me, but accord-

ing to these studies that were done by independent analysts.

So here's the bottom line, St. Charles. There's no Government takeover, unless you consider reining in insurance companies a Government takeover. And I think that's the right thing to do. There's no cutting of Medicare benefits. There's just cutting out fraud and waste in Medicare to make it stronger.

What we're proposing is a commonsense approach to protecting you from insurance company abuses and saving you money. That's the proposal, and it is paid for. And I believe that Congress owes the American people a final up-or-down vote on health care reform. The time for talk is over; it's time to vote. It's time to vote. Tired of talking about it.

Now, of course, folks in Washington, they like to talk. And so Washington's doing right now what Washington does. They're speculating breathlessly, day or night, every columnist, every pundit, every talking head: "Is this proposal going to help the Republicans or is this proposal going to help the Democrats?" "What's going to happen to the President's polls numbers if the vote doesn't go forward? If it does go forward?" "What will it mean for November?" "What will it mean for 2012?" "How's the politics going to play?"

I heard the Republican leader of the Senate the other day, he's warning Democrats, you better be careful about voting for this, it could hurt you. I don't know how sincere the Republican leader is about the best interests of Democrats. [*Laughter*] He's been very generous with advice. [*Laughter*]

You know what, here's the bottom line, St. Charles. I don't know how the politics play. I don't know. This is a hard issue. It's a complicated issue. There's a lot of information floating around out there. A lot of it's inaccurate. The opponents have spent billion—millions of dollars fighting it. And people, during recessionary times, they're anxious and sort of thinking, gosh, can we really afford to change things right now? Maybe we should just kind of stick with the status quo, even though we know it's not working for us.

So I don't know how the politics plays. But here's what I do know: The American people will be more secure with this reform. Our country will be stronger because of this reform. I don't know about the politics, but I know it is the right thing to do, and that's why I'm fighting so hard to get it done.

We've seen years—decades—where Washington just puts off dealing with our toughest challenges because it's too hard, because we don't know how the politics works. And the will and the capacity to act, to do serious things in this country, starts just getting sucked away, just gets sacked by partisanship and political gamesmanship and debates about who's up and who's down, and how does this play politically, instead of asking what's right and what's wrong. And we've seen terrible consequences, not just these last 2 years of turmoil, but a decade of struggle for middle class families.

We can't accept the status quo. We can't accept the same old, same old. I won't accept it. Claire McCaskill won't accept it. Not when it comes to how we manage taxpayer dollars. Not when it comes to how our health care system works. Not when it comes to meeting the difficult challenges that we face. And that's why Claire and I are fighting to stop waste and abuse in our Government. That's why Claire and I are fighting to pass these health insurance reforms. Now is the time. Now is the moment. Now's the time for us to leave for the next generation and generations to come a stronger and more prosperous country. We are not backing down. We are not quitting, St. Charles. And we are going to get this done.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:58 p.m.

Statement on Senate Passage of Legislation Extending Various Tax Code Provisions and Unemployment Aid
March 10, 2010

Investing in our Nation's small businesses, cutting taxes for America's businesses, and bringing relief to families hard hit by the economic crisis are key to our economic recovery and long-term growth. This bill helps small businesses get the loans they need to grow and hire, provides tax relief that companies need to support new research and development jobs of the future, and extends relief to Americans looking for work. Jobs are priority number one for my administration, and I won't rest until every American who wants a good job has one. And I am grateful to Senators in both parties who took one more step forward today in getting our Nation back on a solid economic footing.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 4213.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran
March 10, 2010

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication stating that the Iran emergency declared on March 15, 1995, is to continue in effect beyond March 15, 2010.

The crisis between the United States and Iran resulting from actions and policies of the Government of Iran that led to the declaration of a national emergency on March 15, 1995, has not been resolved. The actions and policies of the Government of Iran are contrary to the interests of the United States in the region and pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to Iran and maintain in force comprehensive sanctions against Iran to respond to this threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
March 10, 2010.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Dinner for Senator Claire McCaskill in St. Louis, Missouri
March 10, 2010

The President. Hello, St. Louis. Thank you, everybody. Everybody have a seat. Have a seat. Thank you so much. All right, we've got some—everybody's a special guest, but we got some big names around here. First of all, please give a huge round of applause once again to one of the finest Governors in this country, Jay Nixon—give it up for him; your outstanding attorney general, Chris Koster; your fabulous State treasurer, Clint Zweifel; my great friend and supporter, State Auditor Susan Montee; one of my favorite folks in Missouri, Jean Carnahan; and all the McCaskills out there. I know you take up about half the tables. [*Laughter*] Golly.

There—by the way, your younger sister made a point of saying, "I'm the younger sister." I just wanted you to know that. [*Laughter*]

Sen. McCaskill. Of course she did. Of course she did.

The President. All right. It is great to be back in the "Show Me" State. It's nice to get out of Washington for a little bit. Now, there are a lot of nice things in Washington, don't get me wrong. I love the monuments. [*Laughter*] But let's face it, it's a town where most of the time, folks are more worried about what's good politics than what's right, where folks are just hooked up to the daily polls like they're on some kind of EKG.

And this isn't a new phenomenon. In fact, I'm remembered—I'm reminded of somebody from Missouri named Harry Truman, who once said in an interview he gave a long time ago, "Washington is a very easy city to forget where you came from and why you got there in the first place." But I want everybody here to understand that there is one person who's never forgotten where she comes from or why she is there, and that's Claire McCaskill. Claire is there to serve. She's there to serve you, she's there to serve Missouri, she's there to serve the United States of America. And I don't have to tell you that, because you've known Claire. You knew her as a prosecutor. You knew her as a State auditor. You now know her as one of the finest Senators that Missouri has ever produced.

In fact, she's a lot like a modern-day Harry Truman, except she's a she. [*Laughter*] But she's a standout in Washington for speaking truth to power, for bringing common sense to every issue, and for having the courage of her convictions. Claire is tough, not just to score cheap political points, but because she understands what her constituents are going through. And in a town marked by just withering partisanship, she's focused on what needs to be done to make sure that ordinary families here in Missouri and all across the country are getting a fair shake. And she'll work with anybody, no matter what party, to get it done. And she'll criticize anybody, no matter what party, in order to get things done.

And so in a town marked by gridlock, she's not afraid to challenge old assumptions or wornout ideas. And so she's a good role model for all of us, including the President of the United States.

Just as the Truman committee went after waste and abuse in our military during World War II, saving taxpayers billions of dollars, Claire's been a relentless force for bringing more efficiency and more transparency, more accountability to our Government. She understands what everyone in Washington should understand, but don't: The money we spend doesn't belong to us, it belongs to the American people. And we've got to invest it responsibly.

And in fact, earlier today, down in St. Charles, I announced a plan that Claire proposed and pushed through Congress that's about to come online. It's a database where Americans can track spending on contracts to see who's getting the job done on time and who's not, to see which companies keep costs low and which come in over budget time and again. Because the way that Claire sees it is the same way that Harry Truman saw it: You don't govern by polls, you govern by principles; you don't put your finger up to the wind, you put your shoulder to the wheel. And when this country is challenged, you do what you think is right, and you figure that the politics will work itself out.

No one in his or her right mind would have plotted, at the beginning of my administration, to do what we did—shore up the financial system, shore up the auto industry, pass the Recovery Act—if the goal was just to drive up our poll numbers. I've got really good pollsters—we knew that what we had to do wasn't popular. We knew it wasn't popular to make sure that we didn't have a financial meltdown. We knew that a lot of folks felt like, well, the auto companies got themselves into trouble. So we knew it wouldn't poll well. But we had a different mission, we had a greater responsibility, and that is to save our country from a even greater economic catastrophe than the one that we've seen. And that's a responsibility that we met.

And today, our financial system is stabilizing. And General Motors is expanding and hiring again. And millions of people are working in America who would not have been working had it not been for the Recovery Act. And all across Missouri, all across the Nation, roads are being repaved and bridges are being repaired and waterways are being rebuilt, not only putting Americans to work today, but laying a foundation for a better tomorrow. So we didn't know how the politics would work out; we knew it was the right thing to do, the same way Claire understands in each of her legislative initiatives: I'm not sure how this will poll, but I know it's the right thing to do.

Now, as we meet tonight, there are still millions of Americans—and too many right here in this State—who are out of work, millions who are stretched to the limits on their mortgage or their credit cards, their student loans. We are on the road to recovery, but we haven't gotten there yet, not until our economy is adding jobs again, not until people feel secure again. And Claire and I together, every day, are fighting for an economy in which Americans can compete and win. We're fighting for an economy in which hard work and entrepreneurship is rewarded again, where small businesses as well as large are thriving again and the great middle class that is the backbone of our country—and where Claire and I come out of—is thriving again, is strong again.

That's not easy, because there's been a lot of work that's been undone for the last two decades, three decades, seven decades. We've got a lot of built-up challenges that we—we're going to have to work hard to solve. But even as we fight these fights, I want you to understand, we are taking on some of the other problems facing folks in this State and across the country, and we're going to win these fights.

We passed a tough new tobacco law that helps stop cigarette companies from targeting kids and force them to disclose what they put in their products. We passed a credit card bill of rights that protects consumers from surprise charges, like over-the-limit fees and hidden costs for paying a bill by phone. We passed an equal pay law to help a promise to America's women that if you do the same job as a man, you should make the same wage as a man. We expanded health insurance coverage for 4 million more children. And so the bottom line is this: I want everybody to understand, despite all the gridlock, despite all the shenanigans, we've gotten a lot done.

The reason I'm here tonight, and the reason Claire is here tonight, is because we've got a lot more work to do. Some of our biggest challenges lie ahead. Because the future belongs to a nation that educates its children best, we've got to reform our education system so that all our kids are ready for college, all our kids are ready for a career, all our kids are ready to succeed in the 21st century. Because the nation that leads in clean energy today will lead the global economy tomorrow, we need to invest in a clean energy industry that frees us from foreign oil and cleans up our air and generates millions of jobs in the process. And yes—and yes—because the current health care system is broken and unsustainable, we have to have health insurance reform this year, right now.

We've been talking about health care for nearly a century. One of the Presidents who tried to do something about it? Harry Truman. Sixty years ago, he pushed back against opponents of reform by saying, quote, "The American people will not be frightened off from health insurance because some people have misnamed it socialized medicine." He then repeated, "What I am recommending is not socialized medicine." Who says history doesn't repeat itself?

But you know what else Harry Truman said—you know, the famous saying about "Give 'em hell, Harry"—what Harry said was, "I'm going to tell the truth, they'll think it's hell." [*Laughter*]

And so let me tell the truth about this health care debate. I know there are strong views about this. I know there are Democrats who would like to scrap our system of private insurance and replace it with a Government-run health care system that works in some countries. I know there are some on the other side who believe that the answer is to loosen regulations on insurance companies, whether it's consumer protections or basic standards of what kind of insurance can be sold. The notion—this

is what we call the "fox guarding the henhouse" approach to health care reform.

But I don't believe we should give the Government or insurance companies more control over health care in America. I believe it's time to give you, the American people, more control over your health insurance. And that's why my proposal builds on the current system, where most Americans get their health insurance from their employers. If you like your plan, you can keep your plan. If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. I'm the father of two young girls; I don't want anybody interfering between my family and their doctor.

But essentially the proposal that we—after all the talk, after the years of debate, let's be clear on what we're doing here. Three things we're going to change about the current health care system.

Number one, we're going to end the worst practices of the insurance companies. Within a year of signing health care reform, thousands of uninsured Americans with preexisting conditions will be able to purchase health insurance for the first time since they were diagnosed. This year—this year—insurance companies will be banned forever from denying coverage to children with preexisting conditions. This year, they will be banned from dropping coverage when you get sick. They'll no longer be able to arbitrarily raise premiums. Those practices will end.

If this—when this reform passes into law, all new insurance plans will offer free preventive care to their customers, free checkups so that we can start catching preventable illnesses on the front end. Starting this year, if you buy a plan, there won't be lifetime restrictions or annual limits on the amount of care that you can receive from your insurance companies. And if you're an uninsured adult, you'll be able to stay on your parent's policy until you're 26 years old. So that's the first thing we do.

Second thing we change, for the first time, we would start allowing people who are currently trying to get health insurance on the individual market—small businesses—and just can't do it to have the same kind of choices of private health insurance that Members of Congress get for themselves, which I don't think's a bad idea and neither does Claire McCaskill. Now, I want everybody—to be clear—Members of Congress will be getting their insurance from this same marketplace, because if it's good enough for the American people, then it's good enough for Congress.

My proposal also says that if you still can't afford the insurance in this new marketplace, we will offer you tax credits to do so, tax credits that add up to the largest middle class tax cut for health care in history. Understand, the wealthiest among us can already buy insurance, the best insurance there is. The least well off, they're covered under Medicaid. It's the middle class that's getting squeezed, and that's who we have to help: small businesses, self-employed, individuals who are out there struggling.

And this will cost some money. It's going to cost about $100 billion per year. But most of this comes from the nearly $2.5 trillion a year that we're already spending on health care; we're just not spending it very wisely right now. We are wasting it; we're spending it badly. And with some basic reforms, eliminating waste and abuse, we can make sure to provide coverage that's affordable—make it more affordable and more secure.

We're going to eliminate wasteful taxpayer subsidies currently going to insurance and pharmaceutical companies. We'll set up a new fee on insurance companies that stand to gain as 30 million new customers come on board. But the point everybody needs to understand is, it's paid for. I said at the beginning of this thing, we would not do anything that adds to our deficit. This plan does not do anything to add to this deficit, and that's how we should be operating. We can't say the same for the prescription drug plan that was passed by the previous Congress.

Finally, this proposal would bring down the cost of health care for families and businesses and the Federal Government. Americans buying comparable coverage to what they have today in the individual market, they'd see their premiums drop 14 percent to 20 percent. Americans who get their insurance through

the marketplace, premiums could fall by as much as $3,000 per person.

And by now, we've incorporated every single serious idea across the political spectrum about how to contain rising costs in health care, ideas that go after waste and abuse in our system, especially in programs like Medicare. But we do this while protecting Medicare benefits, extending stability of the program, and filling this doughnut hole that is such a burden on a lot of seniors who really need their prescription drugs.

So our cost-cutting measures would reduce most people's premiums, bring down the deficit by a trillion dollars over the next two decades. Those are not my numbers. Those are savings determined by the Congressional Budget Office, the nonpartisan, independent referee of Congress.

So just in case anybody's out there asking you about health care reform, that's our proposal. And it is a proposal whose time has come. We are coming to a final vote in Congress, and that's when folks in Congress, they get nervous. The Washington echo chamber is deafening, and it tells Members of Congress to think about politics instead of what's right. It tells Congress that comprehensive reform, that's failed before, it really hurt Clinton. It may just be too hard.

Yes, this is hard. There's no doubt about it. Let me tell you what else is hard. There's a woman I just met, Leslie Banks, in Pennsylvania, single mother. She was hit with 100-percent rate increase; just a letter sent by her insurance company—100-percent increase in her premiums. That's hard. There's a woman named Natoma Canfield—she's got cancer, in Ohio—had to drop her insurance even though it may cost her her house. The other day, she suddenly fell ill; she's in the hospital right now. We're all praying for her, but lying in a hospital bed, worrying about how you're going to pay for your bills, that's hard. I know. My mother went through that.

There's a woman named Laura Klitzka, in Wisconsin, Green Bay, young mother battling cancer. She and her husband had insurance, but their medical bills still landed them in the—in debt. So she's in the middle of this unbelievable battle, got little kids she loves dearly. She's spending most of her time worrying about debt, when all she wants to do is spend time with her children. That's hard. Millions of families, small businesses, what they're going through because we don't have a health insurance system that works for them, that's really hard.

Those of us in public office were not sent to Washington to do what was easy; we were sent there to do what was hard. We were sent there to do what's right. When I think about the campaign I ran for President, and I think about the campaign Claire McCaskill ran for Senate, all the work we put in—we were joking backstage about, boy, you worked really hard for this job. [*Laughter*] The reason we did it wasn't to get a title. The reason you—so many of you—were so passionate about this campaign wasn't just so you could have a picture with me. That wasn't what this was about.

This was about recognizing that America at its best doesn't shrink from a challenge; we overcome challenges. We don't shrink from responsibilities; we embrace our responsibilities. We don't fear the future; we seize the future. That's what we did in the campaign, at a time when everybody was out there saying we couldn't do it. That's what people were warning Claire about when she took on this race for Senate, saying: "I don't know, Claire, you already gone through a couple of losses; this may be tough. Why take the risk?" Because it needed to be done; because somewhere down the road, there were a whole bunch of people in our pasts—our parents, our grandparents, our great-grandparents—who decided, we're not taking the easy path, we're taking the right path. We're going to fight to make sure our kids and our grandkids and our great-grandkids have a better life than we do.

That's what our campaigns were about. That's what your involvement has been about. That's what this health care debate is about. That is what my Presidency is about. And that is what America's about. And that is why I'm absolutely convinced, if we stay on course, that we are going to win this thing. Not the short-term

battle, not the November election, we're going to win out in terms of creating the kind of society for our kids and our grandkids that we can be proud of.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:45 p.m. at the Renaissance Grand Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeremiah W. "Jay" Nixon and State Attorney General Chris Koster of Missouri; former Sen. Jean Carnahan; and former President William J. Clinton.

Remarks at a Reception for Senator Claire McCaskill in St. Louis
March 10, 2010

The President. What's going on, St. Louis? Thank you. Thank you, St. Louis. It is good to be back in Missouri.

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. Thank you, guys. Thank you. I got the same reception when I went to the Republican caucus. [*Laughter*] They were chanting and cheering. [*Laughter*] You don't remember that?

Give it up for Governor Jay Nixon, one of the finest Governors in the country. Give it up for Mayor Francis Slay, who's in the house. He's around here somewhere. There he is over there.

And give it up for my dear, dear friend Claire McCaskill. I love Claire McCaskill. Love, love Claire McCaskill. Now, Claire and I both agree it's nice to get out of Washington once in a while. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Come more often!

The President. Now, don't—I'm going to—[*laughter*]. Don't get me wrong, there are a lot of nice things about Washington. I like the monuments.

Audience member. How is the house?

The President. House is okay. [*Laughter*] It's got a bowling alley.

Audience member. Have you bowled yet?

The President. Huh?

Audience member. Have you bowled?

The President. My bowling has not gotten any better. [*Laughter*] But here's the thing about Washington——

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back. I love you back.

But here's the thing about Washington. Look, it's a town where everybody is spending all their time worrying about staying reelected, what's good for their poll numbers, instead of thinking about what's right. I mean, they are just—you walk into—you walk in somebody's office, and they got, like, five TVs—CNN, MSNBC, FOX News.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. I'm just saying. [*Laughter*]

Sen. McCaskill. Smart crowd, smart crowd.

The President. Yes, they've got all the tabloids, the little gossip, you know, papers in Washington. So it's like a hall of mirrors. But folks don't spend enough time thinking about what's right and what's going on outside of Washington.

Now, this is not a new phenomenon. Harry Truman said something to the same effect. He had an interview, he said, "Washington is a very easy city to forget where you come from and why you got there in the first place." [*Laughter*]

Let me tell you something: Claire McCaskill doesn't forget where she came from, and she doesn't forget why she got to Washington. She got to Washington to serve you, to fight for you, to fight for families all across America. That's why you're here today, because you know Claire McCaskill is on your side.

You've known that ever since she was a prosecutor. You've seen her as a State auditor, just pinching pennies, just looking through—[*laughter*]—making sure folks aren't wasting your money. She's turned into one of the finest Senators Missouri has ever had. She's following in Harry Truman's footsteps.

She's a standout because she speaks truth to power. She's not afraid of anybody, speaks her mind. Sometimes she tells me things—[*laughter*]—and I'm the President. [*Laughter*] But that's what you need, is somebody who's got the courage of their convictions. They're not a

weathervane, putting their fingers out to the wind, seeing, well, is that thing popular, is that going to win, is that good for me? She's thinking about, is it good for you. She's focused on solving problems.

No matter what party, she'll work with anybody if she thinks it's going to solve a problem. She's willing to challenge old assumptions and wornout ideas. And she's a great role model for that.

I'll just give you an example. Some of you remember the—Harry Truman made his name with the Truman committee that went after waste and abuse during World War II, saving taxpayer dollars and lives. Well, Claire is doing the same thing, fighting for transparency and accountability in Government. She understands that the money we spend doesn't belong to us, it belongs to you. It belongs to the American people, so it's got to be spent responsibly.

So just today—just today—I announced a plan that Claire proposed, pushed through Congress, that's going to be coming on line. It's a database where Americans can track spending on contracts: who's getting it, are they doing it on time, are they doing it on budget. If companies aren't doing it on budget, then they stop getting contracts.

But that's an example of the kind of work she's been doing since she got there, the same way Harry Truman saw it. You don't govern by the polls, you govern by principles. You don't put your finger to the wind, you put your shoulder to the wheel. Because Claire assumes that if she's doing what's right, the politics will sort itself out.

See, I've got this same philosophy. I have so much faith in the American people that I figure, you know what, if I do the right thing, then the politics will work itself out. Now, that's puzzling to Washington. So they've been writing over the last couple months, "Oh, my goodness, look at Obama. His poll numbers have dropped. Oh, the sky is falling!" [*Laughter*] No, I mean, you see articles, you know: "Can you imagine what's happened? What a catastrophe!" I'm looking around, and I'm thinking, I feel okay. [*Laughter*] I feel pretty good.

And the reason I feel pretty good is because I wake up every day trying to figure out, what's going to help American families have some control over their lives? What's going to help them be able to save a little more for their retirement? What's going to help them be able to find a job? What's going to help them deal with a health care crisis in their lives? What are we going to do to make sure young people can afford to go to college?

Now, sometimes the decisions we make in the short term are not going to be popular, and the folks in Washington don't understand that I know they're not going to be popular. They can't believe I'm doing them. See, they just think I'm an idiot—[*laughter*]—because I'm doing something that's not immediately popular. But I've got pollsters. I've got very good pollsters. They send me the polls. They say, "You know what, shoring up the financial system, not popular." [*Laughter*] "Helping out the auto industry, not popular; passing the Recovery Act, not popular."

That's okay, because my job is not being popular. My job is solving problems for the American people. I've got a greater responsibility. I've got a deeper mission. I'm looking at 10 years from now, will you look back and say that what he did made sense for the American people, not whether tomorrow people are going to be looking and saying, "That made him popular."

So today—listen, you remember a year ago, everybody was saying—we had only been there for 2 months. [*Laughter*] They said, "Oh, his financial plan is a disaster." Huh? Stock market had dropped. Remember that? Everybody is like, "His Presidency is over; he's been in 3 months." [*Laughter*]

Now, suddenly, you look up, financial system's stabilized. People said: "Oh, you know what, why is he getting involved in this auto thing? Big mistake." Now, suddenly, General Motors is hiring again. They said, "Well, I don't know about this Recovery Act." Except all over Missouri and all across the Nation, roads are being repaved and bridges are being repaired and waterways are being rebuilt. And we're putting Americans back to work. We're laying the foundation for tomorrow. And instead of the economy contracting 6 percent, it's now growing 6 percent. So I think about what's right and then

figure out—whether the politics will work out or not, I'm confident in the American people.

Now, look, here's the bottom line—Claire and I know this—as much progress as we've made, there are still millions of Americans, and too many all across Missouri, who are out of work, too many people who are still stretched to the limits on their mortgages, their credit cards, their student loans. So we're on the road to recovery, but we're not there. We will not be there until folks who want to find a job can get a job, not until people feel some sense of security again.

We are fighting every day, Claire and I, for an America where every single person can compete and win. If they're willing to work hard, if they're willing to apply themselves, then they've got a shot at the American Dream. We're fighting for an economy where entrepreneurship and hard work and some sweat can result in success, and that we can rebuild this middle class that has been the backbone, not just of our economy, but also our democracy.

So we're going to have some more fights. We've won some fights. People don't—people tend to forget—we won them so fast those first 6 months, everybody's forgotten about it. [*Laughter*] Now, we've banned tobacco advertising to kids. We passed credit card legislation to make sure that the worst abuses no longer happen. We passed housing fraud laws that will crack down on predatory lending. We passed equal pay laws so that women are getting paid the same for doing the same work as men. We expanded health care to 4 million children. We passed national service legislation. We are bringing our troops home from Iraq. We have delivered on our promises.

But we've got work left to do. The country that educates its children the best will compete the best in the 21st century, and that's why we're going to keep on pushing to reform our education system, make sure that college is affordable.

Because the nation that leads in clean energy will also lead in the 21st-century economy, we're going to keep on pushing for solar and wind and biodiesel, and create millions of jobs in the process.

And yes, because we know that this economy cannot work if we've got a broken health care system, we are going to get health care reform done this year, right now.

Everybody remembers that person yelling to Harry, "Give 'em hell, Harry!" But folks don't remember Harry's response, which was, "I'm going to tell the truth, and they'll think it's hell." [*Laughter*] So let me tell you the truth about health care reform. The system is broken. Out in California, one of the biggest insurers there just raised rates up to 39 percent on millions of people. Right across the river, in Illinois, 60 percent hikes in some of the individual markets. It's not sustainable and everybody knows it.

So what have we done? There's nothing radical about what we've proposed. We have said, look, some countries have a government-run system; that's not going to work for here in the United States. Some people—most of my Republican colleagues in Washington—seem to think that the best health care plan is just to let 'er rip when it comes to the insurance companies, deregulate further, and that that's somehow going to give you more of a break. This is the "foxes guarding the chicken coop" theory of health care reform.

What I've said is, look, we don't need Government or insurance bureaucrats controlling your health care. We're going to put you in control. And we're going to do that in three simple ways.

Number one, we're going to have the toughest insurance reforms in history. A patient's bill of right on steroids, so they can't deny you coverage because of a preexisting condition, so that they've got to cover young people up to the age of 26, so they don't have fine print that will prevent you from getting the care that you need or allow them to drop you when you get sick—insurance reform.

Number two, what we're saying is, you know what, Members of Congress have a pretty good deal on health care. You know why? Because they're members of a big pool of Federal employees; they've got millions of people in their pool, so like any big company, they can negotiate for the best rates.

Audience member. What about us?

The President. What about you? What about you? Why shouldn't you be able to do the same thing that Members of Congress can do? So we're going to create a pool for you that will drive down your premiums so that you've got leverage, so that you can get a better deal.

[*At this point, the lights went out momentarily.*]

Whoa! All right, who was—was that Mitch McConnell back there trying to—[*laughter*]. Yes, see, they don't like when we start telling the truth. [*Laughter*]

So that's number two. Number three, we're going to drive down costs. We are going to drive down costs. Now, let me tell you—some of you may have heard of the Congressional Budget Office. This is the office that basically decides—it's the referee on how many—how much things cost. According to the Congressional Budget Office, our plan passes and folks right now who have to buy insurance in the individual market or small markets because they don't have a big employer that's looking out for them, they will save 14 to 20 percent on a comparable plan to what they're purchasing right now. That's money out of your pocket. That's money that right now is going out of your pocket that would go back in if this health care reform passed.

Employers, according to the Business Roundtable, would save up to $3,000 per employee in reduced premium costs if health reform passed. That's their numbers, according to the Business Roundtable, not my numbers. The deficit over the next two decades will be reduced by a trillion dollars if health care reform passes, and that's why it can't be "if," it's got to be "when." We are going to get this done, and we're going to get it done soon. And it's time for an up-or-down vote in Washington on health care reform. Tired of talking about it; let's get it done.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. See, I want every Member of Congress to hear this chant.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. We got to start this chant up in Congress, because what ends up happening in Washington is that right about now, when it's time to actually just go ahead and get this done, this is when folks get the most nervous. Oh, there's just so much noise out there, just the echo chamber. It's getting people all stressed out.

Audience member. Stay the course!

The President. Stay the course, is what I tell them. And you know, we were meeting with some supporters back here, and a couple of them said the same thing. They said, "Don't let them wear you down." And I tried to explain I don't get worn down; I wear them down. I don't get worn down.

You know why I don't get worn down? Because of the woman I met in Pennsylvania this past week who found out that her health insurance premium has just gone up a hundred percent; or the mother up in Green Bay who I met last year who's got two small kids, breast cancer has metastasized, and instead of just worrying about how she can get well, she's having to fight off the incredible debt that's coming because of these limits that are placed on her insurance coverage. She's got insurance and is still worried about her family going broke.

Now, if she's not tired, if she's still fighting, then I'm fighting. If they're not getting worn down, then I'm not going to be worn down. And if I've got somebody like Claire McCaskill next to me, if I've got Claire McCaskill in the foxhole with me, if I've got somebody like Claire McCaskill in the Senate bucking people up and telling them, we don't give up, we don't get worn down, then I guarantee you we're not just going to pass health care, we are going to do what is required to make sure that the middle class here in America once again has the ability to control its own destiny.

We don't shirk from a challenge, we don't shrink from responsibilities; we embrace them, for our children and the next generation. We don't worry about the next election, we worry about a longer term. And that's why you're

here. That's why you supported me in this campaign. That's why you supported Claire McCaskill. Don't give up on me now. We're just getting started.

Thank you, St. Louis. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:25 p.m. at the Renaissance St. Louis Grand Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeremiah W. "Jay" Nixon of Missouri; and Mayor Francis G. Slay of St. Louis, MO.

Remarks at the Export-Import Bank's Annual Conference
March 11, 2010

Thank you, everybody. And thank you, John, for that generous introduction. Congratulations to you and Fabienne and Luis for the recognition your companies so richly deserve. And thank you to the chairman of the Export-Import Bank, Fred Hochberg, for having me here today and for all the important work the Ex-Im Bank is doing to help American businesses sell their ideas to the world. I also want to recognize the Secretary-General of the OECD, Angel Gurria, for his leadership at that institution.

Let me also acknowledge some members of my economic team who are here today: my Commerce Secretary, Gary Locke, who's just returned from a trip to Brazil—where are you, Gary?—there he is, right here; our U.S. Trade Representative, Ambassador Ron Kirk, who's been putting in a lot of miles. They are both doing a great job in the work of moving this country forward in tough times.

Now, it has been our most pressing priority over the first year of my administration to deal with an unprecedented economic crisis, one that has been as serious as anything since the Great Depression. To do that required difficult and sometimes unpopular steps to rescue our financial system and to jump-start an economic recovery. But we took those steps. And because we did, we can stand here just over a year later and say that we prevented another depression, we broke the back of the recession, and the economy that was shrinking a year ago is growing today.

Now, what's also clear is that we've got a long way to go. More than 8 million Americans have lost their jobs since the start of the recession. Millions more remain underemployed, including those doing part-time work or odd jobs. And the middle class across this country has felt their economic security eroding for longer than they care to remember. That's why we continue to do everything we can to foster private sector job creation and to restore some sense of security.

But the fact is, if we want to once again approach full employment, if we want to create broad, shared, and lasting wealth for our workers and our families, if we want an America that is ready to compete on the global playing field in the 21st century, then we can't slide back into an economy where we borrow too much and put off tough challenges. We can't return to an economy where too much of our prosperity is based on fleeting bubbles and rampant speculation. We have to rebuild our economy on a new, stronger, more balanced foundation for the future, a foundation that will advance the American people's prosperity at home and support American leadership in the world.

And that's precisely what we've begun to do. We're catalyzing a new clean energy industry that has the potential to employ millions of workers in good jobs. We're investing in the skills and education of our workers and reforming our education system with a goal to once again lead the world in the proportion of college graduates by the end of this decade. We're building a better health care system that works for our people, our businesses, and our Government alike. We're establishing clear, commonsense rules of the road for Wall Street that encourage innovation and creativity instead of recklessness and irresponsibility, rules that prevent firms from taking risks that threaten to bring down the entire economy. And we are rebuilding an economy where we generate more American jobs in more American industries by producing and exporting more goods and services to other nations.

Now, in my State of the Union Address, I set a goal of doubling America's exports over the next 5 years, an increase that will support 2 million American jobs. And I've come to the Export-Import Bank Conference today to discuss the initial steps that we're taking to achieve that goal.

I know the issue of exports and imports, the issue of trade and globalization have long evoked the passions of a lot of people in this country. I know there are differences of opinion between Democrats and Republicans, between business and labor about the right approach. But I also know we are at a moment where it is absolutely necessary for us to get beyond those old debates.

Those who would once support every free trade agreement now see that other countries have to play fair and the agreements have to be enforced; otherwise, we're putting America at a profound disadvantage. Those who once would oppose any trade agreement now understand that there are new markets and new sectors out there that we need to break into if we want our workers to get ahead.

And meanwhile, if you ask the average American what trade has offered them, they won't say that their televisions are cheaper or productivity is higher. They'd say they've seen the plant across town shut down, jobs dry up, communities deteriorate. And you can't blame them for feeling that way. The fact is, other countries haven't always played by the same set of rules, America hasn't always enforced our trade rights or made sure that the benefits of trade are broadly shared, and we haven't always done enough to help our workers adapt to a changing world.

Now, there's no question that as we compete in the global marketplace, we've got to look out for our workers. But to look out for our workers, we've got to be able to compete in the global marketplace. It's never been as important an opportunity for America as it is right now.

In a time when millions of Americans are out of work, boosting our exports is a short-term imperative. Our exports support millions of American jobs; you know this well. In 2008, we exported more than $1 trillion of manufactured goods, supporting more than one in five manufacturing jobs. And those jobs, by the way, pay about 15 percent more than average. We led the world in service exports, which support 2.8 million jobs. We exported nearly $100 billion in agricultural goods. And every $1 billion increase in exports supports more than 6,000 additional jobs.

So it's critical in the short term, but it's also critical for our long-term prosperity. Ninety-five percent of the world's customers and the world's fastest growing markets are outside our borders. We need to compete for those customers because other nations are competing for them.

They're investing in the skills and education of their people. They're investing in the high-demand industries of the future. They've benefited from American consumers. They've made themselves into export-based economies and positioned themselves for the jobs of the future. They're pursuing trade agreements with growing markets, and those agreements would give their companies access to those markets and put our workers and businesses at a disadvantage.

So if we stand on the sidelines while they go after those customers, we'll lose out on the chance to create the good jobs our workers need right here at home. That's why standing on the sidelines is not what we intend to do. We need to remind ourselves we still have the most innovative economy in the world. We still have the most productive workers in the world. We have the finest universities in the world. We have the most dynamic and competitive markets in the world.

We remain the number-one exporter of goods and services in the world. So we've got a terrific foundation to build on. But we can't be satisfied with being number one right now. We shouldn't assume that our leadership is guaranteed. When other markets are growing and other nations are competing, we've got to get even better. We need to secure our companies a level playing field. We need to guarantee American workers a fair shake. In other words, we need to up our game.

And that's why, for the first time, the United States of America is launching a single, comprehensive strategy to promote American exports.

It's called the National Export Initiative, and it's an ambitious effort to marshal the full resources of the United States Government behind American businesses that sell their goods and services abroad.

This morning I signed an Executive order instructing the Federal Government to use every available Federal resource in support of that mission. That order has created an Export Promotion Cabinet, made up of the Secretaries of State, Treasury, Agriculture, Commerce, and Labor, along with our USTR, our Small Business Administrator, the Export-Import Bank President, and other senior U.S. officials whose work impacts exports. That cabinet will convene its first meeting next month.

I've also relaunched the President's Export Council, the principal national advisory committee on international trade. And I named Jim McNerney, the president and CEO of Boeing, as its Chair, with Ursula Burns, the CEO of Xerox, as Vice Chair, and I look forward to their recommendations.

Let me talk a little bit about what the National Export Initiative will do. First, we will substantially increase access to trade financing for businesses that want to export their goods but just need a boost, especially small businesses and medium-sized businesses.

Some of the biggest factors limiting a firm's decisions to export are the high upfront costs of establishing a foothold in a new market and the ability of the customers in that market to finance the purchase of their products.

So during the financial crisis, as trade finance dried up, the Export-Import Bank lived up to its mission and stepped up to fill the void. In fiscal year 2009, as part of a broader effort of G–20 nations to mobilize trade financing worldwide, this institution authorized $21 billion in loans in support of American exports. That's an increase of nearly 50 percent over the previous year. So I applaud Fred's efforts to increase that pace with the authorization of about $10 billion more in the first quarter of this year alone. And under the National Export Initiative, we'll continue to increase the amount of trade financing Ex-Im offers, including a new $2 billion per year effort to increase support for our small and medium-sized businesses.

But another obstacle our exporters face is that the Federal Government, frankly, just hasn't done a good enough job advocating for them abroad, at least compared to the advocacy that other countries are engaging in. And that's why, as the second part of the National Export Initiative, the United States of America will go to bat for our businesses and our workers.

As an example, last week, I signed the Travel Promotion Act, a law that will establish active promotion and marketing efforts to encourage foreign visitors to come visit the most dynamic cities, the most entertaining destinations, and the most beautiful natural resources in the world. Well, that same principle applies for all of our businesses. We've got some of the most innovative companies in the world, and we should be advocating on their behalf to boost local economies and create jobs here.

This is an effort I will personally lead as President. Next week, I'll take my second trip to the Asia-Pacific, a region that will be fundamental to America's ability to create jobs and to thrive in the 21st century. We can't be on the sidelines. We have to lead, and our engagement has to extend to governments and businesses and peoples across the Pacific. So while I'm there, I'll visit Indonesia and Australia, two vibrant economies and democracies that will be critical partners for the United States. And in both countries, I'll highlight the role that American businesses play there and underscore how strong economic partnerships can create jobs on both sides of the Pacific while advancing both regional and global prosperity. Going forward, I will be a strong and steady advocate for our workers and our companies abroad.

And this effort will extend throughout my administration. Secretary Locke is issuing guidance to all senior Government officials who have foreign counterparts on how they can best promote our exports. Secretary Clinton is mobilizing a commercial diplomacy strategy, directing every one of our Embassies to create a senior visitors business liaison who will manage our export advocacy efforts local-

ly. And when our Ambassadors return stateside, we'll ask them to travel the United States to discuss export opportunities in their countries of assignment.

We're also announcing more than 40 trade and reverse trade missions that are scheduled for this year. The Department of Commerce, for example, has sent a trade mission to India this week. Secretary Vilsack is off to Japan on April 15. So advocacy is going to be critical.

Third, we'll unleash a battery of comprehensive and coordinated efforts to promote new markets and new opportunities for American exporters. Many businesses want to export their products but just don't have the resources required to identify new markets or set up shop overseas. And that's where we can help. We'll bring together the Ex-Im Bank, the SBA, the Departments of Commerce and Agriculture, and the Trade Development Agency to set up one-stop shops across the country and in our 250 Embassies and consulates abroad to help American businesses gain a foothold in the fastest growing markets with the most demand. And we'll provide a comprehensive toolkit of services, from financing to counseling to promotion, to help potential exporters grow and expand.

We'll create public-private partnerships to help firms break into new markets with the help of those who have been there, shipping and supply-chain companies for example. And we'll increase funding for existing promotion efforts. We'll increase funding for the International Trade Administration at the Department of Commerce and strengthen the USDA's ability to connect farmers with new overseas markets.

So we're going to increase financing, advocacy, and assistance for American businesses to locate, set up shop, and win new markets. Those are the first three aims of the National Export Initiative. The fourth focuses on making sure American companies have free and fair access to those markets. And that begins by enforcing trade agreements we already have on the books.

When I ran for President, I promised that when the United States of America puts its name to an agreement, that agreement will be as good for workers as it is for businesses, including strong labor and environmental protections that we'll enforce. My administration is living up to that promise. Ambassador Kirk has been doing an extraordinary job as our United States Trade Representative, and he's been working to knock down barriers that unfairly keep American companies from markets we belong in, hold our trade partners to their labor and environmental obligations, and crack down on practices that blatantly harm our companies.

I mean, keep in mind, the United States offers some of the world's lowest barriers to trade. That's why we can often get more out of a trade deal, because our borders are largely already open. And when we give other countries the privilege of that free and fair access, we can expect it in return. That's the spirit in which we'll move forward.

So we're going to continue to work towards an ambitious and a balanced Doha agreement, not just for the sake of any agreement, but for one that enhances market access for American agriculture and goods and services. We're going to strengthen relations with key partners, specifically South Korea, Panama, Colombia, with the goal of moving forward with existing agreements in a way that upholds our values. And we will pursue negotiations in the Trans-Pacific Partnership that we launched last year with some of the most dynamic economies in Asia, negotiations that I believe will result in a new standard for 21st-century trade agreements that aren't just good for workers, businesses, and farmers, but also consistent with our most cherished values.

What's more, we're going to aggressively protect our intellectual property. Our single greatest asset is the innovation and the ingenuity and creativity of the American people. It is essential to our prosperity, and it will only become more so in this century. But it's only a competitive advantage if our companies know that someone else can't just steal that idea and duplicate it with cheaper inputs and labor. There's nothing wrong with other people using our technologies; we welcome it. We just want to make sure that it's licensed and that American businesses are getting paid appropriately. And that's why USTR is using the full arsenal of tools available to crack down on practices that blatantly harm

our businesses, and that includes negotiating proper protections and enforcing our existing agreements and moving forward on new agreements, including the proposed Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement.

We'll also work within the G–20 to continue global recovery and growth. Last year, when the G–20 met to coordinate the international response to our global economic crisis, we agreed that in order for that growth to continue, we needed to rebalance our economies. For too long, America served as the consumer engine for the entire world. But we're rebalancing. We are now saving more. And that means that everybody has got to rebalance. Countries with external deficits need to save and export more. Countries with external surpluses need to boost consumption and domestic demand. And as I've said before, China moving to a more market-oriented exchange rate will make an essential contribution to that global rebalancing effort.

I want to commend Secretary Tim Geithner for his extraordinary work and his tremendous leadership throughout this past year within the G–20. And I know he'll keep encouraging other nations to rebalance global demand, and those are efforts that will be good for our exports, good for our job growth, good for the world economy as a whole.

Finally, we're working to reform our export control system for our strategic, high-tech industries, which will strengthen our national security. What we want to do is concentrate our efforts on enforcing controls on the export of our most critical technologies, making America safer while enhancing the competitiveness of key American industries. Now, we've conducted a broad review of the export control system, and Secretary Gates will outline our reform proposal within the next couple of weeks. But today I'd like to announce two steps that we're prepared to take.

First, we're going to streamline the process certain companies need to go through to get their products to market, products with encryption capabilities like cell phone and network storage devices. Right now they endure a technical review that can take between 30 and 60 days, and that puts that company at a distinct disadvantage to foreign competitors who don't face those same delays. So a new, one-time online process will shorten that review time from 30 days to 30 minutes, and that makes it quicker and easier for our businesses to compete while meeting our national security requirements.

And second, we're going to eliminate unnecessary obstacles for exporting products to companies with dual national and third-country national employees. Currently, our exporters and foreign consumers of these goods have to comply with two different, conflicting set of standards. They're running on two tracks, when they could be running just on one. So we're moving towards harmonizing those standards and making it easier for American and foreign companies to comply with our requirements without diminishing our security. And I look forward to consulting with Congress on these reforms, as well as broader export control reform efforts.

So that's how we're going to double our exports, open up new markets, and level the playing field for American businesses and American workers. I have every confidence that we can succeed in this effort. I have every confidence that we will succeed in this effort.

This is a difficult time for our country. And in times like these, questions have always arisen about whether or not America's best days are behind us. That's standard fare. It happens every so often. There have always been naysayers and skeptics. There were always those who've waxed fatalistic, fearing that we lacked the capacity to adapt, to succeed, at times, even to survive in a changing world.

But what makes America great, what continues to make America the envy of our competitors, what makes this a place where people come not just to invest, but to start lives and businesses and families, is something that has been inexorable and enduring, especially in times of great challenge and great change. It's that spirit of adventurousness and entrepreneurship that has for generations turned wild-eyed tinkerers into world-changing entrepreneurs, that led us westward and skyward, that led to roads and railways cutting through wilderness, and ships and planes and fiber optic

lines carrying American goods and services around the world. It's the spirit that has advanced America's leadership in the world and held aloft the American Dream for generations. And it is ultimately that spirit that's given us the tools and the toughness to overcome every obstacle and adapt to every circumstance, and today is no different.

It hasn't always been easy. Our success is by no means guaranteed. But if we summon a sense of national purpose equal to the seriousness of these times, if we combine our creativity, our innovation, and our eternal optimism, if we come together in common cause as we have so many times before, we will succeed, we will define our destiny once again, and we will make this century another American century, with your help.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. at the Omni Shoreham Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to John W. Baumstark, chief executive officer and chairman of the board of directors, Suniva Inc., and recipient of the Export-Import Bank's Renewable Energy Exporter of the Year award; Fabienne Demol, North American representative, EDF Energies Nouvellles, and recipient of the Export-Import Bank's Deal of the Year award; Luis Arguello, Sr., president and chief executive officer, DemeTech Corporation, and recipient of the Export-Import Bank's Small Business Exporter of the Year award; and Secretary-General Angel Gurria of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Statement on Immigration Reform
March 11, 2010

Today I met with Senators Schumer and Graham and was pleased to learn of their progress in forging a proposal to fix our broken immigration system. I look forward to reviewing their promising framework, and every American should applaud their efforts to reach across party lines and find commonsense answers to one of our most vexing problems. I also heard from a diverse group of grassroots leaders from around the country about the growing coalition that is working to build momentum for this critical issue. I am optimistic that their efforts will contribute to a favorable climate for moving forward. I told both the Senators and the community leaders that my commitment to comprehensive immigration reform is unwavering, and that I will continue to be their partner in this important effort.

The President's Weekly Address
March 13, 2010

Lost in the news of last week was a headline that ought to be a source of concern for every American. It said, "Many Nations Passing U.S. in Education." Now, debates in Washington tend to be consumed with the politics of the moment: who's up in the daily polls; whose party stands to gain in November. But what matters to you, what matters to our country, is not what happens in the next election, but what we do to lift up the next generation. And the fact is, there are few issues that speak more directly to our long-term success as a nation than issues concerning the education we provide to our children.

Our prosperity in the 20th century was fueled by an education system that helped grow the middle class and unleash the talents of our people more fully and widely than at any time in our history. We built schools and focused on the teaching of math and science. We helped a generation of veterans go to college through the GI bill. We led the globe in producing college graduates, and in turn, we led in producing groundbreaking technologies and scientific dis-

coveries that lifted living standards and set us apart as the world's engine of innovation.

Of course, other nations recognize this and are looking to gain an edge in the global marketplace by investing in better schools and supporting teachers and committing to clear standards that will produce graduates with more skills. Our competitors understand that the nation that outeducates us today will outcompete us tomorrow. Yet too often we failed to make inroads in reforming and strengthening our public education system, the debate mired in worn arguments hurled across entrenched divides.

As a result, over the last few decades, we've lost ground. One assessment shows American 15-year-olds no longer even near the top in math and science when compared to their peers around the world. As referenced in the news report I mentioned, we've now fallen behind most wealthy countries in our high school graduation rates. And while we once led the world in the proportion of college graduates we produced, today we no longer do.

Not only does that risk our leadership as a nation, it consigns millions of Americans to a lesser future. For we know that the level of education a person attains is increasingly a prerequisite for success and a predictor of the income that person will earn throughout his or her life. Beyond the economic statistics is a less tangible but no less painful reality: Unless we take action, unless we step up, there are countless children who will never realize their full talent and potential.

I don't accept that future for them. And I don't accept that future for the United States of America. That's why we're engaged in a historic effort to redeem and improve our public schools, to raise the expectations for our students and for ourselves, to recognize and reward excellence, to improve performance in troubled schools, and to give our kids and our country the best chance to succeed in a changing world.

Under the leadership of an outstanding Education Secretary, Arne Duncan, we launched a Race to the Top, through which States compete for funding by committing to reform and raising standards, by rewarding good teaching, by supporting the development of better assessments to measure results, and by emphasizing math and science to help prepare children for college and careers.

And on Monday, my administration will send to Congress our blueprint for an updated Elementary and Secondary Education Act to overhaul No Child Left Behind. What this plan recognizes is that while the Federal Government can play a leading role in encouraging the reforms and high standards we need, the impetus for that change will come from States and from local schools and school districts. So yes, we set a high bar, but we also provide educators the flexibility to reach it.

Under these guidelines, schools that achieve excellence or show real progress will be rewarded and local districts will be encouraged to commit to change in schools that are clearly letting their students down. For the majority of schools that fall in between, schools that do well but could do better, we will encourage continuous improvement to help keep our young people on track for a bright future, prepared for the jobs of the 21st century. And because the most important factor in a child's success is the person standing in the front of the classroom, we will better prepare teachers, support teachers, and encourage teachers to stay in the field. In short, we'll treat the people who educate our sons and daughters like the professionals they are.

Through this plan, we are setting an ambitious goal: All students should graduate from high school prepared for college and a career, no matter who you are or where you come from. Achieving this goal will be difficult. It'll take time, and it will require the skills, talents, and dedication of many: principals, teachers, parents, and students. But this effort is essential for our children and for our country. And while there will always be those cynics who claim it can't be done, at our best, we know that America has always risen to the challenges that we've faced. This challenge is no different.

As a nation, we are engaged in many important endeavors: improving the economy, reforming the health care system, encouraging innovation in energy and other growth indus-

tries of the 21st century, all while still in the midst of two wars. But our success in these efforts, and our success in the future as a people, will ultimately depend on what happens long before an entrepreneur opens his doors or a nurse walks the rounds or a scientist steps into her laboratory. Our future is determined each and every day, when our children enter the classroom, ready to learn and brimming with promise.

It's that promise we must help them fulfill. Thanks so much.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:05 p.m. on March 12 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for broadcast on March 13. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 12, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 13.

Statement on the Anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution
March 14, 2010

I send my warmest wishes to all those that will celebrate the anniversary of the 1848 Hungarian Revolution tomorrow. That event was a defining moment in Hungary's struggle for freedom and continues to serve as inspiration for all those that advocate for freedom's cause. Our two nations are bound by our shared values and our solemn obligations to each other through the NATO Article 5 commitment to one another's security. On this occasion, I also wish to pay tribute to those many Americans that can trace their roots to Hungary. They continue to make important contributions to our society, enriching the character and culture of the United States.

Remarks at the Walter F. Ehrnfelt Recreation and Senior Center in Strongsville, Ohio
March 15, 2010

The President. Hello, Ohio! It is good to be here in the Buckeye State. Congratulations on winning the Big Ten Championship.

Audience member. O–H!

The President. I'm filling out my brackets now. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. O–H!

Audience members. I–O!

Audience member. O–H!

Audience members. I–O!

Audience member. O–H!

Audience members. I–O!

The President. Yes, that kid Turner looks pretty good. [*Laughter*] You guys are doing all right.

It is wonderful to be here.

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you back. I do.

Couple of people I just want to make sure I give special mention to. First of all, you already saw him, Governor Ted Strickland in the house. Ted is fighting every day to bring jobs and economic development to Ohio. So is your terrific United States Senator, Sherrod Brown—love Sherrod Brown; your own Congressman, who is tireless on behalf of working people, Dennis Kucinich.

Audience member. Vote yes!

The President. Did you hear that, Dennis? Go—say that again.

Audience member. Vote yes!

The President. A couple of other Members of Congress are here: U.S. Representative Betty Sutton; U.S. Representative Marcia Fudge; U.S. Representative Tim Ryan; U.S. Representative Charlie Wilson.

I want to thank Mayor Tom Perciak here in Strongsville. Please, Mr. Mayor—you're on. That's a good bunch of folks we got here in Ohio, working hard, which is why I'm glad to be back. And let's face it: It's nice to be out of Washington once in a while. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Connie, who introduced me. I want to thank her and her family for being

here on behalf of her sister Natoma. I don't know if everybody understood that Natoma's in the hospital right now, so Connie was filling in. It's not easy to share such a personal story, when your sister, who you love so much, is sick. And so I appreciate Connie being willing to do so here today, and I want everybody to understand that Connie and her sister are the reason that I'm here today.

See, Connie felt it was important that her sister's story be told. But I want to just repeat what happened here. Last month, I got a letter from Connie's sister Natoma. She's self-employed, she's trying to make ends meet, and for years, she's done the responsible thing, just like most of you have, she bought insurance. She didn't have a big employer who provided her insurance, so she bought her health insurance through the individual market.

And it was important for her to have insurance because 16 years ago, she was diagnosed with a treatable form of cancer. And even though she had been cancer-free for more than a decade, the insurance companies kept on jacking up her rates, year after year. So she increased her out-of-pocket expenses. She raised her deductible. She did everything she could to maintain her health insurance that would be there just in case she got sick, because she figured, I didn't want to be—she didn't want to be in a position where, if she did get sick, somebody else would have to pick up the tab, that she'd have to go to the emergency room, that the cost would be shifted onto folks through their higher insurance premiums or hospitals charging higher rates. So she tried to do the right thing.

And she upped her deductible last year to the minimum—the highest possible deductible. But despite that, Natoma's insurance company raised her premiums by more than 25 percent. And over the past year, she paid more than $6,000 in monthly premiums.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. She paid more than $4,000 in out-of-pocket medical costs, for copays and medical care and prescriptions. So all together, this woman paid $10,000—1 year. But because she never hit her deductible, her insurance company only spent $900 on her care. All right. So the insurance company is making—getting $10,000; paying out $900. Now, what comes in the mail at the end of last year?

Audience member. A bill!

Audience member. A rate hike!

The President. It's a letter telling Natoma that her premiums would go up again by more than 40 percent.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. So here's what happens. She just couldn't afford it. She didn't have the money. She realized that if she paid those health insurance premiums that had been jacked up by 40 percent, she couldn't make her mortgage. And despite her desire to keep her coverage, despite her fears that she would get sick and lose the home that her parents built, she finally surrendered. She finally gave up her health insurance. She stopped paying it. She couldn't make ends meet.

So January was her last month of being insured. Like so many responsible Americans, folks who work hard every day, who try to do the right thing, she was forced to hang her fortunes on chance, just to take a chance; that's all she could do. She hoped against hope that she would stay healthy. She feared terribly that she might not stay healthy.

That was the letter that I read to the insurance companies, including the person responsible for raising her rates. Now, I understand Natoma was pretty surprised when she found out that I had read it to these CEOs. But I thought it was important for them to understand the human dimensions of this problem. Her rates have been hiked more than 40 percent.

And this was less than 2 weeks ago. Unfortunately, Natoma's worst fears were realized. And just last week, she was working on a nearby farm, walking outside, apparently chasing after a cow—[*laughter*]—when she collapsed. And she was rushed to the hospital. She was very sick. She needed two blood transfusions. Doctors performed a battery of tests. And on Saturday, Natoma was diagnosed with leukemia.

Now, the reason Natoma's not here today is that she's lying in a hospital bed, suddenly faced with this emergency, suddenly faced

with the fight of her life. She expects to face more than a month of aggressive chemotherapy. She is racked with worry not only about her illness, but about the costs of the tests and the treatment that she's surely going to need to beat it.

So you want to know why I'm here, Ohio? I'm here because of Natoma. I'm here because of the countless others who have been forced to face the most terrifying challenges in their lives with the added burden of medical bills they can't pay. I don't think that's right. Neither do you. That's why we need health insurance right now—health insurance reform right now.

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. I'm here because of my own mother's story. She died of cancer, and in the last 6 months of her life, she was on the phone in her hospital room arguing with insurance companies instead of focusing on getting well and spending time with her family.

I'm here because of the millions who are denied coverage because of preexisting conditions or dropped from coverage when they get sick. I'm here because of the small businesses who are forced to choose between health care and hiring. I'm here because of the seniors unable to afford the prescriptions that they need. I'm here because of the folks seeing their premiums go up 20 and 30 and 40 and 50 and 60 percent in a year. Ohio, I am here because that is not the America I believe in, and that's not the America that you believe in.

Audience member. What's your plan?

The President. So when you hear people say "start over"——

Audience members. No!

The President. ——I want you to think about Natoma. When you hear people saying that this isn't the right time, you think about what she's going through. When you hear people talk about, well, what does this mean for the Democrats? What does this mean for the Republicans? I don't know how the polls are doing. When you hear people more worried about the politics of it than what's right and what's wrong, I want you to think about Natoma and the millions of people all across this country who are looking for some help and looking for some relief. That's why we need health insurance reform right now.

Part of what makes this issue difficult is most of us do have health insurance. They—we still do and so we kind of feel like, well, I don't know, it's kind of working for me; I'm not worrying too much. But what we have to understand is that what's happened to Natoma, there but for the grace of God go any one of us. Anybody here, if you lost your job right now, and after the COBRA ran out——

[*At this point, an audience member fainted.*]

The President. Looks like we've got somebody who might've fainted down there, so if we've got a medic—no, no, no—hold on, I'm talking about there's somebody who might've fainted right down here, so if we can get a medic just back here. They're probably okay. Just give her or him some space.

Audience member. Hope you have insurance! [*Laughter*]

The President. So let's just think about if you lost your job right now. How many people here might have had a preexisting condition that would mean it'd be very hard to get health insurance on the individual market? Think about if you wanted to change jobs. Think about if you wanted to start your own business, but you suddenly had to give up your health insurance on your job. Think about what happens if a child of yours, heaven forbid, got diagnosed with something that made it hard for them to insure.

For so many people, it may not be a problem right now, but it's going to be a problem later, at any point. And even if you've got good health insurance, what's happening to your premiums? What's happening to your copayments? What's happening to your deductibles? They're all going up. That's money straight out of your pocket.

So the bottom line is this: The status quo on health care is simply unsustainable. We can't have a system that works better for the insurance companies than it does for the American people.

And we know what will happen if we fail to act. We know that our Government will be plunged deeper into debt. We know that millions more people will lose their coverage. We

know that rising costs will saddle millions more families with unaffordable expenses. And a lot of small businesses are just going to drop their coverage altogether. That's already what's been happening.

A study came out just yesterday—this is a nonpartisan study—it's found that without reform, premiums could more than double for individuals and families over the next decade. Family policies could go to an average of $25,000 or more. Can you afford that?

Audience members. No!

The President. You think your employer can afford that?

Audience members. No!

The President. Your employer can't sustain that. So what's going to happen is they're basically—more and more of them are just going to say, you know what, you're on your own on this.

We have debated this issue now for more than a year. Every proposal's been put on the table. Every argument has been made. I know a lot of people view this as a partisan issue, but look, the fact is, both parties have a lot of areas where we agree; it's just politics are getting in the way of actually getting it done.

Somebody asked, what's our plan. Let me describe exactly what we're doing, because we've ended up with a proposal that incorporates the best ideas from Democrats and Republicans, even though Republicans don't give us any credit. [*Laughter*] That's all right.

You know, if you think about the debate around health care reform, there were some who wanted to scrap the system of private insurance and replace it with Government-run care. And look, that works in a number of places, but I did not see that being practical to get help right away for people who really need it.

And on the other end of the spectrum—and this is what a lot of the Republicans are saying right now—there are those who simply believe that the answer is to unleash the insurance industry, to deregulate them further, provide them less oversight and fewer rules.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. This is called the "fox guarding the henhouse" approach to health insurance reform. [*Laughter*] So what it would do is it would give insurance companies more leeway to raise premiums, more leeway to deny care. It would segment the market further. It would be good if you were rich and healthy. You'd save money. But if you're an ordinary person, if you get older, if you get a little sicker, you'd be paying more.

Now, I don't believe we should give the Government or insurance companies more control over health care in America. I believe it's time to give you, the American people, more control over your own health insurance.

And that's what our proposal does. Our proposal builds on the current system, where most Americans get their health insurance from their employer. So if you like your plan, you can keep your plan. If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. I don't want to interfere with people's relationships between them and their doctors.

Essentially, here's what my proposal would change: three things about the current health care system, but three important things. Number one, it would end the worst practices of the insurance companies. All right? This is like a patient's bill of rights on steroids. [*Laughter*] Within the first year of signing health care reform, thousands of uninsured Americans with preexisting conditions will be able to purchase health insurance for the first time in their lives or the first time since they got sick. This year, insurance companies will be banned forever from denying coverage to children with preexisting conditions, so parents can have a little bit of security. This year, under this legislation, insurance companies will be banned from dropping your coverage when you get sick. Those practices would end.

With this reform package, all new insurance plans would be required to offer free preventive care to their customers starting this year, so free checkups to catch preventable diseases on the front end. That's a smart thing to do. Starting this year, if you buy a new plan, there won't be lifetime or restrictive annual limits on the amount of care you receive from your insurance companies, so you won't be surprised by the fine print that says suddenly they've stopped paying and you now suddenly are 50 or 100 or $200,000 out of pocket. That

won't—that will not happen if this becomes law this year. I see some young people in the audience. If you're an uninsured young adult, you will be able to stay on your parent's policy until you're 26 years old under this law.

So number one, number one is insurance reform. The second thing that this plan would change about the current system is this: For the first time, uninsured individuals, small businesses, they'd have the same kind of choice of private health insurance that Members of Congress get for themselves. Understand if this reform becomes law, Members of Congress, they'll be getting their insurance from the same place that the uninsured get theirs, because if it's good enough for the American people, it's good enough for the people who send us to Washington.

So basically, what would happen is we'd set up a pool of people; millions of people across the country would all buy into these pools that give them more negotiating power. If you work for a big company, you've got a better insurance deal because you've got more bargaining power as a whole. We want you to have all the bargaining power that the Federal employees have, that big companies have, so you'll be able to buy in or a small business will be able to buy into this pool. And that will lower rates, it's estimated, by up to 14 to 20 percent over what you're currently getting. That's money out of pocket.

And what my proposal says is if you still can't afford the insurance in this new marketplace, then we're going to offer you tax credits to do so. And that will add up to the largest middle class tax cut for health care in history. That's what we're going to do.

Now, when I was talking about this at that health care summit—some of you saw it—I sat there for about 7 hours. I know you guys watched the whole thing. [*Laughter*] But some of these folks said, "Well, we just—that's a nice idea, but we just can't afford to do that." Look, I want everybody to understand, the wealthiest among us can already buy the best insurance there is. The least well among us, the poorest among us, they get their health care through Medicaid. So it's the middle class, it's working people that are getting squeezed, and that's who we have to help, and we can afford to do it.

Now, it is true that providing these tax credits to middle class families and small businesses, that's going to cost some money. It's going to cost about $100 billion per year. But most of this comes from the nearly $2.5 trillion a year that Americans already spend on health care. It's just right now a lot of that money's being spent badly.

So with this plan, we're going to make sure the dollars we make—the dollars that we spend on health care are going to make insurance more affordable and more secure. And we're going to eliminate wasteful taxpayer subsidies that currently go to insurance company. Insurance companies are making billions of dollars on subsidies from you, the taxpayer. And if we take those subsidies away, we can use them to help folks like Natoma get health insurance so she doesn't lose her house.

And yes, we will set a new fee on insurance companies, because they stand to gain millions more customers who are buying insurance. There's nothing wrong with them giving something back.

But here's the bottom line: Our proposal's paid for, which, by the way, is more than can be said for our colleagues on the other side of the aisle when they passed that big prescription drug plan that cost about as much as my health care plan and they didn't pay for any of it and it went straight to the deficit. And now they're up there on their high horse talking about, "Well, we don't want to expand the deficit." This plan doesn't expand the deficit. Their plan expanded the deficit. That's why we pay for what we do. That's the responsible thing to do.

Now—so let me talk about the third thing, which is, my proposal would bring down the cost of health care for families, for businesses, and for the Federal Government. So Americans buying comparable coverage to what they have today—and I already said this—would see premiums fall by 14 to 20 percent. That's not my numbers; that's what the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office says, for Americans who get their insurance through the workplace. How many people are getting insurance through their jobs right now? Raise your hands. All right, well, a lot of those folks—your employer, it's estimated, would see premiums fall by as

much as 3,000 percent [$3,000 a person],* which means they could give you a raise.

We have incorporated most of the serious ideas from across the political spectrum about how to contain the rising costs of health care. We go after waste and abuse in the system, especially in Medicare. Our cost-cutting measures would reduce most people's premiums and bring down our deficit by up to a trillion dollars over the next two decades. Those aren't my numbers. Those are the numbers determined by the Congressional Budget Office. They're the referee. That's what they say, not what I say.

Now, the opponents of reform, they've tried to make a lot of different arguments to stop these changes. You remember: First, they said, "Well, there's a Government takeover of health care." Well, that wasn't true. Then they said, "Well, what about death panels?" Well, that turned out—that didn't turn out to be true.

You know, the most insidious argument they're making is the idea that somehow this would hurt Medicare. I know we've got some seniors here with us today. So I couldn't tell—you guys look great. [*Laughter*] I wouldn't have guessed. But I want to tell you directly: This proposal adds almost a decade of solvency to Medicare. This proposal would close the gap in prescription drug coverage, called the doughnut hole—you know something about that—that sticks seniors with thousands of dollars in drug costs. This proposal will, over time, help to reduce the costs of Medicare that you pay every month. This proposal would make preventive care free so you don't have to pay out of pocket for tests to keep you healthy.

So yes, we're going after the waste, the fraud, the abuse in Medicare. We are eliminating some of the insurance subsidies that should be going to your care. That's because these dollars should be spent on care for seniors, not on the care and feeding of the insurance companies through sweetheart deals. And every senior should know, there is no cutting of your guaranteed Medicare benefits, period, no ifs, ands, or buts. This proposal makes Medicare stronger, it makes the coverage better, and it makes the finances more secure. And anybody who says otherwise is either misinformed or they're trying to misinform you. Don't let them hoodwink you. They're trying to hoodwink them. [*Laughter*]

Now—so look, Ohio, that's the proposal. And I believe Congress owes the American people a final up-or-down vote. We need an up-or-down vote. It's time to vote. And now as we get closer to the vote, there's a lot of hand-wringing going on. We hear a lot of people in Washington talking about politics, talking about what this means in November, talking about the poll numbers for Democrats and Republicans.

Audience member. We need courage!

The President. We need courage. Did you hear what somebody just said? That's what we need. That's why I came here today. We need courage.

We need courage. You know, in the end, this debate is about far more than politics. It comes down to what kind of country do we want to be. It's about the millions of lives that would be touched and in some cases saved by making health insurance more secure and more affordable. It's about a woman who's lying in a hospital bed who just wants to be able to pay for the care she needs. And the truth is, what's at stake in this debate, it's not just our ability to solve this problem; it's about our ability to solve any problem.

I was talking to Dennis Kucinich on the way over here about this. I say: "You know what? It's been such a long time since we made Government on the side of ordinary working folks, where we did something for them that relieved some of their struggles, that made folks who work hard every day and are doing the right thing and who are looking out for their families and contributing to their communities, that just gave them a little bit of a better chance to live out their American Dream."

* White House correction.

The American people want to know if it's still possible for Washington to look out for their interests, for their future. So what they're looking for is some courage. They're waiting for us to act. They're waiting for us to lead. They don't want us putting our finger out to the wind. They don't want us reading polls. They want us to look and see what is the best thing for America and then do what's right. And as long as I hold this office, I intend to provide that leadership. And I know these Members of Congress are going to provide that leadership. I don't know about the politics, but I know what's the right thing to do. And so I'm calling on Congress to pass these reforms, and I'm going to sign them into law. I want some courage. I want us to do the right thing, Ohio. And with your help, we're going to make it happen.

God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Evan Turner, guard/forward, Ohio State University men's basketball team; and Connie Anderson, sister of Cleveland Clinic cancer patient Natoma Canfield. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Financial Regulatory Reform and Consumer Protection Legislation

March 15, 2010

It has now been well over a year since the near collapse of the financial sector, and yet today, the same failed system that brought on this crisis remains in place. The financial crisis has resulted in more than 8 million American workers losing their jobs, trillions in household wealth being wiped out, and hundreds of thousands of small businesses without the credit they need to grow. We cannot wait any longer for real financial reform that brings accountability to the financial system and makes sure that the American taxpayer is never again asked to bail out the irresponsibility of our largest banks and financial institutions.

This proposal provides a strong foundation to build a safer financial system. It creates a new consumer financial protection agency to set and enforce clear rules of the road and establishes stronger supervision for the largest financial firms under the Federal Reserve. It brings transparency and oversight to derivatives and other financial markets that were central to the crisis and separates banking from proprietary trading and hedge funds. The proposal will also provide the Government with essential tools to respond in a financial crisis so that we can wind down and liquidate a large, interconnected failing financial firm. It allows us to protect the economy and taxpayers so that we can end the belief that any firm is too big to fail.

As the bill moves forward, I will take every opportunity to work with Chairman Dodd and his colleagues to strengthen the bill and will fight against efforts to weaken it.

American families deserve a strong, independent consumer financial protection agency that is accountable for setting and enforcing clear rules across the financial marketplace. And I will not accept attempts to undermine the independence of the consumer protection agency or to exclude from its purview banks, credit card companies, or nonbank firms such as debt collectors, credit bureaus, payday lenders, or auto dealers. I will oppose any loopholes that could harm consumers or investors or that allow institutions to avoid oversight that is important to financial stability.

We need to ensure the ultimate bill provides strong, clear authority for setting and enforcing rules, limiting excessive risk-taking in the financial system, and winding down the largest financial firms when necessary in a way that does not cause a financial panic. All derivatives must be regulated, and shareholders should have a say not just on pay, but also other compensation that rewards risk-taking. We will stand firm against any attempt by the financial sector to avoid their responsibilities. In any future crisis, the big financial companies must pay, not taxpayers.

Statement on Sunshine Week
March 16, 2010

As Sunshine Week begins, I want to applaud everyone who has worked to increase transparency in Government and recommit my administration to be the most open and transparent ever, an effort that will strengthen our democracy and ensure the public's trust in their Government.

We came to Washington to change the way business was done, and part of that was making ourselves accountable to the American people by opening up our Government. We've put our White House visitor records on the Internet for the first time in history, opened up more Government information than ever before on data.gov, recovery.gov, and USAspending.gov, and issued an Executive order fighting unnecessary secrecy, to name a few.

We are proud of these accomplishments, but our work is not done. We will continue to work toward an unmatched level of transparency, participation, and accountability across the entire administration.

Statement on the National Broadband Plan
March 16, 2010

America today is on the verge of a broadband-driven Internet era that will unleash innovation, create new jobs and industries, provide consumers with new powerful sources of information, enhance American safety and security, and connect communities in ways that strengthen our democracy. Just as past generations of Americans met the great infrastructure challenges of the day, such as building the transcontinental railroad and the interstate highways, so too must we harness the potential of the Internet. Expanding broadband across the Nation will build a foundation of sustained economic growth and the widely shared prosperity we all seek.

I commend Chairman Julius Genachowski, the Commissioners, and the FCC staff for their hard work in developing the National Broadband Plan.

My administration will build upon our efforts over the past year to make America's nationwide broadband infrastructure the world's most powerful platform for economic growth and prosperity, including improving access to mobile broadband, maximizing technology innovation, and supporting a nationwide, interoperable public safety wireless broadband network.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on the Federal Government's Interagency Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communications
March 16, 2010

Dear _____:

Pursuant to section 1055 of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (Public Law 110–417), I am providing a report on my Administration's comprehensive interagency strategy for public diplomacy and strategic communication of the Federal Government.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 17.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Brian Cowen of Ireland and an Exchange With Reporters

March 17, 2010

President Obama. Good morning, everybody. First of all, I just want to congratulate this soundperson right here for having the green earmuffs. [*Laughter*] Now, I haven't seen that before. Happy St. Patrick's Day, everybody.

Before I talk a little bit about the strong and enduring bond between the American and Irish people, I just want to thank Congress for passing this morning the "HIRE Act." It is the first of what I hope will be a series of jobs packages that help to continue to put people back to work all across America.

This bill will provide tax cuts to small businesses that are willing to begin hiring right now, putting people back to work. It's also going to provide significant tax breaks to businesses for investing in their business, and so, hopefully, at a time when we're starting to see an upswing in economic growth, that will help sustain it. And the bill also will continue to improve our ability to finance infrastructure projects all across the country.

I also want to say to the Republicans who voted for this bill that I appreciate their willingness to work with Democrats in a bipartisan fashion to get America moving again. And as I said, I hope that on a series of future steps that we take to help small businesses get financing, to help improve our infrastructure around the country, to put people back to work, that we're going to see more progress on that front.

I want to thank the Taoiseach for coming here today. Last year, we had the opportunity to get to know each other and had a wonderful time during St. Patrick's Day. Thirty-six million Americans claim Irish ancestry—I'm sure more do on St. Patrick's Day. And it's a testament, I think, to how close our two countries are that America has been shaped culturally, politically, economically by the incredible contributions of Irish Americans. Those bonds endure. And in our meeting we reaffirmed how important it is for us to continue a strong partnership across a whole host of issues.

I thanked Taoiseach for the assistance that they've provided on critical international issues. We use the facilities in Ireland for transit for our military troops to Afghanistan. The Irish police are providing training in Afghanistan. As Taoiseach indicated, the Irish Government punches above its weight on a whole host of critical issues. We're going to be working together to enhance food security around the world. Even in these difficult times, it's important for us to make sure that we're tackling big issues like world hunger.

I congratulated the Taoiseach and his Government for the extraordinary work that they engaged in, working with Gordon Brown and the British Government, as well as Secretary Hillary Clinton, in reaffirming the progress that's been made in Northern Ireland and to get a ratification of continued devolution. It's a sign of his leadership, and we want to be as supportive as possible in advancing the Northern Ireland peace process.

We also discussed the economy. And on both sides of the Atlantic we are seeing stabilization of the economy, but obviously we want more than just stabilization. There are a lot of people out there that are still hurting, still out of work. And so we will continue to coordinate in international fora as well as bilaterally to see how we can spur investment and private sector growth on both sides of the Atlantic.

So I just wanted to say how grateful we are for the friendship and the partnership between the United States Government and the Irish Government. We wish you and everybody who's here a happy St. Patrick's Day and are looking forward to the reception that we'll have in the White House later this evening.

Prime Minister Cowen. Thank you very much, Mr. President. And we are—I and my delegation—delighted to be able to join you here in the White House this morning on this wonderful St. Patrick's Day morning. And I think the Sun shining outside and the light coming in, I think, typifies the excellent relationship that Ireland enjoys with the United States, not only now but, as you say, over many generations. And that contribution to America by Ire-

land is a continuing one, one that we have to find and give modern expression to all the time.

And certainly, the level of cooperation and common cause we enjoy together, in terms of the issues of today in the economy and how we can ensure that our economies recover as quickly as possible, is something that's very important to both our countries. And certainly in Ireland's context, the resurgent U.S. economy will be a strong indicator of our return to prosperity. And we very much commend the very decisive steps that you have taken in terms of the economic issues and the banking issues, which have been so successful, and which we are seeking to replicate ourselves in our own context, in terms of recapitalization of our banking system and making sure that we have a banking system fit for purpose that will assist recovery and grow jobs again in the future and provide investment and credit—working credit for businesses that are hard pressed in a very difficult trading environment.

In that context, I've been delighted to head a delegation here to the United States and having visited Chicago, the West Coast, Silicon Valley, and now Washington, DC, over the last couple of days; 70 small and medium-sized enterprises have been over with us, doing trade with American companies. I'm glad to say that the two-way relationship in terms of investment is continuing. Over 34 billion euros has been invested by Ireland—Irish companies in the United States, employing 85,000 people directly.

And that, if you like, mirrors the very significant U.S. investment that has taken place in Ireland, employing directly of the order of 90,000 people. So that important two-way mutual benefit to this trade is very, very important, one I know that you're equally cognizant of, in terms of finding jobs for your people as we seek to provide jobs for ours.

On Northern Ireland, we are deeply grateful for the continuing and deep commitment shown by the Obama administration, by the President himself, and by Secretary of State Clinton in recent months. We've been very grateful for that continuing interest, which has influenced an outcome that has been so positive. As I said to the President, for a place that has been known for its disagreements, an 88–17 vote was a very good vote to get. I'm sure he's looking forward to a good outcome in what he's doing during the course of this week.

We decided to come on a quiet week; we knew there wasn't much going on. [*Laughter*] But we—in that context, it reinforces the fact that we are so, so grateful that the President gives so much of his time—both himself, as President, his administration, and indeed, the people on the Hill from both parties are very welcoming of us. And we deeply appreciate that, as both a recognition of the contribution of Ireland thus far to America, but also the continuing important relationship we enjoy.

So on all these fronts, again, it's a great pleasure to meet with the leader of the free world. We are deeply grateful for his sense of mission, not only in terms of how America is progressing, but America's position in the world. And we will always be supportive of the very progressive stands and positions that President Obama has taken, not only in terms of the economic issues, but on development issues. We will have a cochairing by Secretary Clinton and Micheal Martin, our foreign minister, at the U.N. conference on hunger and food security. And these are another indication of the values we share, and our ability to cooperate and provide leadership positions is one that we're very grateful and privileged to enjoy with you.

President Obama. Thank you. Thank you, everybody.

[*At this point, the press were dismissed by the White House staff. President Obama and Prime Minister Cowen began to leave, but the President stopped to answer questions from reporters.*]

Congressional Action on Heath Care Reform Legislation

Q. [*Inaudible*]—that Representative Kucinich will vote for the health care bill.

President Obama. That's a good sign.

Q. What did you tell him?

President Obama. I told him thank you.

President's Visit to Ireland

Q. Will you be going to Ireland, Mr. President?

President Obama. I would love to be going to Ireland.

Q. If St. Patrick comes—[*inaudible*]—got you the health care, the rub of the Irish green, would you then come to Ireland the next day to thank him. Would you?

The President. If you have a vote in the House——

Q. Would you? [*Laughter*]

The Preisdent. All right, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:26 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom. He also referred to H.R. 2847. A portion of the first reporter's remarks could not be verified because of difficulties with the audio.

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Luncheon
March 17, 2010

Thank you. Please, everybody, be seated. To Speaker Pelosi; distinguished Members of the House and Senate; Republican Leader Boehner; Majority Leader Steny Hoyer; my outstanding Vice President and his newest chief of staff—[*laughter*]—to Prime Minister Cowen and the entire Irish delegation, as well as the extraordinary leaders from Ireland and Northern Ireland: It is my privilege to welcome all of you for this wonderful St. Patrick's Day tradition.

And, Governor O'Malley, thank you for that outstanding rendition of our two national anthems. I had asked if Martin was going to do a rock 'n' roll version. [*Laughter*] Some of you know he's got a rock band and is in much demand.

This tradition, as most of you know, was begun by Tip O'Neill and Ronald Reagan, two men who agreed on their love of all things Irish, including a good scrum. But they also knew how to set aside time just to enjoy one another's company. President Reagan himself said that the two men could be friends after 6 o'clock. And I imagine they also made a midday exception for this luncheon every year.

Today is a day we speak with pride of being Irish American, whether we actually are or not. [*Laughter*] I am pleased to say that I can actually get away with it, and I've got the Taoiseach here to vouch for me. Prime Minister Cowen was born in County Offaly, and I can trace my ancestry on my mother's side there as well. I believe it was my great-great-great-great-great grandfather. [*Laughter*] This is true. [*Laughter*] He was a bootmaker, if I'm not mistaken.

Someone actually discovered my Irish lineage when I was running for President, and my first thought was, why didn't anybody discover this when I was running for office in Chicago? [*Laughter*] I would have gotten here sooner. [*Laughter*] I used to put the apostrophe after the "O" but that did not work. [*Laughter*]

So it is nice to have a little Irish blood today. It is, after all, a day to celebrate and give thanks for the profound and enduring relationship between Ireland and America. And it's also a day to thank the Irish people for all that they've done for America.

Few nations so small have had such an enormous impact on another. They came to our shores in waves, by choice as well as by necessity, building new lives even as they were building a new nation, enriching our heritage, enriching our culture in their own way. And in so doing, alongside so many others who sought a better life in America, they forged a better future for all of us.

But the truth is, they weren't always welcomed. There were times where the Irish were caricatured and stereotyped and cursed at and blamed for society's ills. So naturally, it was a good fit for them to go into politics—[*laughter*]—made sense. [*Laughter*]

When the fictional Mayor Skeffington of Edwin O'Connor's "The Last Hurrah" spoke of his life as an Irish American, he said, "When I be-

gan, it was long ago, and the situation around here was a bit different. I had no education to speak of, a good many roads were closed to our people, and politics seemed the easiest way out." [*Laughter*]

Today, of course, we all feel the heavy absence of one of our greatest Irish Americans, a man who loved this day so much, a man who, I believe, is still watching this body closely, particularly this week, and that is our beloved Ted Kennedy. And I'm so grateful that Vicki and Patrick are here. Thank you for your presence.

I confess that one of my fondest memories of Teddy has been on my mind lately; it's one that I shared before. Just a few years ago, on St. Patrick's Day, so it would probably be, maybe, 5 years ago, when I had just gotten to the Senate, Teddy cornered me on the Senate floor for my support on a piece of legislation. And I told him, "You've got my vote, Teddy, but I got to tell you, this is not looking good. I do not think this thing is going to fly." But it did, with votes to spare. And so I grabbed Teddy, pulled him aside, I said, "How did you pull that off?" And he just patted me on the back, and he said, "Luck of the Irish."

And it's nice when the luck of the Irish can bring to the Senate and to Congress such an extraordinary leader as Ted Kennedy. I think it's a little providence, as well as a little luck. It's also nice when the luck of the Irish can bring us all together, Republicans and Democrats. That was one of Teddy's talents. Even as he waged epic and unyielding battles in this building, he too was a believer that we were all friends after 6 o'clock.

And more importantly, he was a believer in building consensus, in forging compromise, in the idea that the only way that we can accomplish the work of the American people is to work together. And one of the greatest testaments to his life and his work, I think, was that so many of his colleagues, past and present, Republican and Democrats, came forward to honor him in similar terms.

Now, that work—the work of setting aside old differences and softening hardened positions, taking the tough steps to do what's right in the long run over what's easy in the moment—has also paid dividends in terms of the remarkable progress that we've seen in Northern Ireland, particularly in recent months. And so I want to salute First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness for their outstanding leadership, their continuing example. We are grateful for that. Thank you.

It is such leadership that keeps me convinced that our best days—for this legislative body, for this Nation, for Ireland, and for Northern Ireland and for the friendship between our peoples—those best days are still ahead.

So, Taoiseach, I thank you and your lovely wife for coming. To you and to the people of Ireland, America is grateful for our shared past, hopeful for our common future, and I assure you we will be a faithful partner in the work of progress and prosperity and a just and lasting peace.

Happy St. Patrick's Day to all of you. And with that, please welcome the Prime Minister of Ireland, Brian Cowen.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:10 p.m. at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Finnegan Biden, granddaughter of Vice President Joe Biden; Gov. Martin J. O'Malley of Maryland; Victoria R. Kennedy, wife, and Patrick J. Kennedy, son, of former Sen. Edward M. Kennedy; First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness of Northern Ireland; and Mary Cowen, wife of Prime Minister Cowen.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Protocol Additional to the Agreement Between the United States of America and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards in the United States of America
March 17, 2010

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

This letter submits additions and deletions to the list of sites, facilities, locations, and activities in the United States declared in 2009 to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) under the Protocol Additional to the Agreement between the United States of America and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards in the United States of America, with Annexes, signed at Vienna on June 12, 1998 (the "U.S.-IAEA Additional Protocol"). This letter constitutes the report and notifications required by section 272 of Public Law 109–401 and the resolution of advice and consent to ratification of the United States Senate of March 31, 2004. Further, I hereby certify that:

(1) each site, location, facility, and activity included in the list has been examined by each agency with national security equities with respect to such site, location, facility, or activity;
(2) appropriate measures have been taken to ensure that information of direct national security significance will not be compromised at any such site, location, facility, or activity in connection with an IAEA inspection; and
(3) any additions to the lists of locations within the United States that are provided to the IAEA pursuant to Article 2.a.(i), Article 2.a.(iv), Article 2.a.(v), Article 2.a.(vi)(a), Article 2.a.(vii), Article 2.a.(viii), and Article 2.b.(i) of the U.S.-IAEA Additional Protocol will not adversely affect the national security of the United States.

None of the deletions to the list of locations that was previously declared to the IAEA pursuant to Article 2.a.(i), Article 2.a.(iv), Article 2.a.(v), Article 2.a.(vi)(a), Article 2.a.(vii), Article 2.a.(viii), and Article 2.b.(i) of the U.S.-IAEA Additional Protocol were due to such locations having direct national security significance.

The IAEA classification of the enclosed declaration is "Highly Confidential Safeguards Sensitive." The United States regards this information as "Sensitive but Unclassified." Under Public Law 109–401, information reported to, or otherwise acquired by, the United States Government under this title or under the U.S.-IAEA Additional Protocol shall be exempt from disclosure under section 552 of title 5, United States Code. Therefore, none of the enclosed documents should be printed, published, posted on any website, or otherwise made publicly available.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Shamrock Presentation Ceremony With Prime Minister Brian Cowen of Ireland
March 17, 2010

President Obama. Good evening, everybody. Welcome to St. Patrick's Day at the White House, on a day when springtime is in the air. And this is—even though Taoiseach hasn't even shared his shamrocks yet, but we can fill—we can feel spring coming.

Before I say anything else, let me just say that I could not have a better partner in a difficult

job than the Vice President of the United States, Joe Biden. And he does a great job each and every day. And I couldn't have a better partner in life than the First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama.

Welcome back, Mr. Prime Minister, First Lady. We are thrilled to have you.

The Irish and Irish Americans are out in force tonight. We've—I believe, if I'm not mistaken, that Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy is here. A couple of my Cabinet Secretaries are here as well: Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius and Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano. I would love to acknowledge all the Members of Congress who are here tonight, but there are a few dozen of you, including three or four Murphys, so—[*laughter*]—yes. Right? There's one right there. [*Laughter*] Man, you're everywhere. [*Laughter*]

Governor Martin O'Malley, who's been known to be the lead in an Irish rock band; Governor Bob McDonnell is here, of the great Commonwealth of Virginia; and Mayor Tom Menino shipped down from Boston; my dear friend, the United States Ambassador to Ireland, and the person who is singly responsible for converting the entire country to become Steelers fans, Dan Rooney; and his counterpart, the Irish Ambassador to the United States, Michael Collins. So welcome, everybody.

This has been a wonderful day filled with good reminders of just how deeply woven the ties between our two countries are. We welcomed back a friend, the Taoiseach. He and I remarked once again of our shared ties to County Offaly. He was born there, and when I was running for President, it was brought to my attention that—and I want to make sure I get this straight—it was my great-great-great-great-grandfather on my mother's side who hailed from Moneygall. I wish I knew about this when I was running in Chicago. [*Laughter*]

I also had the pleasure of welcoming back First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness of Northern Ireland, two men who have stood together with conviction to chart a historic path towards peace. They are here tonight. We were thinking about sending them up to Congress tomorrow—[*laughter*]—to see if they can share some of their secrets. [*Laughter*]

I also just met with Andrew Sens and Brigadier General—I want to make sure I get this right—Tauno Nieminen, who, because of their successful leadership, are winding down the work of the Independent Commission on Decommissioning after 12 years, and Matt Baggott, the Chief Constable of the Police Services of Northern Ireland, whose fairness and impartiality is keeping the peace across all of Northern Ireland's communities. So thank you.

Now, 12 years ago, America was inspired by the brave men and women who found the courage to see past the scars of a troubled past so that their children would know a better future. And we are watching you and continue to be inspired by your extraordinary work.

Now, it's wonderful to have everybody here at the White House tonight. During his last visit, the Taoiseach mentioned that the Irish Diaspora is some 70 million strong, which is obviously impressive for a small island. And it's even more impressive that they all find their way to America for St. Patrick's Day. [*Laughter*] I can make that joke as somebody of Irish heritage. [*Laughter*]

I should mention, by the way, that I—we were discussing this with my mayor from Chicago, Mayor Daley, and I told him that I had this Irish heritage. And he said that he had, actually, Kenyan blood in him also. And so—[*laughter*].

It just goes to show that in recent decades, it has become cool to be Irish. [*Laughter*] It's the phenomenon that the Irish poet—and Joe Biden's favorite poet—Seamus Heaney once described in stunned fashion as "the manifestation of sheer, bloody genius—Ireland is chic." [*Laughter*]

And obviously, we know, though, that that wasn't always the case. After centuries of oppression, the Irish began coming to America, even before America had been won. And many came with no family, no friends, no money, nothing to sustain their voyage but faith: faith

in the Almighty, faith in a better life over the horizon, and faith that in America, you can make it if you try.

And in the wake of a great hunger, that migration intensified. And the Irish carved out a place for themselves in our Nation's story. America and Ireland, our brawn and blood, side by side in the making and remaking of this Nation, pulling it westward, pushing it skyward, moving it forward, even if it was a nation that was not always as welcoming as it could be.

But with hard work and toughness and loyalty and faith, the Irish persevered. And in the process, they secured the future for generations of Irish Americans, free to live their lives as they will, and today free to argue openly and proudly about who's more Irish than whom. [*Laughter*]

So it can be easy to forget that there was a time when "No Irish Need Apply"—particularly when it was half a century ago this year that John F. Kennedy walked through the doors of this house as the first Irish-Catholic President of the United States.

Now, one person who never forgot this history, someone who frequently recalled his grandfather's vivid stories of those days, who through his office window could see the Boston Harbor steps where his eight Irish grandparents first set foot in America, was the President's younger brother and our dear friend, Ted Kennedy.

He knew, as we do, that our Nation is infinitely richer for not only the contributions of the Irish throughout history, but the contributions of people from around the world. That's why I'm pleased that there's bipartisan progress being made in an area that I know was close to his big heart, and that's fixing our broken immigration system. And that's why my own commitment to comprehensive immigration reform remains unwavering.

In this and every other battle for progress, Ted was a tireless warrior. And I know that we could use him this week. [*Laughter*] I am so glad that we're joined tonight by his wife Vicki, his daughter Kara, his son Congressman Patrick Kennedy, and his sister-in-law Ethel Kennedy, as well as a whole bunch of nieces and nephews. Please give them a big round of applause.

Both of our nations are down one friend, a champion, and a peacemaker. But it wouldn't be an Irish mourning without some undercurrent of joy. And so while Teddy's laughter may not shake the walls of this house tonight, as it did so many times over the past half-century, ours will not be diminished. While his singing may not fill these rooms, I suspect that won't stop some of you from trying. [*Laughter*] You don't have to try, though; that's why we brought in the entertainment. [*Laughter*]

This is rightly a day for celebration and good cheer between America and one of her oldest friends, and it's a partnership that extends to our earliest days as a Republic. So before I turn it over to the Taoiseach, let me leave you with all the words from those early days that speak to why this has been such a incredible relationship between our two countries. These are words spoken by the Father of our Country, George Washington:

"When our friendless standards were first unfurled, who were the strangers who first mustered around our staff? And when it reeled in the light, who more brilliantly sustained it than Erin's generous sons? Ireland, thou friend of my country in my country's most friendless days, much injured, much enduring land, accept this poor tribute from one who esteems thy worth, and mourns thy desolation. May the God of Heaven, in His justice and mercy, grant thee more prosperous fortunes, and in His own time, cause the Sun of Freedom to shed its benign radiance on the Emerald Isle."

To all of you from near and far and over all the years and tests ahead, may America and Ireland forever brilliantly sustain one another's sons and daughters.

And with that, to our guest, the Taoiseach of Ireland, on behalf of the American people, we want to thank you for your presence here. We are proud to call you a friend this day and every day. And we are looking forward to planting this little piece of Ireland in the garden here in the White House.

So happy St. Patrick's Day, everybody. I'd like to introduce the Taoiseach, the Prime Minister of Ireland, Brian Cowen.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Cowen made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Prime Minister Cowen. And of course, Mr. President, when the Irish are finished looking after your entertainment needs—[*laughter*]—Padraig Harrington, who also joins us tonight, can help you with your golf game.

President Obama. All right. Yo, I need help. There he is. I need some tips.

[*Prime Minister Cowen made further remarks and presented the bowl of shamrocks.*]

President Obama. Wonderful. Thank you. This is beautiful. This is wonderful. Beautiful. Thank you so much. And I think in addition to all the fertilizer we put down, this will bring good luck to the garden. [*Laughter*] Thank you very much. That is lovely. Thank you.

Prime Minister Cowen. You're welcome.

President Obama. Very good. Yes.

So I want to thank everybody for being here. I want you to have a wonderful time—not that I need to tell you that. If anybody wants pictures taken, Patrick Leahy is here. [*Laughter*] He always has a camera. [*Laughter*]

Have a wonderful time. Happy St. Patrick's Day, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:47 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mary Cowen, wife of Prime Minister Cowen; Gov. Martin J. O'Malley of Maryland; U.S. diplomat Andrew D. Sens and Brig. Gen. Tauno Nieminen of the Finnish Defense Forces, in their capacity as members of the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning; and Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago. Prime Minister Cowen referred to professional golfer Padraig Harrington. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 18, and it also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden, who introduced the President, and Prime Minister Cowen.

Remarks on Signing the Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment Act
March 18, 2010

Good morning, everybody. Please have a seat. Well, on this beautiful morning, we are here to mark the passage of a welcome piece of legislation for our fellow Americans who are seeking work in this difficult economy. But first, let me say a few words about the latest development in the debate over health insurance reform. I don't know if you guys have been hearing, but there's been a big debate going on here.

This morning a new analysis from the Congressional Budget Office concludes that the reform we seek would bring $1.3 trillion in deficit reduction over the next two decades. That makes this legislation the most significant effort to reduce deficits since the Balanced Budget Act in the 1990s. And this is but one virtue of a reform that will bring new accountability to the insurance industry and greater economic security to all Americans. So I urge every Member of Congress to consider this as they prepare for their important vote this weekend.

And I want to welcome all the Members of Congress who are here, those who are on stage—Madam Speaker, Majority Leader Reid—as well as some of my Cabinet members who are here.

In a few moments, I'll sign what's called the HIRE Act, a jobs bill that will encourage businesses to hire and help put Americans back to work. And I'd like to say a few words about what this jobs bill will mean for workers, for businesses, and for America's economic recovery.

There are a number of ways to look at an economic recovery. Through the eyes of an economist, you look at the different stages of recovery. You look at whether an economy has begun to grow, at whether businesses have begun to hire temporary workers or increase the hours of existing workers. You look at whether

businesses, small and large, have begun to hire full-time employees again.

That's how economists measure a recovery, and by those measures, we are beginning to move in the right direction. But through the eyes of most Americans, recovery is about something more fundamental: Do I have a decent job? Can I provide for my family? Do I feel a sense of financial security?

The great recession that we've just gone through took a terrible toll on the middle class and on our economy as a whole. For every one of the over 8 million people who lost their jobs in recent years, there's a story of struggle, of a family that's forced to choose between paying their electricity bill or the car insurance or the daughter's college tuition, of weddings and vacations and retirements that have been postponed.

So here's the good news: A consensus is forming that partly because of the necessary, and often unpopular, measures we took over the past year, our economy is now growing again, and we may soon be adding jobs instead of losing them. The jobs bill I'm signing today is intended to help accelerate that process.

I'm signing it mindful that, as I've said before, the solution to our economic problems will not come from Government alone. Government can't create all the jobs we need or can it repair all the damage that's been done by this recession.

But what we can do is promote a strong, dynamic private sector, the true engine of job creation in our economy. We can help to provide an impetus for America's businesses to start hiring again. We can nurture the conditions that allow companies to succeed and to grow.

And that's exactly what this jobs bill will help us do. Now, make no mistake, while this jobs bill is absolutely necessary, it's by no means enough. There's a lot more that we're going to need to do to spur hiring in the private sector and bring about full economic recovery, from helping creditworthy small businesses to get loans that they need to expand, to offering incentives to make homes and businesses more energy efficient, to investing in infrastructure so we can put Americans to work doing the work that America needs done.

Nevertheless, this jobs bill will make a difference in several important ways. First, we will forgive payroll taxes for businesses that hire someone who's been out of work at least 2 months. That's a tax benefit that will apply to unemployed workers hired between last month and the end of this year. So this tax cut says to employers, if you hire a worker who's unemployed, you won't have to pay payroll taxes on that worker for the rest of the year. And businesses that move quickly to hire today will get a bigger tax credit than businesses that wait until later this year.

This tax cut will be particularly helpful to small-business owners. Many of them are on the fence right now about whether to bring in that extra worker or two, or whether they should hire anyone at all. And this jobs bill should help make their decision that much easier. And by the way, I'd like to note that part of what health insurance reform would do is to provide tax credits for over 4 million small businesses so they don't have to choose between hiring workers and offering coverage.

The second thing this bill does is to encourage small businesses to grow and to hire by permitting them to write off investments they make in equipment this year. These kinds of expenses typically take years to depreciate, but under this law, businesses will be able to invest up to $250,000, let's say, in a piece of factory equipment, and write it off right away. Put simply, we'll give businesses an incentive to invest in their own future, and to do it today.

Third, we'll reform municipal bonds to encourage job creation by expanding investment in schools and clean energy projects. Say a town wants to put people to work rebuilding a crumbling elementary school or putting up wind turbines. With this law, we'll make it easier for them to raise the money they need to do what they want to do by using a model that we've called Build America Bonds, one of the most successful programs in the Recovery Act. We'll give Americans a better chance to invest in the future of their communities and of the country.

And finally, this jobs bill will maintain crucial investments in our roads and our bridges as we head into the spring and summer months, when construction jobs are picking up.

I want to commend all the Members of Congress, and their leadership is what made this bill possible. Many of them are here today. I'm also gratified that over a dozen Republicans agreed that the need for this jobs bill was urgent, and that they were willing to break out of the partisan morass to help us take this forward step for the American people. I hope this is a prelude to further cooperation in the days and months to come, as we continue to work on digging our way out of the recession and rebuilding our economy in a way that works for all Americans and not just some Americans.

After all, the jobs bill I'm signing today, and our broader efforts to achieve a recovery, aren't about politics. They're not about Democrat versus Republican. This isn't a game that we're playing here. They're about the people in this country who are out of work and looking for a job. They're about all the Americans of every race and region and age who've shared their stories with me over the last year.

The single mother who's told me she's filled out hundreds of job applications and been on dozens of interviews, but still hasn't found a job. The father whose son told me he started working when he was a teenager and recently found himself out of a job for the very first time in his life. The children who write to me, they're worried about their moms and their dads, worried about what the future holds for their families.

That's who I'm thinking about every morning when I enter into the Oval Office. That's who I'm signing this bill for. And that's who I'm going to continue to fight for so long as I am President of the United States.

So with that, let me sign this bill and let's get to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. H.R. 2847, approved March 18, was assigned Public Law No. 111–147.

Statement on a Bipartisan Immigration Reform Framework
March 18, 2010

In June, I met with members of both parties and assigned Secretary Napolitano to work with them and key constituencies around the country to craft a comprehensive approach that will finally fix our broken immigration system. I am pleased to see that Senators Schumer and Graham have produced a promising, bipartisan framework which can and should be the basis for moving forward. It thoughtfully addresses the need to shore up our borders and demands accountability from both workers who are here illegally and employers who game the system.

My administration will be consulting further with the Senators on the details of their proposal, but a critical next step will be to translate their framework into a legislative proposal and for Congress to act at the earliest possible opportunity.

I congratulate Senators Schumer and Graham for their leadership and pledge to do everything in my power to forge a bipartisan consensus this year on this important issue so we can continue to move forward on comprehensive immigration reform.

Memorandum on Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians
March 18, 2010

Memorandum for the Secretary of Homeland Security

Subject: Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians

Since 1991, the United States has provided safe haven for Liberians who were forced to flee their country as a result of armed conflict and widespread civil strife, in part through granting Temporary Protected Status (TPS).

The armed conflict ended in 2003 and conditions improved such that TPS ended effective October 1, 2007. President Bush then deferred the enforced departure of the Liberians originally granted TPS. I extended that grant of Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) to March 31, 2010. I have determined that there are compelling foreign policy reasons to again extend DED to those Liberians presently residing in the United States under the existing grant of DED.

Pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States, I have determined that it is in the foreign policy interest of the United States to defer for 18 months the removal of any Liberian national, or person without nationality who last habitually resided in Liberia, who is present in the United States and who is under a grant of DED as of March 31, 2010. The grant of DED only applies to an individual who has continuously resided in the United States since October 1, 2002, except for Liberian nationals, or persons without nationality who last habitually resided in Liberia:

(1) who are ineligible for TPS for the reasons provided in section 244(c)(2)(B) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. 1254a(c)(2)(B);
(2) whose removal you determine is in the interest of the United States;
(3) whose presence or activities in the United States the Secretary of State has reasonable grounds to believe would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States;
(4) who have voluntarily returned to Liberia or his or her country of last habitual residence outside the United States;
(5) who were deported, excluded, or removed prior to the date of this memorandum; or
(6) who are subject to extradition.

Accordingly, I direct you to take the necessary steps to implement for eligible Liberians:

(1) a deferral of enforced departure from the United States for 18 months from March 31, 2010; and
(2) authorization for employment for 18 months from March 31, 2010.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 19.

Remarks at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia
March 19, 2010

The President. Hello, George Mason! How's everybody doing today? Thank you. Thank you.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. Thank you, everybody. It's good to be back with some real Patriots. I want to thank Dr. Alan Merten, the president of George Mason University, and his family; Dr. Shirley Travis, who's here—thank you; and Coach Larranaga—we were just talking a little bit about—[*applause*]—looking forward to picking George Mason in my bracket next year.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you. I don't know if some of you remember, but I visited this university about 3 years ago for the first time. This was at just the dawn of my Presidential campaign. It was about 3 weeks old, I think. We didn't have a lot of money. We didn't have a lot of staff. Nobody could pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] Our poll numbers were quite low. And a lot of people in Washington, they didn't think it was even worth us trying.

They had counted us out before we had even started, because the Washington conventional wisdom was that change was too hard. But what we had even then was a group of students here at George Mason who believed that if we worked hard enough and if we fought long enough, if we organized enough supporters, then we could finally bring change to that city across the river. We believed that despite all the

resistance, we could make Washington work, not for the lobbyists, not for the special interests, not for the politicians, but for the American people.

And now, 3 years later, I stand before you, 1 year after the worst recession since the Great Depression, having to make a bunch of tough decisions, having had a tumultuous debate, having had a lot of folks who were skeptical that we could get anything done. And right now we are at the point where we are going to do something historic this weekend. That's what this health care vote is all about.

A few miles from here, Congress is in the final stages of a fateful debate about the future of health insurance in America. It's a debate that's raged not just for the past year, but for the past century. One thing when you're in the White House, you've got a lot of history books around you. [*Laughter*] And so I've been reading up on the history here. Teddy Roosevelt, Republican, was the first to advocate that everybody get health care in this country. Every decade since, we've had Presidents, Republicans and Democrats, from Harry Truman to Richard Nixon to JFK to Lyndon Johnson to—every single President has said we need to fix this system. It's a debate that's not only about the cost of health care, not just about what we're doing about folks who aren't getting a fair shake from their insurance companies, it's a debate about the character of our country, about whether we can still meet the challenges of our time, whether we still have the guts and the courage to give every citizen, not just some, the chance to reach their dreams.

At the heart of this debate is the question of whether we're going to accept a system that works better for the insurance companies than it does for the American people, because if this vote fails, the insurance industry will continue to run amok. They will continue to deny people coverage. They will continue to deny people care. They will continue to jack up premiums 40 or 50 or 60 percent, as they have in the last few weeks, without any accountability whatsoever. They know this, and that's why their lobbyists are stalking the Halls of Congress as we speak and pouring millions of dollars into negative ads. And that's why they are doing everything they can to kill this bill.

So the only question left is this: Are we going to let the special interests win once again?

Audience members. No!

The President. Or are we going to make this vote a victory for the American people?

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. George Mason, the time for reform is right now. Not a year from now, not 5 years from now, not 10 years from now, not 20 years from now, it's now. We have had a year of hard debate. Every proposal has been put on the table; every argument has been made. We have incorporated the best ideas from Democrats and from Republicans into a final proposal that builds on the system of private insurance that we currently have. The insurance industry and its supporters in Congress have tried to portray this as radical change.

Now, I just want to be clear, everybody. Listen up, because we have heard every crazy thing about this bill. You remember. First, we heard this was a Government takeover of health care. Then we heard that this was going to kill granny. Then we heard, well, illegal immigrants are going to be getting the main benefits of this bill. There has been—they have thrown every argument at this legislative effort. But when it—it turns out, at the end of the day, what we're talking about is commonsense reform. That's all we're talking about.

If you like your doctor, you're going to be able to keep your doctor. If you like your plan, keep your plan. I don't believe we should give Government or the insurance companies more control over health care in America. I think it's time to give you, the American people, more control over your health.

And since you've been hearing a whole bunch of nonsense, let's just be clear on what exactly the proposal that they're going to vote on in a couple of days will do. It's going to change health care in three ways.

Number one, we are going to end the worst practices of insurance companies. This is a patient's bill of rights on steroids. [*Laughter*] Starting this year, thousands of uninsured

Americans with preexisting conditions will be able to purchase health insurance, some for the very first time. Starting this year, insurance companies will be banned forever from denying coverage to children with preexisting conditions. Starting this year, insurance companies will be banned from dropping your coverage when you get sick. And they've been spending a lot of time weeding out people who are sick so they don't have to pay benefits that people have already paid for. Those practices will end.

If this reform becomes law, all new insurance plans will be required to offer free preventive care to their customers. If you buy a new plan, there won't be lifetime or restrictive annual limits on the amount of care you receive from your insurance companies. And by the way, to all the young people here today, starting this year, if you don't have insurance, all new plans will allow you to stay on your parent's plan until you are 26 years old.

So you'll have some security when you graduate. If that first job doesn't offer coverage, you're going to know that you've got coverage. Because as you start your lives and your careers, the last thing you should be worried about is whether you're going to go broke or make your parents broke just because you get sick. All right?

So that's the first thing this legislation does: the toughest insurance reforms in history. And by the way, when you talk to Republicans and you say, "Well, are you against this?" a lot of them will say, "No, no, that part's okay." [*Laughter*] All right, so let's go to the second part.

The second thing that would change about the current system is that for the first time, small-business owners and people who are being priced out of the insurance market will have the same kind of choice of private health insurance that Members of Congress give to themselves.

So what this means is, is that small-business owners and middle class families, they're going to be able to be part of what's called a big pool of customers that can negotiate with the insurance companies. And that means they can purchase more affordable coverage in a competitive marketplace. So they're not out there on their own just shopping. They're part of millions of people who are shopping together. And if you still can't afford the insurance in this new marketplace, even though it's going to be cheaper than what you can get on your own, then we're going to offer you tax credits to help you afford it, tax credits that add up to the largest middle class tax cut for health care in American history.

Now, these tax credits cost money. Helping folks who can't afford it right now, that does cost some money. It costs about $100 billion per year.

Audience member. That's all right.

The President. But most of the cost—[*laughter*]—well, here's the reason it's all right. [*Laughter*] Here's the reason it's all right. It wouldn't be all right if we weren't paying for it—and by the way, that's what a previous Congress did with the prescription drug plan. All they did was they gave the benefits and they didn't pay for it.

That's not what we're doing. What we're doing is we're taking money that America is already spending in the health care system, but is being spent poorly, that's going to waste and fraud and unwarranted subsidies for the insurance companies, and we're taking that money and making sure those dollars go towards making insurance more affordable.

So we're going to eliminate wasteful taxpayer subsidies to insurance companies. We're going to set a new fee on insurance companies that stand to gain millions of new customers. So here's the point: This proposal's paid for. Unlike some of these previous schemes in Washington, we're not taking out the credit card in your name, young people, and charging it to you. We're making sure this thing is paid for. All right, so that's the second thing.

Now, the third thing that this legislation does is it brings down the cost of health care for families and businesses and the Federal Government. Americans who are buying comparable coverage in the individual market would end up seeing their premiums go down 14 to 20 percent. Americans who get their insurance through the workplace, cost savings could be as much as $3,000 less per employer than if we do nothing. Now, think about that. That's $3,000

your employer doesn't have to pay, which means maybe she can afford to give you a raise.

And by the way, if you're curious, well, how exactly are we saving these costs? Well, part of it is, again, we're not spending our health care money wisely. So, for example, you go to the hospital or you go to a doctor and you may take five tests, when it turns out, if you just took one test, and you send an e-mail around with the test results, you wouldn't be paying $500 per test. So we're trying to save money across the system. And altogether, our cost-cutting measures would reduce most people's premiums. And here's the bonus: It brings down our deficit by more than $1 trillion over the next two decades.

So you've got a whole bunch of opponents of this bill saying, "Well, we can't afford this; we're fiscal conservatives." These are the same guys who passed that prescription drug bill without paying for it, adding over $1 trillion to our deficit—"Oh, we can't afford this." But this bill, according to the Congressional Budget Office, which is the referee, the scorekeeper for how much things cost, says we'll save us $1 trillion. Not only can we afford to do this, we can't afford not to do this.

So here's the bottom line. That's our proposal: toughest insurance reforms in history, one of the biggest deficit-reduction plans in history, and the opportunity to give millions of people—some of them in your own family, some of the people who are in this auditorium today—an opportunity for the first time in a very long time to get affordable health care. That's it. That's what we're trying to do. That's what the Congress of the United States is about to vote on this weekend.

Now, it would be nice if we were just kind of examining the substance, we were walking through the details of the plan, what it means for you. But that's not what the cable stations like to talk about. [*Laughter*] What they like to talk about is the politics of the vote. What does this mean in November? What does it mean to the poll numbers? Is this more of an advantage for Democrats or Republicans? What's it going to mean for Obama? Will his Presidency be crippled?

Audience members. No!

The President. Or will he be the comeback kid? Well, that's what they like to talk about. That's what they like to talk about. I understand.

One of the things you realize is, basically, that a lot of reporting in Washington, it's just like "SportsCenter." [*Laughter*] It's considered a sport, and who's up and who's down, and everybody's keeping score. And you got the teams going at it. It's Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots. [*Laughter*]

Look, let me say this, George Mason: I don't know how this plays politically. Nobody really does. I mean, there's been so much misinformation and so much confusion, and the climate, at times, during the course of this year has been so toxic, and people are so anxious because the economy has been going through such a tough time. I don't know what's going to happen with the politics on this thing. I don't know whether my poll numbers go down, they go up. I don't know what happens in terms of Democrats versus Republicans.

But here's what I do know: I do know that this bill, this legislation, is going to be enormously important for America's future. I do know the impact it will have on the millions of Americans who need our help. And the millions more who may not need help right now, but a year from now or 5 years from now or 10 years from now, if they have some bad luck, if, heaven forbid, they get sick, if they've got a preexisting condition, if their child has a preexisting condition, if they lose their job, if they want to start a company, I know the impact it will have on them.

I know what this reform will mean for people like Leslie Banks, a single mom I met in Pennsylvania. She's trying to put her daughter through college, just like probably some of your moms and dads are trying to put you through college. And her insurance company just sent her a letter saying they plan to double her premium this year, have it go up 100 percent. And she can't afford it. So now she's trying to figure out, am I going to keep my insurance or am I going to keep my daughter in college? Leslie Banks needs us to pass this reform bill.

I know what reform will mean for people like Laura Klitzka. I met Laura up in Green Bay, Wisconsin, while I was campaigning. She thought she had beaten her breast cancer. Then she discovered it had spread to her bones. And she and her insurance—she and her husband, they were lucky enough to have insurance, but their medical bills still landed them in debt. So now she's spending time worrying about the debt, when all she wants to do is think about how she can spend time with her two kids. Laura needs us to pass this reform bill.

I know what reform will mean for people like Natoma Canfield. When her insurance company raised her rates, she had to give up her coverage, even though she had been paying thousands of dollars in premiums for years, because she had beaten cancer 11 years earlier. They kept on jacking up her rates, jacking up her rates. Finally, she thought she was going to lose her home. She was scared that a sudden illness would lead to financial ruin, but she had no choice. Right now she's lying in a hospital bed, faced with paying for such an illness, after she had to give up her health insurance. She's praying that somehow she can afford to get well. She knows that it is time for reform.

So, George Mason, when you hear people saying, "Well, why don't we do this more incrementally; why don't we do this a little more piecemeal; why don't we just help the folks that are easiest to help," my answer is, the time for reform is now. We have waited long enough. We have waited long enough.

And in just a few days, a century-long struggle will culminate in a historic vote. We've had historic votes before. We had a historic vote to put Social Security in place to make sure that our elderly did not live out their golden years in poverty. We had a historic vote in civil rights to make sure that everybody was equal under the law. As messy as this process is, as frustrating as this process is, as ugly as this process can be, when we have faced such decisions in our past, this Nation, time and time again, has chosen to extend its promise to more of its people.

You know, the naysayers said that Social Security would lead to socialism. [*Laughter*] But the men and women of Congress stood fast and created that program that lifted millions out of poverty.

There were cynics that warned that Medicare would lead to a Government takeover of our entire health care system and that it didn't have much support in the polls. But Democrats and Republicans refused to back down, and they made sure that our seniors had the health care that they needed and could have some basic peace of mind.

So previous generations, those who came before us, made the decision that our seniors and our poor, through Medicaid, should not be forced to go without health care just because they couldn't afford it. Today, it falls to this generation to decide whether we will make that same promise to hard-working middle class families and small businesses all across America and to young Americans like yourselves who are just starting out.

So here's my bottom line: I know this has been a difficult journey. I know this will be a tough vote. I know that everybody's counting votes right now in Washington. But I also remember a quote I saw on a plaque in the White House the other day. It's hanging in the same room when I demanded answers from insurance executives and just received a bunch of excuses. And it was a quote from Teddy Roosevelt, the person who first called for health care reform—that Republican—all those years ago. And it said, "Aggressively fighting for the right is the noblest sport the world affords."

Now, I don't know how passing health care will play politically, but I know it's right. Teddy Roosevelt knew it was right; Harry Truman knew that it was right; Ted Kennedy knew it was right. And if you believe that it's right, then you've got to help us finish this fight. You've got to stand with me, just like you did 3 years ago, and make some phone calls and knock on some doors, talk to your parents, talk to your friends. Do not quit, do not give up. We keep on going. We are going to get this done. We are going to make history. We are going to fix health care in America, with your help.

God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:27 a.m. at the Patriot Center. In his remarks, he referred to Shirley S. Travis, dean, College of Health and Human Services, and Jim Larranaga, head coach of the men's basketball team, George Mason University.

The President's Weekly Address
March 20, 2010

On Monday, the Banking Committee of the United States Senate will debate a proposal to address the abuse and excess that led to the worst financial crisis in generations. These reforms are essential. As I've urged over the past year, we need commonsense rules that will allow our markets to function fairly and freely while reining in the worst practices of the financial industry. That's the central lesson of this crisis. And we fail to heed that lesson at our peril.

Of course, there were many causes of the economic turmoil that ripped through our country over the past 2 years. But it was a crisis that began in our financial system. Large banks engaged in reckless financial speculation without regard for the consequences and without tough oversight. Financial firms invented and sold complicated financial products to escape scrutiny and conceal enormous risk. And there were some who engaged in the rampant exploitation of consumers to turn a quick profit, no matter who was hurt in the process.

Now, I have long been a vigorous defender of free markets. And I believe we need a strong and vibrant financial sector so that businesses can get loans and families can afford mortgages, entrepreneurs can find the capital to start a new company, sell a new product, or offer a new service. But what we have seen over the past 2 years is that without reasonable and clear rules to check abuse and protect families, markets don't function freely. In fact, it was just the opposite. In the absence of such rules, our financial markets spun out of control, credit markets froze, and our economy nearly plummeted into a second great depression. That's why financial reform is so necessary.

After months of bipartisan work, Senator Chris Dodd and his committee have offered a strong foundation for reform, in line with the proposal I previously laid out and in line with the reform bill passed by the House. It would provide greater scrutiny of large financial firms to prevent any one company from threatening the entire financial system, and it would update the rules so that complicated financial products like derivatives are no longer bought and sold without oversight. It would prevent banks from engaging in risky dealings through their own hedge funds while finally giving shareholders a say on executive salaries and bonuses. And through new tools to break up failing financial firms, it would help ensure that taxpayers are never again forced to bail out a big bank because it's, quote, "too big to fail."

Finally, these reforms include a new consumer financial protection agency. It would prevent predatory loan practices and other abuses to ensure that consumers get clear information about loans and other financial products before they sign on the dotted line. Because this financial crisis wasn't just the result of decisions made by large financial firms, it was also the result of many decisions made by ordinary Americans to open credit cards and take on mortgages. And while there were many who took out loans they knew they couldn't afford, there were also millions of people who signed contracts they didn't fully understand, offered by lenders who didn't always tell the truth.

This is in part because the job of protecting consumers is spread across seven different Federal agencies, none of which has the interests of ordinary Americans as its principal concern. This diffusion of responsibility has made it easier for credit card companies to lure customers with attractive offers and then punish them in the fine print or for payday lenders and others who charge outrageous interest rates to operate without much oversight and for mortgage brokers to entice home buyers

with low initial rates, only to trap them with ballooning payments down the line.

For these banking reforms to be complete, for these reforms to meet the measure of the crisis we've just been through, we need a consumer agency to advocate for ordinary Americans and help enforce the rules that protect them. That's why I won't accept any attempts to undermine the independence of this agency. And I won't accept efforts to create loopholes for the most egregious abusers of consumers, from payday lenders to auto finance companies to credit card companies.

Unsurprisingly, this proposal has been a source of contention with financial firms, who like things just the way they are. In fact, the Republican leader in the House reportedly met with a top executive of one of America's largest banks and made thwarting reform a key part of his party's pitch for campaign contributions. And this week, the allies of bank and consumer finance companies launched a multimillion-dollar ad campaign to fight against the proposal. You might call this air support for the army of lobbyists already arm-twisting members of the committee to reject those reforms and block this consumer agency. Perhaps that's why, after months of working with Democrats, Republicans walked away from this proposal. I regret that and urge them to reconsider.

The fact is, it's now been well over a year since the near collapse of the entire financial system, a crisis that helped wipe out more than 8 million jobs and that continues to exact a terrible toll throughout our economy. Yet today, the very same system that allowed this turmoil remains in place. No one disputes that. No one denies that reform is needed. So the question we have to answer is very simple: Will we learn from this crisis, or will we condemn ourselves to repeat it? That's what's at stake.

I urge those in the Senate who support these reforms to remain strong, to resist the pressure from those who would preserve the status quo, to stand up for their constituents and our country. And I promise to use every tool at my disposal to see these reforms enacted, to ensure that the bill I sign into law reflects not the special interests of Wall Street, but the best interests of the American people.

Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:55 p.m. on March 19 in the Green Room at the White House for broadcast on March 20. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 19, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 20.

Remarks to the House Democratic Caucus
March 20, 2010

Thank you very much. Everybody, please have a seat. To Leader Reid, to Steny Hoyer, John Larson, Xavier Becerra, Jim Clyburn, Chris Van Hollen, to an extraordinary leader and extraordinary Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, and to all the Members here today, thank you very much for having me. Thanks for having me, and thanks for your tireless efforts waged on behalf of health insurance reform in this country.

I have the great pleasure of having a really nice library at the White House. And I was tooling through some of the writings of some previous Presidents, and I came upon this quote by Abraham Lincoln: "I am not bound to win, but I'm bound to be true. I'm not bound to succeed, but I'm bound to live up to what light I have."

This debate has been a difficult debate, this process has been a difficult process, and this year has been a difficult year for the American people. When I was sworn in, we were in the midst of the worst recession since the Great Depression. Eight hundred thousand people per month were losing their jobs, millions of people were losing their health insurance, and the financial system was on the verge of collapse.

And this body has taken on some of the toughest votes and some of the toughest decisions in the history of Congress, not because you were bound to win, but because you were

bound to be true, because each and every one of you made a decision that at a moment of such urgency, it was less important to measure what the polls said than to measure what was right.

Now, a year later, we're in different circumstances. Because of the actions that you've taken, the financial system has stabilized. The stock market has stabilized. Businesses are starting to invest again. The economy, instead of contracting, is now growing again. There are signs that people are going to start hiring again. There's still tremendous hardship all across the country, but there is a sense that we are making progress, because of you.

But even before this crisis, each and every one of us knew that there were millions of people across America who were living their own quiet crises. Maybe because they had a child who had a preexisting condition, and no matter how desperate they were, no matter what insurance company they called, they couldn't get coverage for that child. Maybe it was somebody who had been forced into early retirement, in their fifties, not yet eligible for Medicare, and they couldn't find a job, and they couldn't find health insurance, despite the fact that they had some sort of chronic condition that had to be tended to.

Every single one of you at some point before you arrived in Congress and after you arrived in Congress have met constituents with heartbreaking stories. And you've looked them in the eye, and you've said: "We're going to do something about it. That's why I want to go to Congress."

And now we're on the threshold of doing something about it. We're a day away. After a year of debate, after every argument has been made by just about everybody—[*laughter*]—we're 24 hours away.

Now, some of you know, I'm not somebody who spends a lot of time surfing the cable channels, but I'm not completely in the bubble. I have a sense of what the coverage has been, and mostly, it's an obsession with: What will this mean for the Democratic Party? What will this mean for the President's polls? How will this play out in November? Is this good or is this bad for the Democratic majority? What does it mean for those swing districts?

And I noticed that there's been a lot of friendly advice offered all across town. [*Laughter*] Mitch McConnell, John Boehner, Karl Rove, they're all warning you of the horrendous impact if you support this legislation. Now, it could be that they are suddenly having a change of heart and they are deeply concerned about their Democratic friends. [*Laughter*] They are giving you the best possible advice—[*laughter*]—in order to assure that Nancy Pelosi remains Speaker and Harry Reid remains leader and that all of you keep your seats. That's a possibility. [*Laughter*]

But it may also be possible that they realize after health reform passes and I sign that legislation into law, that it's going to be a little harder to mischaracterize what this effort has been all about.

Because this year, small businesses will start getting tax credits so that they can offer health insurance to employees who currently don't have it. Because this year, those same parents who are worried about getting coverage for their children with preexisting conditions now are assured that insurance companies have to give them coverage—this year. Because this year, insurance companies won't suddenly be able to drop your coverage when you get sick or impose lifetime limits or restrictive limits on the coverage that you have. Maybe they know that this year, for the first time, young people will be able to stay on their parents' health insurance until they're 26 years old, and they're thinking that might just be popular all across the country.

And what they also know is what won't happen. They know that after this legislation passes and after I sign this bill, lo and behold, nobody is pulling the plug on granny. [*Laughter*] It turns out that, in fact, people who like their health insurance are going to be able to keep their health insurance, that there's no Government takeover. People will discover that if they like their doctor, they'll be keeping their doctor. In fact, they're more likely to keep their doctor because of a stronger system.

It'll turn out that this piece of historic legislation is built on the private insurance system

that we have now and runs straight down the center of American political thought. Turns out, this is a bill that tracks the recommendations not just of Democrat Tom Daschle, but also Republicans Bob Dole and Howard Baker, that this is a middle-of-the-road bill that is designed to help the American people in an area of their lives where they urgently need help.

Now, there are some who wanted a single-payer, Government-run system. That's not this bill. The Republicans wanted what I call the "foxes guard the henhouse approach," in which we further deregulate the insurance companies and let them run wild, the notion being somehow that that was going to lower costs for the American people. I don't know a serious health care economist who buys that idea, but that was their concept. And we rejected that, because what we said was, we want to create a system in which health care is working not for insurance companies, but it's working for the American people, it's working for middle class families.

So what did we do? What is the essence of this legislation? Number one, this is the toughest insurance reforms in history. We are making sure that the system of private insurance works for ordinary families. A prescription—this is a patient's bill of rights on steroids. So many of you individually have worked on these insurance reforms—they are in this package—to make sure that families are getting a fair deal; that if they're paying a premium, that they're getting a good service in return; making sure that employers, if they are paying premiums for their employees, that their employees are getting the coverage that they expect; that insurance companies are not going to game the system with fine print and rescissions and dropping people when they need it most, but instead are going to have to abide by some basic rules of the road that exemplify a sense of fairness and good value. That's number one.

The second thing this does is it creates a pool, a marketplace, where individuals and small businesses, who right now are having a terrible time out there getting health insurance, are going to be able to purchase health insurance as part of a big group, just like Federal employees, just like Members of Congress. They are now going to be part of a pool that can negotiate for better rates, better quality, more competition.

And that's why the Congressional Budget Office says this will lower people's rates for comparable plans by 14 to 20 percent. That's not my numbers, that's the Congressional Budget Office's numbers. So that people will have choice and competition, just like Members of Congress have choice and competition.

Number three, if people still can't afford it, we're going to provide them some tax credits, the biggest tax cut for small businesses and working families when it comes to health care in history.

And number four, this is the biggest reduction in our deficit since the budget balance act, one of the biggest deficit-reduction measures in history, over $1.3 trillion that will help put us on the path of fiscal responsibility.

And that's before we count all the game-changing measures that are going to assure, for example, that instead of having five tests when you go to the doctor, you just get one, that the delivery system is working for patients, not just working for billings. And everybody who's looked at it says that every single good idea to bend the cost curve and start actually reducing health care costs are in this bill.

So that's what this effort is all about: toughest insurance reforms in history; a marketplace so people have choice and competition who right now don't have it and are seeing their premiums go up 20, 30, 40, 50 percent; reductions in the cost of health care for millions of American families, including those who have health insurance. The Business Roundtable did their own study and said that this would potentially save employers $3,000 per employee on their health care because of the measures in this legislation.

And by the way, not only does it reduce the deficit, we pay for it responsibly in ways that the other side of the aisle that talks a lot about fiscal responsibility, but doesn't seem to be able to walk the walk, can't claim when it comes to their prescription drug bill. We are actually doing it. This is paid for and will not add a dime to the deficit. It will reduce the deficit.

Now, is this bill perfect? Of course not. Will this solve every single problem in our health care system right away? No. There are all kinds

of ideas that many of you have that aren't included in this legislation. I know that there's been discussion, for example, of how we're going to deal with regional disparities, and I know that there was a meeting with Secretary Sebelius to assure that we can continue to try to make sure that we've got a system that gives people the best bang for their buck.

So this is not—there are all kinds of things that many of you would like to see that isn't in this legislation. There are some things I'd like to see that's not in this legislation. But is this the single most important step that we have taken on health care since Medicare? Absolutely. Is this the most important piece of domestic legislation, in terms of giving a break to hard-working middle class families out there, since Medicare? Absolutely. Is this a vast improvement over the status quo? Absolutely.

Now, I still know this is a tough vote, though. I know this is a tough vote. I've talked to many of you individually. And I have to say that if you honestly believe in your heart of hearts, in your conscience, that this is not an improvement over the status quo; if despite all the information that's out there that says that without serious reform efforts like this one, people's premiums are going to double over the next 5 or 10 years, that folks are going to keep on getting letters from their insurance companies saying that their premium just went up 40 or 50 percent; if you think that somehow it's okay that we have millions of hard-working Americans who can't get health care, and that it's all right, it's acceptable in the wealthiest nation on Earth that there are children with chronic illnesses that can't get the care that they need; if you think that the system is working for ordinary Americans rather than the insurance companies, then you should vote no on this bill. If you can honestly say that, then you shouldn't support it. You're here to represent your constituencies, and if you think your constituencies honestly wouldn't be helped, you shouldn't vote for this.

But if you agree that the system's not working for ordinary families, if you've heard the same stories that I've heard everywhere, all across the country, then help us fix this system. Don't do it for me. Don't do it for Nancy Pelosi or Harry Reid. Do it for all those people out there who are struggling.

Some of you know I get 10 letters a day that I read out of the 40,000 that we receive. Started reading some of the ones that I got this morning: "Dear President Obama, my daughter, a wonderful person, lost her job. She has no health insurance. She had a blood clot in her brain. She's now disabled, can't get care." "Dear President Obama, I don't yet qualify for Medicare. COBRA is about to run out. I am desperate, don't know what to do."

Do it for them. Do it for people who are really scared right now, through no fault of their own, who've played by the rules, who've done all the right things and have suddenly find—found out that because of an accident, because of an ailment, they're about to lose their house; or they can't provide the help to their kids that they need; or they're a small business who, up until now, has always taken pride in providing care for their workers, and it turns out that they just can't afford to do it anymore, and they're having to make a decision about, do I keep providing health insurance for my workers, or do I just drop their coverage, or do I not hire some people because I simply can't afford it, it's all being gobbled up by the insurance companies?

Don't do it for me. Don't do it for the Democratic Party. Do it for the American people. They're the ones who are looking for action right now.

I know this is a tough vote. And I am actually confident—I've talked to some of you individually—that it will end up being the smart thing to do politically, because I believe that good policy is good politics. I am convinced that when you go out there and you are standing tall and you are saying, I believe that this is the right thing to do for my constituents and the right thing to do for America, that ultimately, the truth will out.

I had a wonderful conversation with Betsy Markey—I don't know if Betsy is around here; there she is right there—who—Betsy's in a tough district. The biggest newspaper is somewhat conservative, as Betsy described. [*Laughter*] They weren't real happy with health care

reform. They were opposed to it. Betsy, despite the pressure, announced that she was in favor of this bill. And lo and behold, the next day, that same newspaper runs an editorial saying, you know what, we've considered this, we've looked at the legislation, and we actually are pleased that Congresswoman Markey is supporting the legislation.

When I see John Boccieri stand up proud with a whole bunch of his constituencies—in as tough a district as there is—and stand up with a bunch of folks from his district with preexisting conditions and saying, "You know, I don't know what is going on in Washington, but I know what's going on with these families," I look at him with pride.

Now, I can't guarantee that this is good politics. Every one of you know your districts better than I do. You talk to folks. You're under enormous pressure. You're getting robocalls. You're getting e-mails that are tying up the communications system. I know the pressure you're under. I get a few comments made about me. I don't know if you've noticed. [*Laughter*] I've been in your shoes. I know what it's like to take a tough vote.

But what did Lincoln say? "I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true." Two generations ago, folks who were sitting in your position, they made a decision: We are going to make sure that seniors and the poor have health care coverage that they can count on. And they did the right thing.

And I'm sure at the time they were making that vote, they weren't sure how the politics were either, any more than the people who made the decision to make sure that Social Security was in place knew how the politics would play out or folks who passed the civil rights acts knew how the politics were going to play out. They were not bound to win, but they were bound to be true.

And now we've got middle class Americans, don't have Medicare, don't have Medicaid, watching the employer-based system fray along the edges or being caught in terrible situations. And the question is, are we going to be true to them?

Sometimes I think about how I got involved in politics. I didn't think of myself as a potential politician when I got out of college. I went to work in neighborhoods, working with Catholic churches in poor neighborhoods in Chicago, trying to figure out how people could get a little bit of help. And I was skeptical about politics and politicians, just like a lot of Americans are skeptical about politics and politicians right now. Because my working assumption was, you know, when it—when push comes to shove, all too often, folks in elected office, they're looking out for themselves and not looking out for the folks who put them there, that there are too many compromises, that the special interests have too much power, they just got too much clout, there's too much big money washing around.

And I decided finally to get involved because I realized if I wasn't willing to step up and be true to the things I believed in, then the system wouldn't change. Every single one of you had that same kind of moment at the beginning of your careers. Maybe it was just listening to stories in your neighborhood about what was happening to people who'd been laid off of work. Maybe it was your own family experience, somebody got sick and didn't have health care, and you said something should change.

Something inspired you to get involved, and something inspired you to be a Democrat instead of running as a Republican. Because somewhere deep in your heart, you said to yourself, I believe in an America in which we don't just look out for ourselves, that we don't just tell people, you're on your own, that we are proud of our individualism, we are proud of our liberty, but we also have a sense of neighborliness and a sense of community, and we are willing to look out for one another and help people who are vulnerable and help people who are down on their luck and give them a pathway to success and give them a ladder into the middle class. That's why you decided to run.

And now a lot of us have been here a while, and everybody here has taken their lumps and their bruises. And it turns out, people have had to make compromises, and you've been away from families for a long time, and you've missed special events for your kids sometimes. And maybe there have been times where you asked yourself, why did I ever get involved in politics

in the first place? [*Laughter*] And maybe things can't change after all. And when you do something courageous, it turns out, sometimes you may be attacked. And sometimes the very people you thought you were trying to help may be angry at you and shout at you. And you say to yourself, maybe that thing that I started with has been lost.

But you know what? Every once in a while—every once in a while a moment comes where you have a chance to vindicate all those best hopes that you had about yourself, about this country, where you have a chance to make good on those promises that you made in all those town meetings and all those constituency breakfasts and all that traveling through the district, all those people who you looked in the eye, and you said, "You know what, you're right, the system's not working for you, and I'm going to make it a little bit better."

And this is one of those moments. This is one of those times where you can honestly say to yourself, "Doggone it, this is exactly why I came here. This is why I got into politics. This is why I got into public service. This is why I've made those sacrifices. Because I believe so deeply in this country, and I believe so deeply in this democracy, and I'm willing to stand up even when it's hard, even when it's tough."

Every single one of you have made that promise, not just to your constituents, but to yourself. And this is the time to make true on that promise. We are not bound to win, but we are bound to be true. We are not bound to succeed, but we are bound to let whatever light we have shine. We have been debating health care for decades. It has now been debated for a year. It is in your hands. It is time to pass health care reform for America, and I am confident that you are going to do it tomorrow.

Thank you very much, House of Representatives. Let's get this done.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:53 p.m. in the auditorium at the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center. In his remarks, he referred to former White House Deputy Chief of Staff Karl C. Rove; former Sens. Thomas A. Daschle, Robert J. Dole, and Howard H. Baker, Jr. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Videotaped Remarks on the Observance of Nowruz
March 20, 2010

Today I want to extend my best wishes to all who are celebrating Nowruz in the United States and around the world. On this New Year's celebration, friends and family have a unique opportunity to reflect on the year gone by, to celebrate their time together, and to share in their hopes for the future.

One year ago, I chose this occasion to speak directly to the people and leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran and to offer a new chapter of engagement on the basis of mutual interests and mutual respect. I did so with no illusions. For three decades, the United States and Iran have been alienated from one another. Iran's leaders have sought their own legitimacy through hostility to America, and we continue to have serious differences on many issues.

I said last year that the choice for a better future was in the hands of Iran's leaders. That remains true today. Together with the international community, the United States acknowledges your right to peaceful nuclear energy; we insist only that you adhere to the same responsibilities that apply to other nations. We are familiar with your grievances from the past; we have our own grievances as well, but we are prepared to move forward. We know what you're against; now tell us what you're for.

For reasons known only to them, the leaders of Iran have shown themselves unable to answer that question. They have refused good faith proposals from the international community. They have turned their backs on a pathway that would bring more opportunity to all Iranians and allow a great civilization to take its rightful place in the community of nations. Faced with an extended hand, Iran's leaders have shown only a clenched fist.

Last June, the world watched with admiration as Iranians sought to exercise their universal right to be heard. But tragically, the aspirations of the Iranian people were also met with a clenched fist, as people marching silently were beaten with batons, political prisoners were rounded up and abused, absurd and false accusations were leveled against the United States and the West, and people everywhere were horrified by the video of a young woman killed in the street.

The United States does not meddle in Iran's internal affairs. Our commitment, our responsibility is to stand up for those rights that should be universal to all human beings. That includes the right to speak freely, to assemble without fear, the right to the equal administration of justice, and to express your views without facing retribution against you or your families.

I want the Iranian people to know what my country stands for. The United States believes in the dignity of every human being and an international order that bends the arc of history in the direction of justice, a future where Iranians can exercise their rights, participate fully in the global economy, and enrich the world through educational and cultural exchanges beyond Iran's borders. That is the future that we seek. That is what America is for.

That is why, even as we continue to have differences with the Iranian Government, we will sustain our commitment to a more hopeful future for the Iranian people. For instance, by increasing opportunities for educational exchanges so that Iranian students can come to our colleges and universities and through our efforts to ensure that Iranians can have access to the software and Internet technologies that will enable them to communicate with each other and with the world without fear of censorship.

Finally, let me be clear: We are working with the international community to hold the Iranian Government accountable because they refuse to live up to their international obligations. But our offer of comprehensive diplomatic contacts and dialogue stands. Indeed, over the course of the last year, it is the Iranian Government that has chosen to isolate itself and to choose a self-defeating focus on the past over a commitment to build a better future.

Last year, I quoted the words of the poet Saadi, who said, "The children of Adam are limbs to each other, having been created of one essence." I still believe that; I believe it with every fiber of my being. And even as we have differences, the Iranian Government continues to have the choice to pursue a better future and to meet its international responsibilities while respecting the dignity and fundamental human rights of its own people.

Thank you. And *Eid-eh Shoma Mobarak*.

NOTE: The President's remarks were videotaped at approximately 6 p.m. on March 19 in the Green Room at the White House for later broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released Arabic and Persian transcripts of these remarks.

Statement on the Death of Stewart L. Udall
March 20, 2010

For the better part of three decades, Stewart Udall served this Nation honorably. Whether in the skies above Italy in World War II, in Congress, or as Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall left an indelible mark on this Nation and inspired countless Americans who will continue his fight for clean air, clean water, and to maintain our many natural treasures. Michelle and I extend our condolences to the entire Udall family, who continue his legacy of public service to this day.

Remarks on House of Representatives Passage of Health Care Reform Legislation

March 21, 2010

Good evening, everybody. Tonight, after nearly 100 years of talk and frustration, after decades of trying, and a year of sustained effort and debate, the United States Congress finally declared that America's workers and America's families and America's small businesses deserve the security of knowing that here in this country, neither illness nor accident should endanger the dreams they've worked a lifetime to achieve.

Tonight, at a time when the pundits said it was no longer possible, we rose above the weight of our politics. We pushed back on the undue influence of special interests. We didn't give in to mistrust or to cynicism or to fear. Instead, we proved that we are still a people capable of doing big things and tackling our biggest challenges. We proved that this Government, a Government of the people and by the people, still works for the people.

I want to thank every Member of Congress who stood up tonight with courage and conviction to make health care reform a reality. And I know this wasn't an easy vote for a lot of people, but it was the right vote. I want to thank Speaker Nancy Pelosi for her extraordinary leadership and Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and Majority Whip Jim Clyburn for their commitment to getting the job done. I want to thank my outstanding Vice President, Joe Biden, and my wonderful Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, for their fantastic work on this issue. I want to thank the many staffers in Congress and my own incredible staff in the White House, who have worked tirelessly over the past year with Americans of all walks of life to forge a reform package finally worthy of the people we were sent here to serve.

Now, today's vote answers the dreams of so many who have fought for this reform. To every unsung American who took the time to sit down and write a letter or type out an e-mail hoping your voice would be heard, it has been heard tonight. To the untold numbers who knocked on doors and made phone calls, who organized and mobilized out of a firm conviction that change in this country comes not from the top down, but from the bottom up, let me reaffirm that conviction: This moment is possible because of you.

Most importantly, today's vote answers the prayers of every American who has hoped deeply for something to be done about a health care system that works for insurance companies, but not for ordinary people. For most Americans, this debate has never been about abstractions, the fight between right and left, Republican and Democrat; it's always been about something far more personal. It's about every American who knows the shock of opening an envelope to see that their premiums just shot up again when times are already tough enough. It's about every parent who knows the desperation of trying to cover a child with a chronic illness only to be told no again and again and again. It's about every small-business owner forced to choose between insuring employees and staying open for business. They are why we committed ourselves to this cause.

Tonight's vote is not a victory for any one party; it's a victory for them. It's a victory for the American people, and it's a victory for common sense.

Now, it probably goes without saying that tonight's vote will give rise to a frenzy of instant analysis. There will be tallies of Washington winners and losers, predictions about what it means for Democrats and Republicans, for my poll numbers, for my administration. But long after the debate fades away and the prognostication fades away and the dust settles, what will remain standing is not the Government-run system some feared or the status quo that serves the interests of the insurance industry, but a health care system that incorporates ideas from both parties, a system that works better for the American people.

If you have health insurance, this reform just gave you more control by reining in the worst excesses and abuses of the insurance in-

dustry with some of the toughest consumer protections this country has ever known, so that you are actually getting what you pay for.

If you don't have insurance, this reform gives you a chance to be a part of a big purchasing pool that will give you choice and competition and cheaper prices for insurance. And it includes the largest health care tax cut for working families and small businesses in history, so that if you lose your job and you change jobs, start that new business, you'll finally be able to purchase quality, affordable care and the security and peace of mind that comes with it.

This reform is the right thing to do for our seniors. It makes Medicare stronger and more solvent, extending its life by almost a decade. And it's the right thing to do for our future. It will reduce our deficit by more than $100 billion over the next decade and more than $1 trillion in the decade after that.

So this isn't radical reform, but it is major reform. This legislation will not fix everything that ails our health care system, but it moves us decisively in the right direction. This is what change looks like.

Now, as momentous as this day is, it's not the end of this journey. On Tuesday, the Senate will take up revisions to this legislation that the House has embraced, and these are revisions that have strengthened this law and removed provisions that had no place in it. Some have predicted another siege of parliamentary maneuvering in order to delay adoption of these improvements. I hope that's not the case. It's time to bring this debate to a close and begin the hard work of implementing this reform properly on behalf of the American people. This year and in years to come, we have a solemn responsibility to do it right.

Nor does this day represent the end of the work that faces our country. The work of revitalizing our economy goes on. The work of promoting private sector job creation goes on. The work of putting American families' dreams back within reach goes on. And we march on with renewed confidence, energized by this victory on their behalf.

In the end, what this day represents is another stone firmly laid in the foundation of the American Dream. Tonight we answered the call of history as so many generations of Americans have before us. When faced with crisis, we did not shrink from our challenge, we overcame it. We did not avoid our responsibility, we embraced it. We did not fear our future, we shaped it.

Thank you. God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 22. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Pakistan National Day
March 22, 2010

On behalf of the American people, I send my best wishes to the people of Pakistan and all those of Pakistani descent here in America and around the world observing Pakistan National Day. Seventy years ago, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and those of the independence generation declared their dreams of self-determination and democracy. Today, the people of Pakistan are carrying on the great work of Quaid-i-Azam. In these efforts, the American people are proud to join in the education, health, and economic partnerships that can improve the daily lives of Pakistanis and their families. Here in the United States, our country is enriched by the many Pakistani Americans who excel as doctors, small-business owners, students, members of our Armed Forces, and in many other fields. On this national day, we give thanks for the contributions of these fellow Americans, and the United States pledges to remain a partner of all Pakistanis who seek to build a future of peace and prosperity.

Statement on Financial Regulatory Reform and Consumer Protection Legislation
March 22, 2010

We are now one step closer to passing real financial reform that will bring oversight and accountability to our financial system and help ensure that the American taxpayer never again pays the price for the irresponsibility of our largest banks and financial institutions. For that I congratulate Chairman Dodd and the Senate Banking Committee.

By creating a new consumer agency, we will finally set and enforce clear rules of the road across the financial marketplace. And as this bill moves to the floor in the coming weeks, I will continue to fight to strengthen the bill and against attempts to undermine the independence of this agency. I will also oppose efforts to add loopholes that could harm consumers or investors or that allow institutions to avoid oversight that is critical for financial stability. I urge those in the Senate who support these efforts to resist pressure from those who would preserve the status quo and to stand up for long overdue reform that will protect American families and the long-term health of our economy.

Remarks on Signing the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
March 23, 2010

The President. Thank you, everybody. Please, have a seat. Thank you, Joe. [*Laughter*]

Vice President Joe Biden. Good to be with you, Mr. President. [*Laughter*]

The President. Today, after almost a century of trying, today, after over a year of debate, today, after all the votes have been tallied, health insurance reform becomes law in the United States of America—today.

It is fitting that Congress passed this historic legislation this week. For as we mark the turning of spring, we also mark a new season in America. In a few moments, when I sign this bill, all of the overheated rhetoric over reform will finally confront the reality of reform.

And while the Senate still has a last round of improvements to make on this historic legislation—and these are improvements I'm confident they will make swiftly—the bill I'm signing will set in motion reforms that generations of Americans have fought for and marched for and hungered to see.

It will take 4 years to implement fully many of these reforms, because we need to implement them responsibly. We need to get this right. But a host of desperately needed reforms will take effect right away.

This year, we'll start offering tax credits to about 4 million small business men and women to help them cover the cost of insurance for their employees. That happens this year.

This year, tens of thousands of uninsured Americans with preexisting conditions, the parents of children who have a preexisting condition, will finally be able to purchase the coverage they need. That happens this year.

This year, insurance companies will no longer be able to drop people's coverage when they get sick or place—[*applause*]. They won't be able to place lifetime limits or restrictive annual limits on the amount of care they can receive.

This year, all new insurance plans will be required to offer free preventive care. And this year, young adults will be able to stay on their parents' policies until they're 26 years old. That happens this year.

And this year, seniors who fall in the coverage gap known as the doughnut hole will start getting some help. They'll receive $250 to help pay for prescriptions, and that will, over time, fill in the doughnut hole. And I want seniors to know, despite what some have said, these reforms will not cut your guaranteed benefits. In fact, under this law, Americans on Medicare will receive free preventive care without copayments or deductibles. That begins this year.

Once this reform is implemented, health insurance exchanges will be created, a competitive marketplace where uninsured people and small businesses will finally be able to purchase affordable, quality insurance. They will be able to be part of a big pool and get the same good deal that Members of Congress get. That's what's going to happen under this reform. And when this exchange is up and running millions of people will get tax breaks to help them afford coverage, which represents the largest middle class tax cut for health care in history. That's what this reform is about.

This legislation will also lower costs for families and for businesses and for the Federal Government, reducing our deficit by over $1 trillion in the next two decades. It is paid for, it is fiscally responsible, and it will help lift a decades-long drag on our economy. That's part of what all of you together worked on and made happen.

That our generation is able to succeed in passing this reform is a testament to the persistence and the character of the American people, who championed this cause, who mobilized, who organized, who believed that people who love this country can change it. It's also a testament to the historic leadership and uncommon courage of the men and women of the United States Congress, who've taken their lumps during this difficult debate. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Yes, we did. [*Laughter*] But we're still standing.

The President. You know, there are few tougher jobs in politics or Government than leading one of our legislative Chambers. In each Chamber, there are men and women who come from different places and face different pressures, who reach different conclusions about the same things and feel deeply concerned about different things.

And by necessity, leaders have to speak to those different concerns. It isn't always tidy; it is almost never easy. But perhaps the greatest and most difficult challenge is to cobble together out of those differences the sense of common interest and common purpose that's required to advance the dreams of all people, especially in a country as large and diverse as ours.

And we are blessed by leaders in each Chamber who not only do their jobs very well, but who never lost sight of that larger mission. They didn't play for the short term; they didn't play to the polls or to politics. One of the best Speakers the House of Representatives have ever had, Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Audience members. Nancy! Nancy! Nancy!

The President. One of the best majority leaders the Senate has ever had, Mr. Harry Reid.

To all of the terrific committee chairs, all the Members of Congress who did what was difficult but did what was right and passed health care reform, not just this generation of Americans will thank you, but the next generation of Americans will thank you.

And of course, this victory was also made possible by the painstaking work of members of this administration, including our outstanding Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, and one of the unsung heroes of this effort, an extraordinary woman who led the reform effort from the White House, Nancy-Ann DeParle. Where's Nancy?

Today I'm signing this reform bill into law on behalf of my mother, who argued with insurance companies even as she battled cancer in her final days.

I'm signing it for Ryan Smith, who's here today. He runs a small business with five employees. He's trying to do the right thing, paying half the cost of coverage for his workers. This bill will help him afford that coverage.

I'm signing it for 11-year-old Marcelas Owens, who's also here. Marcelas lost his mom to an illness. And she didn't have insurance and couldn't afford the care that she needed. So in her memory, he has told her story across America so that no other children have to go through what his family has experienced.

I'm signing it for Natoma Canfield. Natoma had to give up her health coverage after her rates were jacked up by more than 40 percent. She was terrified that an illness would mean she'd lose the house that her parents built, so she gave up her insurance. And now she's lying in a hospital bed, as we speak, faced with just such an illness, praying that she can somehow afford to get well without insurance. Natoma's family is here today because Natoma can't be.

And her sister Connie is here. Connie, stand up.

I'm signing this bill for all the leaders who took up this cause through the generations, from Teddy Roosevelt to Franklin Roosevelt, from Harry Truman to Lyndon Johnson, from Bill and Hillary Clinton to one of the deans who's been fighting this so long, John Dingell, to Senator Ted Kennedy—and it's fitting that Ted's widow, Vicki, is here—[*applause*]—it's fitting that Teddy's widow, Vicki, is here and his niece Caroline, his son Patrick, whose vote helped make this reform a reality.

I remember seeing Ted walk through that door in a summit in this room a year ago, one of his last public appearances. And it was hard for him to make it. But he was confident that we would do the right thing.

Our presence here today is remarkable and improbable. With all the punditry, all of the lobbying, all of the game-playing that passes for governing in Washington, it's been easy at times to doubt our ability to do such a big thing, such a complicated thing, to wonder if there are limits to what we as a people can still achieve. It's easy to succumb to the sense of cynicism about what's possible in this country.

But today we are affirming that essential truth, a truth every generation is called to rediscover for itself, that we are not a nation that scales back its aspirations. We are not a nation that falls prey to doubt or mistrust. We don't fall prey to fear. We are not a nation that does what's easy. That's not who we are. That's not how we got here.

We are a nation that faces its challenges and accepts its responsibilities. We are a nation that does what is hard, what is necessary, what is right. Here in this country, we shape our own destiny. That is what we do. That is who we are. That is what makes us the United States of America.

And we have now just enshrined, as soon as I sign this bill, the core principle that everybody should have some basic security when it comes to their health care. And it is an extraordinary achievement that has happened because of all of you and all the advocates all across the country.

So thank you. Thank you. God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America. [*Applause*] Thank you. Thank you.

All right. I would now like to call up to stage some of the Members of Congress who helped make this day possible and some of the Americans who will benefit from these reforms. And we're going to sign this bill.

This is going to take a little while. I've got to use every pen, so it's going to take a really long time. [*Laughter*] I didn't practice. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

We are done.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:29 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Nancy-Ann DeParle, Director, White House Office of Health Reform; and Connie Anderson, sister of Natoma Canfield. H.R. 3590, approved March 23, was assigned Public Law No. 111–148. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden, who introduced the President.

Remarks on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
March 23, 2010

Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat.

We wanted to do this twice—[*laughter*]—because there are so many people we have to thank. And as I look around the room, we've got leaders of labor who helped to make this happen, we've got ordinary folks who knocked on doors and made phone calls at the last minute to get this thing over the top. My extraordinary members of my Cabinet—we've still got some additional Members of Congress who helped lead the charge on this. There's my staff, who I see are still here. [*Laughter*] They—at any given moment, I thought they were going to quit—[*laughter*]—but they just

stuck it out with me. So the main purpose here is to say thank you, and thank you on behalf of the American people.

After a century of striving, after a year of debate, after a historic vote, health care reform is no longer an unmet promise, it is the law of the land. It is the law of the land.

And although it may be my signature that's affixed to the bottom of this bill, it was your work, your commitment, your unyielding hope that made this victory possible. When the special interests deployed an army of lobbyists, an onslaught of negative ads to preserve the status quo, you didn't give up. You hit the phones, and you took to the streets. You mobilized, and you organized. You turned up the pressure, and you kept up the fight.

When the pundits were obsessing over who was up and who was down, you never lost sight of what was right and what was wrong. You knew this wasn't about the fortunes of a party, this was about the future of our country. And when the opposition said this just wasn't the right time, you didn't want to wait another year or another decade or another generation for reform. You felt the fierce urgency of now.

You met the lies with truth. You met cynicism with conviction. Most of all, you met fear with a force that's a lot more powerful, and that is faith in America. You met it with hope.

Despite decades in which Washington failed to tackle our toughest challenges, despite the smallness of so much of what passes for politics these days, despite those who said that progress was impossible, you made people believe that people who love this country can still change it. So this victory is not mine, it is your victory. It's a victory for the United States of America.

For 2 years on the campaign trail, and for the past year as we've worked to reform our system of health insurance, it's been folks like you who have propelled this movement and kept us fixed on what was at stake in this fight. And rarely has a day gone by that I haven't heard from somebody personally—whether in a letter, or an e-mail, or at a town hall—who's reminded me of why it was so important that we not give up, who reminded me why we could not quit.

I heard from Ryan Smith, who's here today, and runs a small business with five employees. He is trying to do the right thing, paying for half of the cost of coverage for his workers. But as his premiums keep on going up and up and up, he's worried he's going to have to stop offering health care for his people. But because of this bill, he is now going to be getting tax credits that allow him to do what he knows is the right thing to do, and that's going to be true for millions of employers all across America.

I heard the story of 11-year-old Marcelas Owens, who's right here, looking sharp in his—[*applause*]. He and I made sure to coordinate our ties today. [*Laughter*] Yes, it looks good. [*Laughter*]

Marcelas is a wonderful young man, and he lost his mom to illness. And she didn't have insurance and couldn't afford the care that she needed. So in her memory, Marcelas, 11 years old, has told her story across America so that no other children have to go through what his family has experienced. That's why we don't quit.

I heard from folks like Natoma Canfield, who had to give up her health coverage after her rates were jacked up by more than 40 percent. And she was terrified that an illness would mean she'd lose the house that her parent built, but she also knew that if she was burdened by these huge premiums, that she wouldn't be able to pay the mortgage. So she finally decided not to keep her health insurance. And she's now lying in a hospital bed, as we speak, faced with just such an illness, and she's praying that she can somehow afford to get well. And her sister Connie is here today. And it's because of Natoma's family that we could not quit.

I've met people like Ashley Baia, who worked for my campaign. Where's Ashley? She's around here somewhere, I know she is. There she is, right in front. She just doesn't like waving. [*Laughter*] Ashley decided to get involved with our campaign a couple of years ago because her own mother lost her job and with it her health insurance when she got sick. And they had to file bankruptcy. And so Ashley worked tirelessly, not to get me elected, but to solve a problem that millions of families across the country were facing.

Each of these Americans made their voices heard. And it's because of them, so many others, so many of you, that real, meaningful

change is coming to the United States of America. It is because of you that we did not quit. It's because of you that Congress did not quit. It's because of you that I did not quit. It's because of you.

Now, let me tell you what change looks like, because those fighting change are still out there, still making a lot of noise—[*laughter*]—about what this reform means. So I want the American people to understand it and look it up for yourself. Go on our web site, whitehouse.gov, or go to any credible news outlet's web site and look in terms of what reform will mean for you. [*Laughter*]

I said this once or twice, but it bears repeating: If you like your current insurance, you will keep your current insurance. No Government takeover, nobody is changing what you've got if you're happy with it. If you like your doctor, you will be able to keep your doctor. In fact, more people will keep their doctors because your coverage will be more secure and more stable than it was before I signed this legislation.

And now that this legislation is passed, you don't have to take my word for it. You'll be able to see it in your own lives. I heard one of the Republican leaders say this was going to be Armageddon. Well, 2 months from now, 6 months from now, you can check it out. We'll look around—[*laughter*]—and we'll see. You don't have to take my word for it.

So what works in our system won't change. And a lot of people are happy with the health care that they've got, and that won't change because of this legislation. Here's what will change, and here's what will change right away.

This year, we'll start offering tax credits to about 4 million small businesses to help them cover the cost of coverage. And that means that folks like Ryan will immediately get a tax break so that he can better afford the coverage he's already providing for his employees. And who knows, because of that tax break, he may decide to hire a couple more folks in his small business, because of this legislation.

This year, tens of thousands of uninsured Americans with a preexisting condition and parents whose children have a preexisting condition will finally be able to purchase the coverage they need. And that means folks like Natoma Canfield will have access to affordable insurance. That happens this year.

This year, insurance companies will no longer be able to drop people's coverage when they get sick or place lifetime limits or restrictive annual limits on the amount of care they can receive. This year, all new insurance plans will be required to offer free preventive care. And this year, young adults will be able to stay on their parents' policies until they're 26 years old. That all happens this year.

This year, seniors who fall in the coverage gap known as the doughnut hole will get some help to help pay for prescription drugs. And I want seniors to know, despite what some have said, these reforms will not cut your guaranteed benefits. Let me repeat that: They will not cut your guaranteed benefits, period. I'd be wary of anybody who claimed otherwise.

So these are the reforms that take effect right away. These reforms won't give the Government more control over your health care. They certainly won't give the insurance companies more control over your health care. These reforms give you more control over your health care. And that's only the beginning.

That's only the beginning. After more than a decade, we finally renewed the Indian Health Care Improvement Act. And the other changes I'm signing into law will take several years to implement fully, but that's because this is a difficult, complex issue and we want to get it right.

One of these reforms is the creation of a health insurance exchange. This is one of the most important reforms—and by the way, originally, I should point out, a Republican idea. Imagine that. [*Laughter*]

The idea is, is that right now there are a lot of people out there buying health insurance on their own or small businesses buying health insurance on their own. They don't work for a big company, they're not part of a big pool, so they have no leverage; they've got no bargaining power with insurance companies. But now what we're going to do is create exchanges all across the country where uninsured people,

small businesses, they're going to be able to purchase affordable, quality insurance. They will be part of a big pool, just like Federal employees are part of a big pool. They'll have the same choice of private health insurance that Members of Congress get for themselves. That's going to happen as a consequence of this legislation.

And when this exchange is up and running, not only because of better bargaining power will they see their premiums reduced, will people get a better deal, but millions of people who still can't afford it are going to get tax breaks so they can afford coverage. And this represents the largest middle class tax cut for health care in our history. And it's going to mean that millions of people can get health care that don't have it currently.

Now, for those of us who fought so hard for these reforms and believe in them so deeply, I have to remind you our job is not finished. We're going to have to see to it that these reforms are administered fairly and responsibly. And this includes rooting out waste and fraud and abuse in the system. That's how we'll extend the life of Medicare and bring down health care costs for families and businesses and governments. And in fact, it is through these reforms that we achieve the biggest reduction in our long-term deficits since the Balanced Budget Act of the 1990s.

So for all those folks out there who are talking about being fiscal hawks and didn't do much when they were in power, let's just remind them that according to the Congressional Budget Office, this represents over a trillion dollars of deficit reduction, but it's being done in a smart way.

And for those who've been suspicious of reform—and there are a lot of wonderful folks out there who, with all the noise, got concerned because of the misinformation that has marred this debate—I just repeat: Don't take my word for it. Go to our web site, whitehouse.gov; go to the web sites of major news outlets out there; find out how reform will affect you. And I'm confident that you will like what you see: a commonsense approach that maintains the private insurance system, but makes it work for everybody; makes it work not just for the insurance companies, but makes it work for you.

So that's what health reform is all about. Now, as long as a road that this has been, we all know our journey is far from over. There's still the work to do to rebuild this economy. There's still work to do to spur on hiring. There's work to do to improve our schools and make sure every child has a decent education. There's still work to do to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. There's more work to do to provide greater economic security to a middle class that has been struggling for a decade.

So this victory does not erase the many serious challenges we face as a nation. Those challenges have been allowed to linger for years, even decades, and we're not going to solve them all overnight.

But as we tackle all these other challenges that we face, as we continue on this journey, we can take our next steps with new confidence, with a new wind at our backs. Because we know it's still possible to do big things in America. Because we know it's still possible to rise above the skepticism, to rise above the cynicism, to rise above the fear. Because we know it's still possible to fulfill our duty to one another and to future generations.

So yes, this has been a difficult 2 years. There will be difficult days ahead. But let us always remember the lesson of this day and the lesson of history: that we, as a people, do not shrink from a challenge, we overcome it; we don't shrink from our responsibilities, we embrace it; we don't fear the future, we shape the future. That's what we do. That's who we are. That makes us the United States of America.

God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:39 p.m. at the Department of the Interior. In his remarks, he referred to Connie Anderson, sister of Natoma Canfield; and Rep. John A. Boehner. He also referred to H.R. 3590, approved March 23, which was assigned Public Law No. 111–148. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden, who introduced the President.

Statement on the Reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act
March 23, 2010

Earlier today I signed into law the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, the health insurance reform bill passed by Congress. In addition to reducing our deficit, making health care affordable for tens of millions of Americans, and enacting some of the toughest insurance reforms in history, this bill also permanently reauthorizes the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, which was first approved by Congress in 1976.

As a Senator, I cosponsored this Act back in 2007 because I believe it is unacceptable that Native American communities still face gaping health care disparities. Our responsibility to provide health services to American Indians and Alaska Natives derives from the nation-to-nation relationship between the Federal and tribal governments. And today with this bill, we have taken a critical step in fulfilling that responsibility by modernizing the Indian health care system and improving access to health care for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

NOTE: H.R. 3590, approved March 23, was assigned Public Law No. 111–148.

Statement on the Situation in Cuba
March 24, 2010

Recent events in Cuba, including the tragic death of Orlando Zapata Tamayo, the repression visited upon *las Damas de Blanco*, and the intensified harassment of those who dare to give voice to the desires of their fellow Cubans, are deeply disturbing.

These events underscore that instead of embracing an opportunity to enter a new era, Cuban authorities continue to respond to the aspirations of the Cuban people with a clenched fist.

Today I join my voice with brave individuals across Cuba and a growing chorus around the world in calling for an end to the repression, for the immediate, unconditional release of all political prisoners in Cuba, and for respect for the basic rights of the Cuban people.

During the course of the past year, I have taken steps to reach out to the Cuban people and to signal my desire to seek a new era in relations between the Governments of the United States and Cuba. I remain committed to supporting the simple desire of the Cuban people to freely determine their future and to enjoy the rights and freedoms that define the Americas and that should be universal to all human beings.

NOTE: The statement referred to Cuban dissident Orlando Zapata Tamayo, who died in prison on February 23 following a hunger strike; and *las Damas de Blanco*, a human rights group comprised of female relatives of Cuban political prisoners. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this statement.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Amendments
March 24, 2010

Dear Madam Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed amendments to Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 proposals in my FY 2011 Budget. Included are amendments for the Departments of Agricul-

ture, Defense, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, State, and the Treasury, as well as the United States Agency for International Development and the Broadcasting Board of Governors. These amendments would provide for costs associated with relief and reconstruction support for Haiti following the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010, including reimbursement of obligations that have already been incurred by these agencies.

The proposed totals for FY 2010 in my FY 2011 Budget would increase by $2.8 billion as a result of these amendments.

This request responds to urgent and essential needs. Therefore, I request these proposals be considered as emergency requirements. The details of these amendments are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa
March 25, 2010

The President. Hello, Iowa! Are you fired up? Oh, it is good to be back in Iowa. I got to take off my jacket when I'm in Iowa. It is good to be back in Iowa. It's a little colder than it is in DC, I got to admit. [*Laughter*] But I can feel spring coming.

I want to make a couple of acknowledgements. First of all, University of Iowa President Dr. Sally Mason and the entire Hawkeye community—thanks for hosting us. The outstanding Governor of the great State of Iowa, Chet Culver, and First Lady Mari Culver; there he is back there.

A couple of great friends: Lieutenant Governor Patty Judge; the cochairs of my campaign here in Iowa, Attorney General Tom Miller and Treasurer Mike Fitzgerald. The former Governor of Iowa, who's now, I think, going to end up being one of the greatest Secretaries of Agriculture in history, Tom Vilsack's in the house.

I want to acknowledge Iowa City Mayor Matt Hayek. They're—the entire Iowa delegation could not be here because they are still busy finishing business, crossing "t's" and dotting "i's" in Washington. But I want every single person to know that this celebration would not be happening if it were not for your Members of Congress: Leonard Boswell, Bruce Braley, your own personal Congressman, Dave Loebsack, and Senator Tom Harkin.

Now, thank you, Secretary Sebelius, for the introduction, but more importantly, for all the amazing and tireless work that you've done to make health care reform a reality. I too feel your pain, because in my bracket—[*laughter*]—I had Kansas winning it all. [*Laughter*] I feel a little bitter. [*Laughter*] The president of Northern Iowa came here, and he was just—big smile, he was gloating—[*laughter*]. Well, I now—I'm sold. I want to congratulate all the Northern Iowa fans in this part of the State on their big win. And since you ruined my bracket, I'm rooting for you now. [*Laughter*] I want you to just go ahead and take it and go all the way.

I also want to start things off—oh, there's one other thing. Some of you know that I have a military aide that travels with me wherever I go. This is one of the things the President does, is carries a big satchel with all kinds of important stuff in there. And the military aide I have with me today is a guy named Lieutenant Colonel Dave Kalinske. And Dave was strong safety for the Hawkeyes. There he is right there; there's Dave Kalinske—strong safety. See, that briefcase is big, so you've got to have a former strong safety carrying it. [*Laughter*]

I want to start off by telling folks here how inspired that I've been by your continued resilience in the wake of the floods that devastated this region a few years back. And I remember traveling here right after they happened and how tough things were.

I know the rebuilding's been difficult, but you should know that you always have a committed partner in this administration to support the road to recovery. And we know that Iowa City's going to be as good as new and better;

Cedar Rapids, all across the State, we're seeing that rebuilding take place.

So it's just good to be back in Iowa. This is the State that first believed in our campaign. When all the pundits had written us off, when we were down in the polls, this is the State that inspired us to keep on going, even when the path was uncertain. And because of you, this is the place where change began.

Because 3 years ago I came here to this campus to make a promise. Just a few months into our campaign, I stood at the University of Iowa hospital right around the corner, and I promised that by the end of my first term in office, I would sign legislation to reform our health insurance system.

On Tuesday, after a year of debate, a century of trying, after so many of you shared your stories and your heartaches and your hopes, that promise was finally fulfilled. And today, health insurance reform is the law of the land all across America. Just——

Audience members. Yes we did! Yes we did! Yes we did!

The President. Yes we did. Yes we did. Just like the campaign that led us here, this historic change didn't start in Washington. It began in places like Iowa City, places just like this, with Americans just like you.

It began when people had the courage to stand up in town hall meetings and talk about how insurance companies were denying their families coverage because of a preexisting condition. It began when folks wrote letters about how premium hikes of 40 and 50 and 100 percent were forcing them to give up their insurance. It began when countless small-business owners and families and doctors shared stories about a health care system that works better for the insurance industry than it does for the American people.

So this is your victory, because when the special interests sent an army of lobbyists to Congress, they blanketed the airwaves with millions of dollars of negative ads, you mobilized, and you organized, and you refused to give up. And when the pundits were obsessing over, who's up and who's down and how's this affecting the Obama administration and what's going on over in the House and—you never lost sight of what was right and what was wrong. You knew this was not about the fortunes of one party, this was about the future of our country. And today, because of what you did, that future looks stronger and more hopeful and brighter than it has in some time—because of you.

Three years ago, we made a promise. That promise has been kept. Of course, over the last year, there's been a lot of misinformation spread about health care reform. There's been plenty of fearmongering, plenty of overheated rhetoric. You turn on the news, you'll see the same folks are still shouting about, there's going to be a end of the world because this bill passed. [*Laughter*] I'm not exaggerating. Leaders of the Republican Party, they called the passage of this bill "Armageddon." [*Laughter*] Armageddon. "End of freedom as we know it."

So after I signed the bill, I looked around to see if there were—[*laughter*]—any asteroids falling or some cracks opening up in the Earth. [*Laughter*] It turned out, it was a nice day. [*Laughter*] Birds were chirping. Folks were strolling down the Mall. People still have their doctors.

From this day forward, all of the cynics, all the naysayers, they're going to have to confront the reality of what this reform is and what it isn't. They'll have to finally acknowledge this isn't a Government takeover of our health care system. They'll see that if Americans like their doctor, they'll be keeping their doctor. You like your plan? You'll be keeping your plan. No one is taking that away from you. Three months from now, 6 months from now, you're going to look around. You're going to be sitting in a doctor's office reading through the old People magazines, and—[*laughter*]—you'll say, hey, this is same doctor, same plan. It wasn't Armageddon.

What this reform does is build on the system of private health insurance that we already have. So does that mean that it's going to solve every health care problem that we have? No. But it finally tells——

[*At this point, there was a disruption in the audience.*]

The President. Oops, it looks like somebody may have fainted. That happens sometimes in the crowd. Just give them some space. If the medics can make sure to check on them—in the meantime, just make sure that they've got some air. All right? And if anybody has some water down there, that'd be great. They'll be all right.

So—but here's what the bill does: It finally tells the insurance companies that in exchange for all the new customers they're about to get, they've got to start playing by a new set of rules that treats everybody honestly and treats everybody fairly. The days of the insurance industry running roughshod over the American people are over.

So if you already have insurance, this reform will make it more secure and more affordable. If you can't afford insurance right now or if you've been denied coverage—and I'll bet there are some folks here who don't have insurance or can't afford it or have been denied coverage—you're going to finally be able to get it. Costs will come down for families and businesses and the Federal Government, reducing our deficit by more than $1 trillion over the next two decades. That's what reform is going to do.

Now, it's going to take about 4 years to implement this entire plan, because we've got to do it responsibly, and we need to do it right. So I just want to be clear: That means that health care costs won't go down overnight; not all the changes are going to be in place; there are still going to be aspects of the health care system that are very frustrating over the next several years.

But we have built into law all sorts of measures that in the years to come, health care inflation, which has been rising about three times as fast as people's wages, is finally going to start slowing down. We'll start reducing the waste in the system, from unnecessary tests to unwarranted insurance subsidies, so that over time, Americans are going to save money.

And meanwhile, there are a set of reforms that begin to take into effect this year, so I want to talk about this. This year, millions of small-business owners will be eligible for tax credits that will help them cover the cost of insurance for their employees. This year, millions of small businesses will benefit.

So let me talk to you about what this means for a business like your own Prairie Lights bookstore downtown. This is a small business that's been offering coverage to their full-time employees for the last 20 years. Last year, their premiums went up 35 percent, which made it a lot harder for them to offer the same coverage. On Tuesday, I was joined at the bill signing by Ryan Smith, who runs a small business with five employees. His premiums are going up too. He's worried about having to stop offering health insurance to his workers.

So starting now, small-business owners like Ryan and the folks at Prairie Light, they're going to have the security of knowing that they'll qualify for a tax credit that covers up to 35 percent of their employees' health insurance. Starting today—starting today, small-business owners—[*applause*]—so starting today, small-business owners can sit down at the end of the week, look at their expenses, and they can begin calculating how much money they're going to save. And maybe they can even use those savings to not only provide insurance, but also create jobs. This health care tax credit is projobs, it is probusiness, and it starts this year, and it's starting because of you.

Starting this year, tens of thousands of uninsured Americans with a preexisting condition and parents whose children have a preexisting condition will finally be able to purchase the coverage they need.

On Tuesday, right after I signed the bill, I met David Gallagher, whose daughter Lauren had written me a letter last year. And when Lauren's mom lost her job, the entire family lost their health insurance. And when they tried to get new insurance, David was denied coverage because he once had a complication-free hernia surgery.

So Lauren's been worried sick about what would happen if her father became ill or injured. But now, because of this reform, David Gallagher can finally have access to health insurance again. That starts this year, because of you and the work that you did.

This year, insurance companies will no longer be able to drop people's coverage when they get sick or place lifetime limits or restrictive annual limits on the amount of care they can receive.

This year, all new insurance plans will be required to offer free preventive care. And by the way, for all the students who are here today, starting this year, if you don't have insurance or if you're about to graduate and you're not sure what your next job's going to be or there's a little gap between getting that job with insurance, all new plans and some current ones will allow you to stay on your parent's insurance policy until you're 26 years old—starting this year. Because as you start your lives and your careers, the last thing you should worry about is whether you go broke just because you get sick.

This year, for the seniors who are in the audience, if you fall in the coverage gap known as the doughnut hole, you're going to receive $250 to help pay for prescriptions, which will be the first step towards closing that doughnut hole, that gap, completely. And I want seniors to know that despite what some have said, these reforms will not cut your guaranteed benefits. In fact, under this law, Americans on Medicare will receive free preventive care without copayments and deductibles.

Darlyne Neff is here today. She's a breast cancer survivor. She's fought her heart out for reform over the last few years. Today, the preventive care she needs will finally be covered without charge. That's what this reform will do. That's what's happening because of you.

And once this reform is implemented, then health insurance exchanges are going to be created. This is the core aspect of this bill that is going to be so important to Americans who are looking for coverage. Basically, we set up a competitive marketplace where people without insurance, small businesses, people who are having to pay through the teeth because they're just buying insurance on their own, you're—maybe you're self-employed, you're finally going to be able to purchase quality, affordable health insurance, because you're going to be part of a big pool—by the way, with Members of Congress. So you will be able to get the same good deal that they're getting, because if you're paying their salary, you should have health insurance that's at least as good as theirs.

That's what's going to happen in the next few years. And when this exchange is up and running, millions of people are going to be getting tax breaks to help them afford coverage. And the credits add up to the largest middle class tax cut for health care in history. So this is a—that's the basic aspects of reform.

Audience member. What about the public option?

The President. That's not in it.

Audience member. Why not?

The President. Because we couldn't get it through Congress, that's why. So they——

[*There was a disruption in the audience.*]

The President. Let's—but—let's—there's no need to shout, young man, no need to shout.

Thirty-two people are—32 million people are going to have health insurance because of this legislation. That's what's this—this is what it's about. All right? So that's what's going to happen.

Now, I want to just make this point. This legislation's not perfect, as you just heard. [*Laughter*] This young man is dissatisfied with an aspect of it, which is fine. I mean, that's part of what democracy is about. But what this is, is a historic step to enshrine the principle that everybody gets health care coverage in this country, every single person.

And it's absolutely true—it's absolutely true, this is a middle-of-the-road bill. This isn't single-payer, which some people wanted. It's also not what the Republicans were looking for, which was basically to deregulate the insurance industry, arguing that somehow this would cut down costs, something that defies the experience of everybody who's dealt with an insurance company out there. [*Laughter*]

So yes, this is a commonsense bill. It doesn't do everything that everybody wants, but it moves us in the direction of universal health care coverage in this country, and that's why everybody here fought so hard for it.

This is the reform that some folks in Washington are still hollering about, still shouting about. Now that they passed it—now that we passed it, they're already promising to repeal it. They're actually going to run on a platform of repeal in November. You've been hearing that. And my attitude is, go for it.

If these Congressmen in Washington want to come here in Iowa and tell small-business owners that they plan to take away their tax credits and essentially raise their taxes, be my guest. If they want to look Lauren Gallagher in the eye and tell her they plan to take away her father's health insurance, that's their right. They want to make Darlyne Neff pay more money for her checkups, her mammograms, they can run on that platform. This young man out here thinks this is a bad bill, he can run to repeal it. If they want to have that fight, we can have it. Because I don't believe that the American people are going to put the insurance industry back in the driver's seat. We've already been there. We're not going back. This country's moving forward.

The road to this victory, Iowa, has been long, it has been difficult. It's a struggle that a lot of brave Americans have waged for years. For others, like our friend Ted Kennedy, it's a struggle that was waged for nearly a lifetime.

But what this struggle has taught us about ourselves and about this country is so much bigger than any one issue, because it's reminded us what so many of us learned all those months ago on a cold January night here in Iowa, and that's that change is never easy, but it's always possible. It comes not from the halls of power, but from the hearts of our people. Amid setbacks, it requires perseverance. Amid calls for delay, it requires the fierce urgency of now. In the face of unrelenting cynicism, it requires unyielding hope.

And when I came here 3 years ago, I told the story of when Lyndon Johnson stood with Harry Truman and signed Medicare into law. That wasn't perfect either. I'm sure there was somebody who was dissatisfied with it at the time. And as he looked out over the crowd in Independence, Missouri, that day, he said, "History shapes men, but it is necessary—it is a necessary faith of leadership that men can shape history."

What this generation has proven today is that we still have the power to shape history. In the United States of America, it is still a necessary faith that our destiny is written by us, not for us. Our future is what we make it. Our future is what we make it. Look, this is not the end of difficult times for America. From creating jobs to reducing deficits to making sure every child has a decent education, we still face enormous challenges in this country. And as we meet those challenges, we're going to face more resistance. We're going to face more doubt. We're going to face more cynicism. We're going to hear more voices who will warn us that we're reaching too far, that we're going too fast, who are going to tell us that we can't wait—who are going to just make wild accusations about what we're trying to do.

And when that happens, we've got to remember the promise that we've already fulfilled and the people who fulfilled it and the generations before us who made it possible. We're going to have to respond with the creed that continues to define the character of this country we love—and it's my favorite memory of Iowa—that creed that says, yes we can.

Iowa, yes we did, because of you. And it's because of you that we are going to keep on going to make sure that we fulfill every promise to every child in this country for a brighter future.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:08 p.m. at the Field House. In his remarks, he referred to Benjamin J. Allen, president, University of Northern Iowa.

Remarks on the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
March 26, 2010

Good morning, everybody. I just concluded a productive phone call with President Medvedev, and I'm pleased to announce that after a year of intense negotiations, the United States and Russia have agreed to the most comprehensive arms control agreement in nearly two decades.

Since taking office, one of my highest priorities has been addressing the threat posed by nuclear weapons to the American people. And that's why, last April in Prague, I stated America's intention to pursue the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons, a goal that's been embraced by Presidents like John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan. While this aspiration will not be reached in the near future, I put forward a comprehensive agenda to pursue it, to stop the spread of these weapons, to secure vulnerable nuclear materials from terrorists, and to reduce nuclear arsenals. A fundamental part of that effort was the negotiation of a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia.

Furthermore, since I took office, I've been committed to a reset of our relationship with Russia. When the United States and Russia can cooperate effectively, it advances the mutual interests of our two nations and the security and prosperity of the wider world. We've so far already worked together on Afghanistan. We've coordinated our economic efforts through the G–20. We are working together to pressure Iran to meet its international obligations. And today we have reached agreement on one of my administration's top national security priorities, a pivotal new arms control agreement.

In many ways, nuclear weapons represent both the darkest days of the cold war and the most troubling threats of our time. Today we've taken another step forward by—in leaving behind the legacy of the 20th century, while building a more secure future for our children. We've turned words into action. We've made progress that is clear and concrete. And we've demonstrated the importance of American leadership and American partnership on behalf of our own security and the world's.

Broadly speaking, the new START Treaty makes progress in several areas. It cuts, by about a third, the nuclear weapons that the United States and Russia will deploy. It significantly reduces missiles and launchers. It puts in place a strong and effective verification regime. And it maintains the flexibility that we need to protect and advance our national security and to guarantee our unwavering commitment to the security of our allies.

With this agreement, the United States and Russia, the two largest nuclear powers in the world, also send a clear signal that we intend to lead. By upholding our own commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, we strengthen our global efforts to stop the spread of these weapons and to ensure that other nations meet their own responsibilities.

I'm pleased that, almost 1 year to the day after my last trip to Prague, the Czech Republic, a close friend and ally of the United States, has agreed to host President Medvedev and me on April 8 as we sign this historic treaty. The following week, I look forward to hosting leaders from over 40 nations here in Washington as we convene a summit to address how we can secure vulnerable nuclear materials so that they never fall into the hands of terrorists. And later this spring, the world will come together in New York to discuss how we can build on this progress and continue to strengthen the global nonproliferation regime.

Through all these efforts, cooperation between the United States and Russia will be essential. I want to thank President Medvedev for his personal and sustained leadership as we worked through this agreement. We've had the opportunity to meet many times over the last year and we both agree that we can serve the interests of our people through close cooperation.

I also want to thank my national security team, who did so much work to make this day possible. That includes the leaders with me here today: Secretary Clinton, Secretary

Gates, and Admiral Mullen. And it includes a tireless negotiating team. It took patience, it took perseverance, but we never gave up. And as a result, the United States will be more secure and the American people will be safer.

Finally, I look forward to continuing to work closely with Congress in the months ahead. There's a long tradition of bipartisan leadership on arms control. Presidents of both parties have recognized the necessity of securing and reducing these weapons. Statesmen like George Shultz, Sam Nunn, Henry Kissinger, and Bill Perry have been outspoken in their support of more assertive action. Earlier this week, I met with my friends John Kerry and Dick Lugar to discuss this Treaty, and throughout the morning, my administration will be consulting Senators from both parties as we prepare for what I hope will be a strong, bipartisan support to ratify the new START Treaty.

With that, I'm going to leave you in the able hands of my Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, as well as Secretary of Defense Gates and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mike Mullen. So I want to thank all of you for your attention.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:47 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Secretaries of State George P. Shultz and Henry A. Kissinger; former Sen. Samuel A. Nunn; and former Secretary of Defense William J. Perry.

Statement on Bangladesh Independence Day
March 26, 2010

I join the American people in sending my best wishes to those abroad and here at home that are celebrating Bangladesh Independence Day. Thirty-nine years ago, the people of Bangladesh earned their independence, and since then, our two nations have shared a commitment to democratic values and created an enduring friendship. Here at home, those Americans that can trace their roots to Bangladesh continue to be active in all industries and are an important part of our communities. On this independence day, I wish them all the best.

The President's Weekly Address
March 27, 2010

This was a momentous week for America. It was a week in which, together, we took bold new steps toward restoring economic security for our middle class and rebuilding a stronger foundation for our future. It was a week in which some of the change that generations have hoped for and worked for finally became reality in America.

It began with the passage of comprehensive health insurance reform that will begin to end the worst practices of the insurance industry, rein in our exploding deficits, and, over time, finally offer millions of families and small businesses quality, affordable care and the security and peace of mind that comes with it. And it ended with Congress casting a final vote on another piece of legislation that accomplished what we've been talking about for decades, legislation that will reform our student loan system and help us educate all Americans to compete and win in the 21st century.

Year after year, we've seen billions of taxpayer dollars handed out as subsidies to bankers and middlemen who handle Federal student loans, when that money should have gone to advancing the dreams of our students and working families. And yet attempts to fix this problem and reform this program were thwarted by special interests that fought tooth and nail to preserve their exclusive giveaway. But this time, we said, we would be different. We said we'd stand up to the special interests and stand up for the interests of students and families. That's what happened this week. I commend all the Senators and Representatives who did the right thing.

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 outstanding 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,

commander, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing. Thank you all for your outstanding service. Give them a big round of applause.

Thank you for the unbelievable welcome. I know this was on a little bit of short notice.

Audience member. No worries.

The President. Say no worries. [*Laughter*] It is great to be here at Bagram, and it's great to see all the services. We've got Air Force, we got Army, we've got Navy, we've got some marines in the house. And we've got a lot of civilians here too, who are making an outstanding contribution to this effort.

And I'm honored to be joined by America's outstanding civilian-military leadership team here in Afghanistan, Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, who's doing outstanding work, and the commander of our 43-nation coalition, General Stan McChrystal. The two of them together have paired up to do an extraordinarily difficult task, but they are doing it extraordinarily well, and we are proud of them. Please give your outstanding team a big round of applause. They've got my full confidence and my full support.

We're also joined by troops from some of our coalition partners, because this is not simply an American mission or even just a NATO mission. Al Qaida and their extremist allies are a threat to the people of Afghanistan and the threat to the people of America, but they're also a threat to people all around the world, and that's why we're so proud to have our coalition partners here with us. Thank you very much for the great work that you do. We salute you, and we honor you for all the sacrifices you make, and you are a true friend of the United States of America. Thank you very much.

And we also salute the members of the Afghan National Army who are fighting alongside all of you. They're risking their lives to protect their country. And as I told President Karzai today, the United States is a partner, but our intent is to make sure that the Afghans have the capacity to provide for their own security. That is core to our mission, and we are proud of the work that they are doing and the continuing increased capacity that we're seeing out of Afghan National Security Forces. So thank you very much for the great work you're doing to take responsibility for security here in your own country.

And to the Afghan people, I want to say that I'm honored to be a guest in your country. Now, the Afghans have suffered for decades—decades of war. But we are here to help Afghans forge a hard-won peace while realizing the extraordinary potential of the Afghan people, Afghanistan's sons and daughters, from the soldiers and the police to the farmers and the young students. And we want to build a lasting partnership founded upon mutual interests and mutual respect, and I'm looking forward to returning to Afghanistan many times in the years to come.

Now, I know for most of you, you didn't get a lot of notice that I was coming. But I want you to understand, there's no visit that I considered more important than this visit I'm making right now, because I have no greater honor than serving as your Commander in Chief. And it is a privilege to look out and see the extraordinary efforts of America's sons and daughters here in Afghanistan. So my main job here today is to say thank you on behalf of the entire American people.

You are part of the finest military in the history of the world, and we are proud of you. And so I want you to know that everybody back home is proud of you. Everybody back home is grateful. And everybody understands the sacrifices that you have made and your families have made to keep America safe and to keep America secure in this vital mission.

And I know it's not easy. You're far away from home. You miss your kids. You miss your spouses, your family, your friends. Some of you, this is your second or your third or your fourth tour of duty. I'll tell you right now the same thing that I said at West Point last December: If I thought for a minute that America's vital interests were not served, were not at stake here in Afghanistan, I would order all of you home right away.

So I want you to know, I want every American serving in Afghanistan, military and civilian, to know, whether you're working the flight line here at Bagram or patrolling a village down in Helmand, whether you're standing watch at a forward operating base or training

our Afghan partners or working with the Afghan Government, your services are absolutely necessary, absolutely essential to America's safety and security. Those folks back home are relying on you.

We can't forget why we're here. We did not choose this war. This was not an act of America wanting to expand its influence, of us wanting to meddle in somebody else's business. We were attacked viciously on 9/11. And thousands of our fellow country men and women were killed. And this is the region where the perpetrators of that crime, Al Qaida, still base their leadership. Plots against our homeland, plots against our allies, plots against the Afghan and Pakistani people are taking place as we speak right here. And if this region slides backwards, if the Taliban retakes this country and Al Qaida can operate with impunity, then more American lives will be at stake. The Afghan people will lose their chance at progress and prosperity. And the world will be significantly less secure.

And I'm—as long as I'm your Commander in Chief, I am not going to let that happen. That's why you are here. Now, I've made a promise to all of you who serve: I will never send you into harm's way unless it's absolutely necessary. I anguish in thinking about the sacrifices that so many of you make. That's why I promise I will never send you out unless it is necessary.

But that's only part of the promise, because the other part of the promise is that when it is absolutely necessary, you will be backed up by a clear mission and the right strategy, and you will have the support to finish the job, to get the job done. And I am confident all of you are going to get the job done right here in Afghanistan. I am confident of that.

That's why I ordered more troops and civilians here into Afghanistan shortly after taking office. That's why we took a hard look and forged a new strategy and committed more resources in December. That's why we've pushed our friends and allies and partners to pony up more resources themselves, more commitments of aid and additional forces and trainers.

Our broad mission is clear: We are going to disrupt and dismantle, defeat, and destroy Al Qaida and its extremist allies. That is our mission. And to accomplish that goal, our objectives here in Afghanistan are also clear: We're going to deny Al Qaida safe haven; we're going to reverse the Taliban's momentum; we're going to strengthen the capacity of Afghan security forces and the Afghan Government so that they can begin taking responsibility and gain confidence of the Afghan people.

And our strategy includes a military effort that takes the fight to the Taliban while creating the conditions for greater security and a transition to the Afghans, but also a civilian effort that improves the daily lives of the Afghan people and combats corruption, and a partnership with Pakistan and its people, because we can't uproot extremists and advance security and opportunity unless we succeed on both sides of the border. Most of you understand that.

Many of the troops that I ordered to Afghanistan have begun to arrive, and more are on the way. And we'll continue to work with Congress to make sure that you've got the equipment that you need, particularly as we complete our drawdown in Iraq. We're providing more helicopters; we're providing more intelligence and reconnaissance capabilities, more Special Operations Forces, more armored vehicles that can save lives.

And here in Afghanistan, you've gone on the offensive. And the American people back home are noticing. We have seen a huge increase in support in—stateside, because people understand the kinds of sacrifices that you guys are making and the clarity of mission that you're bringing to bear.

And together with our coalition and Afghan partners, our troops have pushed the Taliban out of their stronghold in Marja. We've changed the way we operate and interact with the Afghan people. We see Afghans reclaiming their communities, and we see new partnerships that will help them build their own future and increase their security.

And across the border, Pakistan's mounting major offensives. We've seen violent extremists pushed out of their sanctuaries. We struck major blows against Al Qaida leadership as well as the Taliban's. They are hunkered down. They're worried about their own safety. It's harder for them to move, it's harder for them to train and to plot and to attack, and all of that makes

America safer. And we are going to keep them on the run, because that is what's going to be required in order to assure that our families back home have the security that they need. That's the work that you are doing.

So thanks to you, there's been progress these last several months. But we know there are going to be some difficult days ahead. There's going to be setbacks. We face a determined enemy. But we also know this: The United States of America does not quit once it starts on something. You don't quit. The American Armed Services does not quit. We keep at it, we persevere, and together with our partners, we will prevail. I am absolutely confident of that.

And I also want you to know that as you're doing your duty here, we're going to do right by you back home. We're going to help take care of your families, and that's why the First Lady, Michelle Obama, visited with military families and makes sure that their needs are met. That's why she stays after me once she gets home, when I'm at the White House. And we're going to make sure that we are keeping to improve your pay and your benefits, but also things like childcare and support that ensure that you've got a little bit of security knowing your family is being looked after back home.

And we'll be there for you when you come home. That's why we're improving care for our wounded warriors, especially those with PTSD and traumatic brain injuries. We're moving forward with the post-9/11 GI bill so you and your families can pursue your dreams. And we've made the biggest increase in the VA budget in 30 years, because we're going to keep our sacred trust with all those who serve.

You've been there for us, tour after tour, year after year, at a time when too many American institutions have let us down, when too many institutions have put short-term gain in front of a commitment to duty and a commitment to what's right. You've met your responsibilities, you've done your duty, not just when it's easy, but when it's hard. That's why you've inspired your fellow Americans, and that's why you inspire me. That's why you've earned your place next to the very greatest of American generations.

And all of you represent the virtues and the values that America so desperately needs right now: sacrifice and selflessness, honor and decency. That's what I see here today. That's what you represent.

I've seen your sense of purpose and your willingness to step forward and serve in a time of danger. I've seen it from the marines I've met at Camp Lejeune to the cadets at West Point, from the midshipmen at Annapolis to the troops I have met in Iraq and at bases across America and here in Afghanistan. I've seen your courage and your heroism in the story of a young sergeant first class named Jared Monti, who gave his life here in Afghanistan to save his fellow soldiers, and whose parents I was proud to present with our Nation's highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor. I've seen your tenacity and determination in our wounded warriors in Landstuhl and Walter Reed, Americans fighting to stand again and to walk again and to get back with you—their units—incredible dedication, incredible focus, incredible pride. And I've been humbled by your sacrifice, in the solemn homecoming of flag-draped coffins at Dover to the headstones in Section 60 at Arlington, where the fallen from this war rest in peace alongside the fellow heroes of America's story.

So here in Afghanistan, each one of you is part of an unbroken line of American servicemembers who've sacrificed for over two centuries. You're protecting your fellow citizens from danger. You're serving alongside old allies and new friends. You're bringing hope and opportunity to a people who've known a lot of pain and a lot of suffering.

And I know that sometimes when you're watching TV, the politics back home may look a little messy, and people are yelling and hollering and—Democrats this and Republicans that. I want you to understand this: There's no daylight when it comes to support of all of you. There's no daylight when it comes to supporting our troops. That brings us together. We are all incredibly proud. We all honor what you do. And all of you show all of America what's possible when people come together,

not based on color or creed, not based on faith or station, but based on a commitment to serve together, to bleed together, and to succeed together as one people, as Americans.

Make no mistake, this fight matters to us. It matters to us, it matters to our allies, it matters to the Afghan people. Al Qaida and the violent extremists who you're fighting against want to destroy. But all of you want to build, and that is something essential about America. They've got no respect for human life. You see dignity in every human being. That's part of what we value as Americans. They want to drive races and regions and religions apart. You want to bring people together and see the world move forward together. They offer fear, in other words, and you offer hope.

And that's why it is so important that you know that the entire country stands behind you. That's why you put on that uniform, because in an uncertain world, the United States of America will always stand up for the security of nations and the dignity of human beings. That's who we are. That is what we do.

Much has happened to our country and to the world since 9/11. But I'm confident that so long as brave men and women like you—Americans who are willing to serve selflessly half a world away on behalf of their fellow citizens and the dreams of people they've never met—so long as there are folks like you, then I'm confident that our Nation will endure and hope will overcome fear. And I am confident that better days lie ahead.

So thank you very much, everybody. God bless you, God bless the United States Armed Forces, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:13 p.m. in the Clamshell. In his remarks, he referred to Sgt. Maj. Eric Johnson, USA, director of operations, Combined Joint Task Force–82; Maj. Gen. Curtis M. "Mike" Scaparrotti, USA, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan, Regional Commander East, and commander, 82d Airborne Division; and President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan.

Statement on the Terrorist Attacks in Moscow, Russia
March 29, 2010

I send my deepest condolences to the people of Russia after the terrible loss of life and injuries resulting from the bombings on the Moscow Metro. The American people stand united with the people of Russia in opposition to violent extremism and heinous terrorist attacks that demonstrate such disregard for human life, and we condemn these outrageous acts. My thoughts and prayers go out to those who lost loved ones, and I wish all who sustained injuries a successful recovery.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

Remarks on Signing the Health Care and Reconciliation Act of 2010 in Alexandria, Virginia
March 30, 2010

Thank you, Alexandria. Thank you very much. Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat.

Thank you, Dr. Biden, for that outstanding introduction and for putting up with Joe. [*Laughter*] I want to also thank Dr. Biden for being one of the thousands of instructors all across the country who make such a difference in the lives of students each and every day. So we are very proud of you for that.

I want to thank President Templin and the entire NOVA Community College family for hosting us here today—[*applause*]—you can applaud for that.

On stage, we've got a couple of my outstanding Cabinet members, Secretary Sebelius and

Secretary Arne Duncan. Please give them a big round of applause. In the audience, we've got Secretary Salazar of Interior, Secretary Donovan of HUD, and Ambassador Ron Kirk, our U.S. Trade Representative. Please give them a big round of applause.

To all the outstanding Members of Congress who've made this day possible, and I'm going to mainly single out the amazing Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi.

Today we mark an important milestone on the road to health insurance reform and higher education reform. But more broadly, this day affirms our ability to overcome the challenges of our politics and meet the challenges of our time.

And when I took office, one of the questions we needed to answer was whether it was still possible to make Government responsive to the needs of everyday people, middle class Americans, the backbone of this country, or whether the special interests and their lobbyists would continue to hold sway, like they've done so many times before. And that's a test we met 1 week ago, when health insurance reform became the law of the land in the United States of America.

And it's a test we met later in the week, when Congress passed higher education reforms that will have a tremendous impact on working families and America's future. That's two major victories in 1 week that will improve the lives of our people for generations to come.

Now, I've said before and I've repeated this week, the health insurance reform bill I signed won't fix every problem in our health care system in one fell swoop, but it does represent some of the toughest insurance reforms in history. It represents a major step forward towards giving Americans with insurance, and those without, a sense of security when it comes to their health care. It enshrines the principle that when you get sick, you've got a society there, a community that is going to help you get back on your feet. It represents meaningful progress for the American people.

And today I'm signing a bill that will make a number of improvements to these core reforms. We'll increase the size of tax credits to help middle class families and small businesses pay for their health insurance. We're going to offer $250 to seniors who fall in the Medicare coverage gap known as the doughnut hole to help them pay for prescriptions, and that's a first step towards closing that gap completely. We'll make a significant new investment in community health centers all across America that can provide high-quality primary care to people who need it most. And we'll strengthen efforts to combat waste and fraud and abuse to make sure your dollars aren't lining the pockets of insurance companies when they should be making your health care better.

Now, the debate on health care reform is one that's gone on for generations, and I'm glad—I'm gratified that we were able to get it done last week. But what's gotten overlooked amid all the hoopla, all the drama of last week, is what happened in education, when a great battle pitting the interests of the banks and financial institutions against the interests of students finally came to an end.

You see, for almost two decades, we've been trying to fix a sweetheart deal in Federal law that essentially gave billions of dollars to banks to act as unnecessary middlemen in administering student loans. So these—those are billions of dollars that could have been spent helping more of our students attend and complete college, that could have been spent advancing the dreams of our children, that could have been spent easing the burden of tuition on middle class families. Instead, that money was spent padding student lenders' profits.

Now, it probably won't surprise you to learn that the big banks and financial institutions hired a army of lobbyists to protect the status quo. In fact, Sallie Mae, America's biggest student lender, spent more than $3 million on lobbying last year alone.

But I didn't stand with the banks and the financial industries in this fight—that's not why I came to Washington—and neither did any of the Members of Congress who are here today. We stood with you. We stood with America's students. And together, we finally won that battle.

I don't have to tell folks here at NOVA why this victory matters. In the 21st century, when

the success of every American hinges more than ever on the quality of their education and when America's success as a nation rests more than ever on an educated workforce that is second to none, we can't afford to waste billions of dollars on giveaways to banks.

We need to invest that money in our students. We need to invest in our community colleges. We need to invest in the future of this country. We need to meet the goal I set last year and graduate more of our students than any other nation by the year 2020. And through the extraordinary leadership of Education Secretary Arne Duncan, that's what the reforms I'm signing today will help us do.

By cutting out the middleman, we'll save American taxpayers $68 billion in the coming years—$68 billion. That's real money—[*laughter*]—real savings that we'll reinvest to help improve the quality of higher education and make it more affordable.

Now, we've already taken a number of steps through the Recovery Act and through my budget to significantly increase the support provided to young people attending colleges and universities all across the country. And I just—President Templin handed me a sheet just as I walked in. Just in case you're wondering whether this makes a difference, so far this year—and the year isn't over—right here at NOVA, Pell grant recipients increased by 41 percent over last year, the total dollar amount of Pell grants increased by 59 percent, the number of federally guaranteed loans increased by 43 percent, and loan awards increased by 68 percent. That's right here at this one community college, because of the steps that we had already taken.

So using the $68 billion that we're saving, that had been going to the banks, here's what we're going to be able to do. First, we will reinvest a portion of those savings to upgrade our community colleges, which are one of the great, undervalued assets in our education system.

Community colleges like NOVA are incredibly important because they serve a varied group of learners, from recent high school grads seeking a pathway to a college degree to adults seeking training for the jobs of tomorrow. By forging private sector partnerships, community colleges can offer students the education and training they need to find a good job when they graduate, and it helps offer businesses the assurance they need that graduates will be ready for the jobs that they're hired to do.

And because community colleges like NOVA are so essential to a competitive workforce, I've asked your outstanding professor, Dr. Jill Biden—who does not have enough to do—[*laughter*]—to host a summit on community colleges at the White House this fall. And we're going to bring everybody together, from educators to students, experts to business leaders. We are going to bring everybody together to share innovative ideas about how we can help students earn degrees and credentials, and to forge private sector partnerships so we can better prepare America's workforce and America's workers to succeed in the 21st century.

Now, to help open the doors of higher education to more students, we'll also reinvest part of that $68 billion in savings in Pell grants, one of the most popular forms of financial aid. Pell grants once covered more than three-quarters of the cost of going to college. But now, because the cost of college has skyrocketed, the amount Pell grants cover is about one-third.

Today students hoping to attend college on a Pell grant are going to be able to feel more secure because not only are we going to offer over 800,000 additional Pell awards over the next 10 years, we're also going to raise the amount they're worth to almost $6,000, so that inflation does not erode the value of your grant.

And we'll put the entire Pell grant program on firmer footing for years to come. Altogether, we are more than doubling the amount of Pell grant funding that was available when I took office. It's one of the most significant investments in higher education since the GI bill.

Now, third, we're going to restore a measure of fairness to how students repay their loans. Today, two out of every three students graduates with help from a loan, and often they take on a mountain of debt as a result. Here in Virginia, the typical student carries almost $20,000 in debt. Across the country, the average student graduates with over $23,000 in debt. I know what that's like. Michelle and I had big debts coming out of school, debts we weren't able to

fully repay until just a few years before I started running for office.

Today we're making it easier for responsible students to pay off their loans. Right now, if you're a borrower, you don't have to spend more than 15 percent of your income on loans. But starting in 2014, you won't have to pay more than 10 percent of your income in repaying your student loans. That will make a meaningful difference for over 1 million more students. We're also going to give students an incentive to do what's right. If you pay your loans on time, you'll only have to pay them off for 20 years. And you'll only have to pay them off for 10 years if you repay them with service to your community and to our country, as a teacher or a nurse or a member of our Armed Forces.

Finally, we'll reinvest some of the $68 billion in savings to strengthen our Historically Black Colleges and Universities and minority serving institutions. These are institutions that have struggled more than most in these tough economic times.

The reforms in this bill are significant, but they're just part of a broader effort to strengthen our entire higher education system. We're putting college tuition tax credits in the pockets of millions of students from working families to help them pay for college. We've taken steps to simplify the Federal college assistance form, called the FAFSA, because it shouldn't take a Ph.D. to apply for financial aid. And we're helping ensure that America's high school graduates are ready for college. All of this is paid for. We're redirecting money that was poorly spent to make sure we're making investments in our future.

Now, this won't solve all of our problems in higher education. We continue to expect colleges and universities to do their part to hold down tuition increases. That has to happen. We've got to work on that. And we also need to take greater initiative not only to help more college—students enter college, we've got to make sure that we see more students successfully earn a college degree.

But what we've done over the past year represents enormous progress. So I'll close by saying this. For a long time, our student loan system has worked for banks and financial institutions. Today we're finally making our student loan system work for students and our families. But we're also doing something more.

From the moment I was sworn into office, I've spoken about the urgent need for us to lay a new foundation for our economy and for our future. And two pillars of that foundation are health care and education, and each has long suffered from problems that we chose to kick down the road.

With the bill I signed last week, we finally undertook meaningful reform of our health care system. With this bill and other steps we've pursued over the last year, we are finally undertaking meaningful reform in our higher education system. So this week, we can rightly say, the foundation on which America's future will be built is stronger than it was 1 year ago.

And so at the end of this extraordinary week, I want to acknowledge some of the people who made it possible. There isn't time to single out everyone who's here—outstanding Members of Congress—but I want to make sure I once again say this would not have happened had it not been for the leadership of Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Senator Dick Durbin, and Congressman Steny Hoyer. All provided outstanding leadership that our Nation needed.

On health care, Max Baucus, Chris Dodd, Henry Waxman, Charlie Rangel, and so many others offered invaluable expertise throughout the year. Congressmen George Miller, Jim Clyburn, Dale Kildee, Ruben Hinojosa led the way in the House on education reforms that I sign today.

Senator Tom Harkin's dedication ensured that the Senate would include these reforms in this bill. Virginia's own Bobby Scott and an outstanding freshman, Tom Perriello, helped to make this thing possible. We are grateful to them.

Now, courage is an essential ingredient in any landmark legislation, particularly when the attacks are as fierce and unrelenting and inaccurate—[*laughter*]—as they have been over the past year. So I just want to commend Members of Congress who had the courage to

do what's right, and to say a special thank you to all of the newer Members.

The past couple of years have brought one challenge after another, and you've risen to the moment each time. I could not be prouder of the work that all of you have done. And it would not have happened had it not been for the incredible persistence and stick-to-itiveness of all the folks in the audience here today.

Ultimately, Congress responds to the voices that they're hearing in their communities, and so many of you have written letters and come to meetings and let people know of the ordinary struggles that people are going through each and every day. You're what provided Members of Congress the courage that they needed to do what was right. And so on behalf of all of us who are serving in Washington, we want to thank you, the American people, for your outstanding leadership.

And with that, I'm going to sign this bill. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:04 a.m. at Northern Virginia Community College. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Joe Biden; and Robert G. Templin, Jr., president, Northern Virginia Community College. He also referred to H.R. 3590, approved March 23, which was assigned Public Law No. 111–148; and H.R. 4872, approved March 30, which was assigned Public Law No. 111–152. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Biden.

The President's News Conference With President Nicolas Sarkozy of France
March 30, 2010

President Obama. Please, everybody, have a seat. Good afternoon. *Bienvenue*.

I am delighted to welcome my dear friend President Sarkozy to the White House. And I also want to welcome to the United States the First Lady of France, and Michelle and I are very much looking forward to hosting our guests at dinner this evening.

Now, I have to point out that the French are properly famous for their cuisine, and so the fact that Nicolas went to Ben's Chili Bowl for lunch—[*laughter*]—I think knows—shows his discriminating palate. My understanding is he had a half-smoke, so he was sampling the local wares. And we appreciate that very much.

This visit is an opportunity to return the hospitality that the President and the French people have shown to me during my visits to France. And that includes our family's wonderful visit to Paris last summer. Michelle and I will never forget the opportunity to introduce our daughters for the first time to the City of Lights. And I don't think that Sasha will ever forget celebrating her eighth birthday at the Elysee Palace with the President of France. That's a pretty fancy way for an 8-year-old to spend their birthday.

Today President Sarkozy and I have reaffirmed the enduring ties between our countries. France is our oldest ally and one of our closest. We are two great republics bound by common ideals that have stood together for more than two centuries, from Yorktown to Normandy to Afghanistan.

Under President Sarkozy's leadership, France has further secured its rightful place as a leader in Europe and around the world, recognizing that meeting global challenges requires global partnerships. France took the historic step of returning to NATO's military command, and we are working to revitalize our transatlantic bonds, including a strong, capable European Union, which the United States firmly supports, because a close transatlantic partnership is critical to progress, whether it's applying our combined strength to promote development and confront violent extremism in Africa, or reconstruction in Haiti, or advancing peace from the Caucasus to the Middle East.

Mr. President, on behalf of the American people, I also want to thank you for your personal efforts to strengthen the partnership between our countries. Now, we first met 4 years ago. I was a Senator then; Nicolas was still running for President at the time. And I immedi-

ately came to admire your legendary energy and your enthusiasm for what our countries can achieve together. And that was the spirit of your eloquent speech to Congress 3 years ago, which deeply moved many Americans.

Over the past year, the President and I have worked closely on numerous occasions. We respect one another and understand one another, and we share a belief that through bold yet pragmatic action, our generation can bend the arc of history towards justice and towards progress. And this shared commitment to solving problems allowed us to advance our common interests today.

We agreed to continue working aggressively to sustain the global economic recovery and create jobs for our people. And this includes—as we agreed with our G–20 partners at Pittsburgh—to replacing the old cycle of bubble and bust with growth that is balanced and sustained. And this requires effective coordination by all nations. Now, to that end, I updated the President on our efforts to pass financial reform, and I look forward to the Senate taking action on this landmark legislation so we never repeat the mistakes that led to this crisis.

We must provide sufficient oversight so that reckless speculation or reckless risk-taking by a big—a few big players in the financial markets will never again threaten the global economy or burden taxpayers. And we must assure that consumers of financial products have the information and safeguards that they need so that their life savings are not placed in needless jeopardy. And that's why I press for the passage of these reforms through Congress when they return, and I will continue to work with President Sarkozy and other world leaders to coordinate our efforts, because we want to make sure that whatever steps we're taking, they are occurring on both sides of the Atlantic.

We agreed that sustained and balanced growth includes rejecting protectionism. France is one of our largest trading partners. And we need to expand global commerce, not constrain it. With that regard, we think it's important that Doha trade negotiations move forward this year, and we need all interested parties to push for a more ambitious and balanced agreement that opens global markets. And we look forward to France's Presidency of both the G–8 and G–20 next year. So Nicolas is going to be very busy.

To address climate change, we agreed that all nations aligned with the Copenhagen accord must meet their responsibilities. And I would note that President Sarkozy's leadership has resulted in significant new resources to address deforestation around the world. Upcoming meetings at the United Nations and the Major Economies Forum will be an opportunity of—for nations to follow up their Copenhagen commitments with specific and concrete actions that reduce emissions.

We reaffirmed our commitment to confront the greatest threat to global security: the spread of nuclear weapons. And I updated President Sarkozy on our new START Treaty with Russia. I look forward to welcoming President Sarkozy back to Washington in 2 weeks for our summit on securing vulnerable nuclear materials so that they never fall into the hands of terrorists.

We discussed our shared determination to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. On this, the United States and France are united, are inseparable. With our P–5-plus-1 partners, we offer Iran good faith proposals to resolve this matter through diplomacy. But Iran thus far has rejected those offers. Today, the international community is more united than ever on the need for Iran to uphold its obligations. And that's why we're pursuing strong sanctions through the U.N. Security Council.

And finally, we discussed our efforts to advance security and peace around the world, including in the Middle East, where we agree that all sides need to act now to create the atmosphere that gives the proximity talks the best chance to succeed.

I shared my impressions from my discussions with President Karzai on the urgent need for good government and development in Afghanistan. As I told our troops, we salute our coalition partners, and that includes France, which is one of the largest contributors to the NATO mission, and which has given its most

precious resource, the lives of its young men and women, to a mission that is vital to the security of both our countries and the world's security.

So I thank President Sarkozy for his visit and for the progress that our countries have made today, in large part because of his extraordinary leadership. We are global partners facing global challenges together, and I think that Nicolas will agree that when it comes to America's oldest ally, we've never been closer.

So I'll simply close with words that one American leader expressed to another French partner more than 200 years ago, because Washington's words to Rochambeau reflect the bonds between our countries today: We are "fellow laborers in the cause of liberty, and we have lived together as brothers should do, in harmonious friendship." In that spirit, I welcome President Nicolas Sarkozy.

President Sarkozy. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you for your invitation. I think that we can say—I stand to be corrected by Bernard Kouchner and Christine Lagarde—but I think we can say that rarely in the history of our two countries has the community of views been so identical between the United States of America and France.

To wit, one example, which is that France would not be stepping next year into the Presidency of the G–20 had the United States of America not supported France for this Presidency. Now, there are the words, there are the statements, and then there are the facts, the acts, and that is a fact.

Now, I will not repeat what the—what President Obama so eloquently said. On Afghanistan, we support President Obama's strategy. We cannot afford to lose—not for us, not for ourselves, but for Afghanistan and for the people of Afghanistan, who are entitled to live in freedom. Of course the road is arduous. Of course nothing is—can be anticipated. And of course we are so sorrowful for the loss of young lives. But we have to have the courage to go to the end of our strategy and explain that there is no alternative strategy. Defeat would be too high a price for the security of Americans, the French, and Europeans. By fighting in Afghanistan, what we are fighting for is the—is world security, quite simply.

Now, on Iran, I am very satisfied with what President Obama has said. The time has come to take decisions. Iran cannot continue its mad race. Now, we don't want to punish Iran, which deserves better than what it has by way of leadership today, and therefore, our—fully support in order to get stronger, tougher sanctions at the Security Council and take the necessary decisions is what you have. I have said to President Obama that with Angela Merkel and Gordon Brown, we will make all necessary efforts to ensure that Europe as a whole engages in the sanction regime.

On the Middle East, it's excellent news to hear that the United States are thus engaged. And of course, peace in the Middle East is the—is something which concerns primarily the Israelis and the Palestinians. However, the absence of peace in the Middle East is a problem for all of us, because what it does is keep feeding terrorism all over the world. And I wish to express my solidarity vis-a-vis President Obama in condemning the settlement process. Everybody knows how engaged and committed I am vis-a-vis Israel's security, but the settlement process achieves nothing, and it contributes in no way to Israel's safety and security. There comes a time when you have to take initiatives in favor of peace.

Now, on financial regulation, again, it's great news for the world to hear that the United States is availing itself of rules, adopting rules so that we not go back to what we have already experienced. And then, during the French Presidency of the G–20, Tim Geithner, Christine Lagarde are going to be working hand in glove in order to go even further in regulating world capitalism, and in particular, raising the issue of a new world international monetary order.

Now, on all these subjects, there's much convergence of views. And of course I want to say to President Obama how glad we were for him and for the U.S.A. to hear of the successful passing of the health care reform.

And insofar as the President has revealed a secret, namely, where I had lunch today, I should say that I have a good friend in Washington who had actually recommended that restau-

rant. When I walked in, I saw a huge photograph of President Obama. And I'm afraid that when you go back to that restaurant, you may see a smaller photograph of the French President. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. Excellent. Thank you.

All right, we've got time for a couple of questions. I'm going to call on Ben Feller. There you are, Ben—AP [Associated Press].

Iran/France-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you, sir. Thank you for your patience. President Obama, you've talked about the importance of having consequences for Iran over its nuclear program, but is there ever a real deadline? What is your specific timeline for U.N. sanctions on Iran? And is it one that the American people can believe in?

President Obama. Well——

Q. And—I'm sorry, sir. I just wanted to ask——

President Obama. Sure.

Q. President Sarkozy, you said yesterday in New York that the world needs an open America, an America that listens. I'm wondering if you can elaborate, specifically, if you think President Obama is open to the world and is listening to you.

President Obama. Well, let me answer the second question, even though that was to Nicolas. [*Laughter*] I listen to Nicolas all the time. I can't stop listening to him. [*Laughter*]

On Iran, we came in with a very clear approach and a very clear strategy, and it was an open book to the world. We said we would engage Iran and give them an opportunity to take the right path, a path that would lead to prosperity and opportunity for their people and a peaceful region, and one in which they would allow themselves to become a full-fledged member of the community of nations. The alternative path was further isolation and further consequences.

We mobilized the international community around this approach, including partners like Russia that in the past might have been more hesitant to take a firmer stance on Iran's nuclear program. What we said, though, was that there was going to be a time limit to it and that if we had not seen progress by the end of the year, it was time for us to move forwards on that sanctions track.

My hope is that we are going to get this done this spring. So I'm not interested in waiting months for a sanctions regime to be in place; I'm interested in seeing that regime in place in weeks. And we are working diligently with our international partners, emphasizing to them that, as Nicolas said, this is not simply an issue of trying to isolate Iran; it has enormous implications for the safety and the security of the entire region. We don't want to see a nuclear arms race in the Middle East.

A conflict in the Middle East as a consequence of Iran's actions could have a huge destabilizing effect in terms of the world economy at a time when it's just coming out of a very deep recession.

The long-term consequences of a nuclear-armed Iran are unacceptable. And so Nicolas, myself, and others agree that we have engaged; the door remains open if the Iranians choose to walk through it. But they understand very clearly what the terms of a diplomatic solution would be. And in the interim, we are going to move forcefully on a U.N. sanctions regime.

Now, do we have unanimity in the international community? Not yet. And that's something that we have to work on. We think that we are in a much stronger position to get robust sanctions now than we were a year ago, prior to us initiating our strategy.

But it's still difficult, partly because, let's be honest, Iran is a oil producer, and there are a lot of countries around the world that, regardless of Iran's offenses, are thinking that their commercial interests are more important to them than these long-term geopolitical interests. And so we have to continue to apply pressure not just on Iran, but we have to make sure that we are communicating very clearly that this is very important to the United States.

Q. You can get unanimity within weeks?

President Obama. We think that we can get sanctions within weeks.

President Sarkozy. Well, I've read many comments—and I must say I've been quite amused—on the relations between European leaders and the President of the United States.

I say I'm amused because I've thought to myself, well, when we speak to one another, people must be listening to our phone calls, because I have seen reports on conversations and discussions which in no way resemble anything that has ever taken place between Barack Obama and myself.

Now, why is it easy for us to work? And I speak on behalf of Chancellor Merkel, Gordon Brown, and other leaders. Well, because President Obama, when he says something, keeps his word. His word is his bond. And that is so important. There's a joke among us: We don't like surprises. Well, from that point of view, there's no surprises. When he can, he delivers; when he can't, he says so. So there are no surprises. And we try to be likewise.

Furthermore, secondly, on all topics—and there have been some pretty tough topics. I mean, for instance, bonus—taxes on bonuses, regulation, financial regulations—pretty heavy-going stuff—Copenhagen. I mean, I happen to think that President Obama is a step ahead of public opinion in the United States on this. But we're constantly talking about it. It's even President Obama who wanted us to have a call conference, a videoconference virtually every month with Angela Merkel and Gordon Brown.

Now, this doesn't merely mean that we absolutely agree neck and neck on everything, but we talk amongst ourselves. And this is a novelty from the point of view of Europe, whenever we look at the United States, that everything is put on the table, anything can be discussed, everything can be discussed.

What matters, you see, is not whether we agree once systematically before we've even started discussing thing—that's suspicious. It's to say, whatever divergence of views we may have, we can talk about it among ourselves. And I say things very frankly to you, and this is what all we European leaders believe and think.

I've also heard it said that Europe was less interested in the United States. Well, for heaven's sake, how many times do we have to come over to show that we are interested? What would it mean if we were interested?

So, very frankly and very honestly on this, not only is it not an issue, not a problem, but it's great to be able to work under such conditions. I would say that what I have to say about President Obama is the same as what Bernard Kouchner could say about Hillary Clinton or Christine Lagarde about Tim Geithner—that we're constantly having a dialogue.

I could even take you—give you an example of something on which we don't necessarily agree, such as Syria—or we didn't agree. France took an initiative, as you know. Well, I'll say this to you. At no point—no point has President Obama turned his back on what we were doing. Constantly, he's watching; he's listening. We're constantly exchanging information on the subject, even when there are more complex topics, including in our relations with the Russians. Before even we inform our Russian—or the Russians or our partners, I pick up the phone, I call President Obama, and he knows exactly what we're going to do and why we're going to do it. You follow me on that?

So there may be disagreements, but never for the wrong reasons. And as we are very transparent on both sides, there's confidence, there's trust. And I really think I can say that. There's a lot of trust.

Now, trust always helps one overcome, perhaps, diverging interests. It may be that the United States of America has slightly different interests of those of France, but the bedrock of trust between us is something that he also has with all European leaders. And I don't say this to please you; I said it because it's true. And I took two examples of two topics that could, in other tide—other times, have led to head-on collision, and which in this case, on the contrary, are looked at on both sides of the Atlantic as a situation where we are complementary.

Perhaps he said, well, maybe on Syria, France is on the right track, and maybe one day we'll have the opportunity to do likewise. And that's exactly the way we work.

Go ahead, I'm not the one with the mike.

[*At this point, a reporter asked a question in French, which was translated as follows.*]

U.S. Defense Department Procurements

Q. Since you've just talked about the United—the relations with Europe and the United States, didn't you get a bad surprise, a nasty sur-

prise, on the Pentagon's decision on the tanker planes, which reversed the decision which had originally been taken in favor of Airbus? Did you raise this subject with President Obama? And if so, did you try and put together a new approach, so as to ensure that the competition would be fairer?

[*The reporter then continued in English.*]

Q. Mr. President, what do you think about this new version of this contract with the Pentagon, and don't you think that it would be probably fair to share this contract with the Europeans, since they are now full members of NATO and that they share the price of the war on the ground?

President Sarkozy. If I said I hadn't raised it, it would mean that what I've just told you would be meaningless and senseless. Of course we've talked about it, and President Obama will give you his answer. But I said to him, I trust you. And I do trust him. If you say to me that the request for proposals, the call for tenders will be free, fair, and transparent, then we say, EADS will bid, and we trust you.

President Obama. And what I said to President Sarkozy is, is that the process will be free and fair and that the trust is justified.

Now, it's important for my European friends to understand that, at least here, the Secretary of Defense makes procurement decisions. The President does not meddle in these decisions. And that's a longstanding policy. So I maintain an arm's length approach, but I have assurances from Secretary of Defense Gates that, in fact, the rebidding process is going to be completely transparent, completely open, and a fair competition. That's in our interests. It's in the interest of American taxpayers, and it's also in the interest of our young men and women who rely on this equipment in order to protect this Nation.

And it's important to note, I think, for those of you who don't know Secretary Gates, this is somebody who has actually taken on the military and weapons systems establishment and initiated some very significant procurement reforms that nobody ever thought would happen here in Washington. So he's somebody who's willing to call it like it is and make difficult decisions, and he will do so in this situation as well.

Okay? Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 4:56 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, wife of President Sarkozy; and President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan. President Sarkozy referred to Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Bernard Kouchner and Minister of Economy, Industry, and Employment Christine Lagarde of France; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; and Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom. President Sarkozy and a reporter spoke in French, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report Related to Afghanistan and Pakistan

March 30, 2010

Dear _____:

In response to the requirement of section 1117 of the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2009, and in order to keep the Congress fully informed, I am providing the attached report related to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

My Administration completed a thorough policy review last November, and I announced a new approach at West Point on December 1, 2009. As with the development of that policy, we have continued to consult closely with the Congress on the implementation of this new approach. We are now implementing this policy and do not believe further adjustments are required at this time. Consistent with the statute and given the time necessary to accumulate data, the attached report covers the period ending December 31, 2009. To the extent pos-

sible, the report provides an update on our assessment since that date.

As the Congress begins consideration of the supplemental, I underscore our Nation's interests in the successful implementation of this policy.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Daniel K. Inouye, chairman, and W. Thad Cochran, ranking member, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Carl Levin, chairman, and John S. McCain III, ranking member, Senate Committee on Armed Services; John F. Kerry, chairman, and Richard G. Lugar, ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Joseph I. Lieberman, chairman, and Susan M. Collins, ranking member, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs; Dianne Feinstein, chairman, and Christopher S. "Kit" Bond, ranking member, Senate Committee on Intelligence; Patrick J. Leahy, chairman, and Jefferson B. Sessions III, ranking member, Senate Committee on the Judiciary; David R. Obey, chairman, and Jerry Lewis, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations; Isaac N. "Ike" Skelton IV, chairman, and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, ranking member, House Committee on Armed Services; Howard L. Berman, chairman, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, ranking member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs; Bennie G. Thompson, chairman, House Committee on Homeland Security; Mark E. Souder, ranking member, House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Border, Maritime and Global Counterterrorism; John Conyers, Jr., chairman, and Lamar S. Smith, ranking member, House Committee on the Judiciary; and Silvestre Reyes, chairman, and Peter Hoekstra, ranking member, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 31.

Remarks at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland
March 31, 2010

Thank you so much. Please have a seat. I've got a few introductions that I want to make very quickly before I start my remarks. First of all, I think that by the end of his tenure, we're going to know that Ken Salazar is one of the finest Secretaries of Interior we've ever had. So please give him a big round of applause.

Other members of what we call our green team are here: Steven Chu, our Secretary of Energy; Martha Johnson, the Administrator of the GSA; Nancy Sutley, the CEQ Chair. We've got Carol Browner, who's the White House Energy and Climate Change Director. Please give them a big round of applause. They've put in a lot of work.

Governor Martin O'Malley is here, Governor of Maryland. Ray Mabus, Secretary of the Navy, is here. Admiral Gary Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations, is here, and we appreciate his outstanding service. Thank you, Gar.

I want to thank Steven Shepro, the base commander here at Andrews, and the leadership that's present from the Air Force, the Marine Corps, and the Coast Guard.

Ken and I were colleagues in the Senate, and I appointed him because I knew that he would be a faithful and pragmatic steward of our natural resources. And as Secretary, he is changing the way that the Interior Department does business so that we're responsibly developing traditional sources of energy and renewable sources of energy, from the wind on the high plains to the suns in the desert to the waves off our coasts. And so I'm very grateful to the work that he's done, and it's culminating in one of the announcements that we're making today.

It's also good to see so many members of our Armed Forces here today. Andrews is the home of Air Force One, and I appreciate everything that you do for me and my family. I should point out that you've got a 100-percent ontime departure record. [*Laughter*] You don't charge for luggage—[*laughter*]—so it's a pretty good deal. And I want to thank you not only for the support that you provide me, but also for the

service that you perform to keep our country safe each and every day. So I'm very grateful to all of you.

We're here to talk about America's energy security, an issue that's been a priority for my administration since the day I took office. Already, we've made the largest investment in clean energy in our Nation's history. It's an investment that's expected to create or save more than 700,000 jobs across America, jobs manufacturing advanced batteries for more efficient vehicles, upgrading the power grid so that it's smarter and it's stronger, doubling our Nation's capacity to generate renewable electricity from sources like the wind and the Sun.

And just a few months after taking office, I also gathered the leaders of the world's largest automakers, the heads of labor unions, environmental advocates, and public officials from California and across the country to reach a historic agreement to raise fuel economy standards in cars and trucks. And tomorrow, after decades in which we have done little to increase auto efficiency, those new standards will be finalized, which will reduce our dependence on oil while helping folks spend a little less at the pump.

So my administration is upholding its end of the deal, and we expect all parties to do the same. And I'd also point out, this rule that we're going to be announcing about increased mileage standards will save 1.8 billion dollars—billion barrels of oil overall—1.8 billion barrels of oil. And that's like taking 58 million cars off the road for an entire year.

Today we're also going to go one step further. In order to save energy and taxpayer dollars, my administration, led by Secretary Chu at Energy, as well as Administrator Johnson at GSA, is doubling the number of hybrid vehicles in the Federal fleet, even as we seek to reduce the number of cars and trucks used by our Government overall. So we're going to lead by example and practice what we preach: cutting waste, saving energy, and reducing our reliance on foreign oil.

But we have to do more. We need to make continued investments in clean coal technologies and advanced biofuels. A few weeks ago, I announced loan guarantees to break ground on America's first new nuclear facility in three decades, a project that will create thousands of jobs. And in the short term, as we transition to cleaner energy sources, we've still got to make some tough decisions about opening new offshore areas for oil and gas development in ways that protect communities and protect coastlines.

Now, this is not a decision that I've made lightly. It's one that Ken and I, as well as Carol Browner, my energy adviser, and others in my administration looked at closely for more than a year. But the bottom line is this: Given our energy needs, in order to sustain economic growth and produce jobs and keep our businesses competitive, we are going to need to harness traditional sources of fuel, even as we ramp up production of new sources of renewable, homegrown energy.

So today we're announcing the expansion of offshore oil and gas exploration, but in ways that balance the need to harness domestic energy resources and the need to protect America's natural resources. Under the leadership of Secretary Salazar, we'll employ new technologies that reduce the impact of oil exploration. We'll protect areas that are vital to tourism, the environment, and our national security. And we'll be guided not by political ideology, but by scientific evidence.

That's why my administration will consider potential areas for development in the mid- and south Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico while studying and protecting sensitive areas in the Arctic. That's why we'll continue to support development of leased areas off the North Slope of Alaska while protecting Alaska's Bristol Bay.

Now, there will be those who strongly disagree with this decision, including those who say we should not open any new areas to drilling. But what I want to emphasize is that this announcement is part of a broader strategy that will move us from an economy that runs on fossil fuels and foreign oil to one that relies more on homegrown fuels and clean energy. And the only way this transition will succeed is if it strengthens our economy in the short term and the long run. To fail to recognize this reality would be a mistake.

Now, on the other side, there are going to be some who argue that we don't go nearly far enough, who suggest we should open all our waters to energy exploration without any restriction or regard for the broader environmental and economic impact. And to those folks I've got to say this: We have less than 2 percent of the world's oil reserves; we consume more than 20 percent of the world's oil. And what that means is that drilling alone can't come close to meeting our long-term energy needs. And for the sake of our planet and our energy independence, we need to begin the transition to cleaner fuels now.

So the answer is not drilling everywhere all the time. But the answer is not, also, for us to ignore the fact that we are going to need vital energy sources to maintain our economic growth and our security. Ultimately, we need to move beyond the tired debates of the left and the right, between business leaders and environmentalists, between those who would claim drilling is a cure-all and those who would claim it has no place, because this issue's just too important to allow our progress to languish while we fight the same old battles over and over again.

For decades, we've talked about how our dependence on foreign oil threatens our economy, yet our will to act rises and falls with the price of a barrel of oil. When gas gets expensive at the pump, suddenly everybody's an energy expert. And when it goes back down, everybody's back to their old habits.

For decades, we've talked about the threat to future generations posed by our current system of energy, even as we can see the mounting evidence of climate change, from the Arctic Circle to the Gulf Coast. And—this is particularly relevant to all of you who are serving in uniform—for decades, we've talked about the risks to our security created by dependence on foreign oil, but that dependence has actually grown year after year after year after year.

And while our politics has remained entrenched along these worn divides, the ground has shifted beneath our feet. Around the world, countries are seeking an edge in the global marketplace by investing in new ways of producing and saving energy. From China to Germany, these nations recognize that the nation that leads the clean energy economy will be the country that leads the global economy. And meanwhile, here at home, as politicians in Washington debate endlessly about whether to act, our own military's determined that we can no longer afford not to.

Some of the press may be wondering why we are announcing offshore drilling in a hangar at Andrews Air Force Base. Well, if there's any doubt about the leadership that our military is showing, you just need to look at this F–18 fighter and the light armored vehicle behind me. The Army and Marine Corps have been testing this vehicle on a mixture of biofuels. And this Navy fighter jet, appropriately called the Green Hornet, will be flown for the first time in just a few days, on Earth Day. If tests go as planned, it will be the first plane ever to fly faster than the speed of sound on a fuel mix that is half biomass. The Air Force is also testing jet engines using biofuels and had the first successful biofuel-powered test flight just last week. I don't want to drum up any kind of rivalry here, but—[*laughter*].

Now, the Pentagon isn't seeking these alternative fuels just to protect our environment; they're pursuing these homegrown energy sources to protect our national security. Our military leaders recognize the security imperative of increasing the use of alternative fuels, decreasing energy use, reducing our reliance on imported oil, making ourselves more energy efficient. And that's why the Navy, led by Secretary Mabus, who's here today, has set a goal of using 50 percent alternative fuels in all planes, vehicles, and ships in the next 10 years. That's why the Defense Department has invested $2.7 billion this year alone to improve energy efficiency.

So moving towards clean energy is about our security. It's also about our economy. And it's about the future of our planet. And what I hope is, is the policies that we've laid out—from hybrid fleets to offshore drilling, from nuclear energy to wind energy—underscores the seriousness with which my administration takes this challenge. It's a challenge that requires us to break out of the old ways of thinking, to think and act anew. And it requires each of us, re-

gardless of whether we're in the private sector or the public sector, whether we're in the military or in the civilian side of Government, to think about how could we be doing things better, how could we be doing things smarter so that we are no longer tethered to the whims of what happens somewhere in the Middle East or with other major oil-producing nations.

So I'm open to proposals from my Democratic friends and my Republican friends. I think that we can break out of the broken politics of the past when it comes to our energy policy. I know that we can come together to pass comprehensive energy and climate legislation that's going to foster new energy—new industries, create millions of new jobs, protect our planet, and help us become more energy independent. That's what we can do. That is what we must do. And I'm confident that is what we will do.

So thank you very much. And thanks, again, to all of you who are serving in our Armed Services. It—you are making an enormous contribution, and this is just one example of the leadership that you are showing.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:18 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Col. Steven M. Shepro, USAF, installation commander, Andrews Air Force Base, and commander, 316th Wing.

Remarks at the Closing Session of the Workplace Flexibility Forum
March 31, 2010

Hello, hello. Thank you, everybody. Please, please, have a seat. First, one caveat: I will not be good—as good as Michelle. [*Laughter*] So keep your expectations lower.

I want to first of all acknowledge John Berry for the extraordinary work he's doing here and for helping to organize this. Thank you, John.

In addition, we've got—Secretary Hilda Solis is here from our Department of Labor. Dr. Christina Romer, who's the Chair of our Council of Economic Advisers—where are you, Christina?—right there; Valerie Jarrett, a Senior Adviser and Chair of the White House Council on Women and Girls. Ms. Melody Barnes I actually just saw run off to the garden. She was on my list—the Chair of our Domestic Policy Council—but she's not here; Karen Mills, who is the Administrator for our Small Business Administration; and Ms. Martha Johnson, Administrator of the General Services Administration.

So I understand you've had a wonderful session. I heard all about it. And I want to thank all of you for joining us today and sharing your thoughts on what we can do, as business leaders and advocates, as employees and as Government officials, to modernize our workplaces to meet the needs of our workforce and our families.

And all of us here today know just how wide that gap has grown. And we're all familiar with the economic and demographic changes that have brought us to this point, how over the past generation or two, as costs have risen and wages have lagged, many families have found they can no longer survive on just one income. And at the same time, we've broken down barriers and opened up opportunities, so more women have entered into the workforce, bringing home paychecks that are increasingly critical to supporting families.

Today, two-thirds of American families with kids are headed by two working parents or a single working parent, and the result is the rise of what one expert I know refers to as "the juggler family." For these families, every day is a high wire act. Everything is scheduled right down to the minute. There's no room for error. If the car breaks down, or somebody gets sick, or there's a problem at school, that begins a cascading domino effect that leaves everybody scrambling.

And I have to say that this is something that Michelle and I have struggled with in our own family. As she told you earlier today, it wasn't that long ago that both of us were working full-time outside the home while raising two young daughters. I was away for days on end for my job, and Michelle was working hard at hers, so

a lot of times we felt like we were just barely keeping everything together. When we were at work, we were worrying about what was happening at home; when we were at home, we were worrying about work. We both felt our overloaded schedules were taking a toll on our marriage.

And we had it relatively easy. We could afford good health care. We had a wonderful mother-in-law, grandmother—[*laughter*]—who could help out. We had to ship her in, even in the White House. [*Laughter*] We both had jobs where we could rework our schedules in an emergency without risking being fired or having our paychecks docked.

Now, most folks just aren't that lucky, particularly in today's economy when many people aren't just working one job but are having to work two or three to get by, or they're working longer hours, or they're out of a job and they can't afford to be choosy about things like flexibility and benefits.

And this disconnect between the needs of our families and the demands of our workplace also reflects a broader problem, that today, we as a society still see workplace flexibility policies as a special perk for women rather than a critical part of a workplace that can help all of us. There's still this perception out there that an employee who needs some time to tend to an aging parent or attend to a parent-teachers conference isn't fully committed to his or her job, or that if you make a workplace more flexible, it necessarily will be less profitable.

Now, it's true that women are still disproportionately affected by this issue—something Michelle always reminds me of—[*laughter*]—which is another reason why it's such great concern for me. But plenty of fathers out there wish they had more time to spend with their kids. Plenty of sons wish they could do more for their elderly parents. Plenty of workers, both women and men, wish they could go back to school so they can beef up their skills and advance their careers. And there are plenty of communities that desperately need the new jobs we can create when we embrace teleworking and mobile workplaces.

And as for how this issue affects companies' bottom lines, a report by the White House Council of Economic Advisers that we're releasing today found that companies with flexible work arrangements can actually have lower turnover and absenteeism and higher productivity and healthier workers.

So let's be clear: Workplace flexibility isn't just a women's issue. It's an issue that affects the well-being of our families and the success of our businesses. It affects the strength of our economy, whether we'll create the workplaces and jobs of the future we need to compete in today's global economy.

And ultimately, it reflects our priorities as a society, our belief that no matter what each of us does for a living, caring for our loved ones and raising the next generation is the single most important job that we have. I think it's time we started making that job a little easier for folks.

Now, many of you here represent companies and workplaces that are already doing just that: embracing telecommuting, flextime, compressed work weeks, job sharing, flexible start and end times, and helping your employees generally find quality childcare and eldercare. And if you're doing this not just because it's the right thing to do, but because you've found that what's good for your workers and is good for your families can be good for your bottom lines and your shareholders as well, then you need to spread the word.

My administration is committed to supporting efforts like these. Our budget for next year includes competitive grants to help States launch their own paid-leave programs. It increases funding for childcare and nearly doubles the childcare tax credit for millions of middle class families. And it provides support for folks caring for aging relatives and for seniors who want to live independently for as long as possible.

We're also committed to practicing what we preach and serving as a model for the policies that we're encouraging. And John has been all over this. That's the purpose of the pilot project that John just told you about.

And that's why John is working with our Chief Technology Officer, Aneesh Chopra, to provide opportunities for Federal employees here in Washington, but also all across America

to telework on a regular basis. Where regulations are in the way, we'll see what we can do to change them. Where new technology can help, we'll find a secure, cost-effective way to install it. Where training is needed to help managers and workers embrace this approach, we'll adopt the best practices from the private sector.

Because in the end, we believe that all of this isn't just about providing a better work experience for our employees, it's about providing better, more efficient service for the American people, even in the face of snowstorms and other crises that keep folks from getting to the office. [*Laughter*] I do not want to see the Government close because of snow again. [*Laughter*]

It's about attracting and retaining top talent in the Federal workforce and empowering them to do their jobs and judging their success by the results that they get, not by how many meetings they attend or how much face time they log or how many hours are spent on airplanes. It's about creating a culture where, as Martha Johnson puts it, "Work is what you do, not where you are."

And in these efforts, we'll be looking to all of you for advice and ideas. And we plan to continue this conversation in the coming months, holding forums and roundtables in communities across the country, so we can seek out more good ideas and best practices that we can adopt and promote.

So again, I thank you for being part of this forum. I look forward to hearing about what you all came up with today. And I look forward to working with all of you in the years to come.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:34 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Karen Kornbluh, U.S. Permanent Representative to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, in her capacity as founder of the Work and Family Program at the New America Foundation; and his mother-in-law Marian Robinson.

Statement on the Death of Jaime Escalante
March 31, 2010

I was saddened to hear about the passing of Jaime Escalante today. While most of us got to know him through the movie that depicted his work teaching inner-city students calculus, the students whose lives he changed remain the true testament to his life's work.

Throughout his career Jaime opened the doors of success and higher education for his students one by one and proved that where a person came from did not have to determine how far they could go. He instilled knowledge in his students, but more importantly he helped them find the passion and the will to fulfill their potential. Jaime's story became famous. But he represented countless, valiant teachers throughout our country whose great works are known only to the young people whose lives they change.

Michelle and I offer our condolences to Jaime's family and to all those who knew him and whose lives he touched.

Memorandum on Withdrawal of Certain Areas of the United States Outer Continental Shelf From Leasing Disposition
March 31, 2010

Memorandum for the Secretary of the Interior

Subject: Withdrawal of Certain Areas of the United States Outer Continental Shelf from Leasing Disposition

Under the authority granted to me in section 12(a) of the Outer Continental Shelf

Lands Act, 43 U.S.C. 1341(a), I hereby withdraw from disposition by leasing through June 30, 2017, the Bristol Bay area of the North Aleutian Basin in Alaska. This withdrawal prevents consideration of Bristol Bay for leasing for any oil or gas development in the Outer Continental Shelf, whether for exploratory or production purposes.

Nothing in this withdrawal affects the rights under existing leases in this area.

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks in Portland, Maine
April 1, 2010

The President. Hello, Portland.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. Thank you, Portland. Thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. Well, what a wonderful—I guess when the Sun comes out around here, everybody gets pretty excited.

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you back.

Now, I have to say, the last time I was in Maine, it was before the caucuses. It was a little cooler here—[*laughter*]—as I recall. But it is wonderful to be back. There are some people I want to say a few nice things about.

First of all, we could not have a better Small Business Administrator than your own neighbor, Karen Mills. And so please give her a huge round of applause. She's doing a great job. And I think she has more than a few folks from Maine on her staff. She's kind of stocked them all over the place. And everybody is doing a great job over at the SBA. I want to thank——

Audience member. Thank you!

The President. Thank you. I want to thank one of the finest Governors in the country, John Baldacci, who is here. Thank you, John. Where is he? There he is right there. Thank you.

Your outstanding mayor, Nick Mavodones, is here. And we've got two great champions from Maine whose tireless efforts have helped working families all across this State and all across this country, Congresswoman Chellie Pingree and Congressman Mike Michaud.

All right, it is good to be back in Maine. And I want everybody to remember, when I came here during the campaign, I made a promise. And it wasn't a promise about any particular issue. It was a promise that our Government would once again be responsive to the needs and aspirations of working families, of America's middle class. It was a promise that Washington would concern itself not just with the next election, but with the next generation of Americans.

Now, keeping that promise is even more critical now, at a time when so many families and so many small-business owners are still struggling here in Maine and all across the country. Every time I visit with workers in a factory or families in a diner, every time I sit down and read letters from Americans across the country, I see and hear the same questions. Folks are asking: "How am I going to find a job when I've only known one skill my entire lifetime and I just got laid off and I'm in my fifties?" "How am I going to retire when I keep spending my savings just to get by, or trying to make sure that my kid can go to college and tuition keeps on going up?" "How am I going to make it when I'm stretched to the limits on my mortgage and on my bills?" Those are the questions that I hear.

And I want you to know we are working every single day to spur job creation and to turn this economy around. That's why we worked so hard over the last year to lift one of the biggest burdens facing middle class families and small-business owners, and that is the crushing cost of health care right here in America.

And, Mainers, I want you to know that last week, after a year of debate and a century of trying, health insurance reform became the law of the land—last week. Last week.

Audience members. Yes we did! Yes we did! Yes we did!

The President. Yes we did. Because of folks like Chellie and Mike, it happened. Because of people like you, it happened. It happened because people had the courage to stand up at town hall meetings and talk about how insurance companies were denying their families

coverage because of a preexisting condition. It happened because folks wrote letters about how premiums had gone up 50 or 70 or 100 percent, in some cases, and it was forcing them to give up their insurance. It happened because countless small-business owners and families and doctors shared stories about a health care system that was working better for the insurance industry than it did for American people.

And when the special interests sent an army of lobbyists to Congress and blanketed the airwaves with millions of dollars in negative ads, all of you mobilized and organized, and you refused to give up. And when the pundits were obsessed over what the polls were saying and who was up and who was down and what would this mean for Democrats or Republicans, you never lost sight of what was right and what was wrong. You knew it wasn't about the fortunes of one party; it was about the future of our country. And today, Portland, because of what you did, the future looks stronger and more hopeful than it has in some time.

Now, over the last year, there's been a lot of misinformation spread about health reform. There's been a lot of fearmongering, a lot of overheated rhetoric. You turned on the news, you'd see that those same folks who were hollering about it before it passed, they're still hollering about how the world will end because we passed this bill. [*Laughter*] This is not an exaggeration. John Boehner called the passage of this bill——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. ——no need to—we don't need to boo; I just want to give the facts—called this passage of this bill "Armageddon." You had others who said this is the "end of freedom as we know it."

So after I signed the bill, I looked around. [*Laughter*] I looked up at the sky to see if asteroids were coming. [*Laughter*] I looked at the ground to see if cracks had opened up in the earth. You know what, it turned out it was a pretty nice day. [*Laughter*] Birds were still chirping. Folks were strolling down the street. Nobody had lost their doctor. Nobody had pulled the plug on granny. [*Laughter*] Nobody was being dragged away to be forced into some Government-run health care plan.

But the thing is, though, you have to love some of the pundits in Washington. Every single day since I signed the reform law, there's been another poll or headline that said "Nation Still Divided on Health Care Reform. Polls Haven't Changed Yet." Well, yes. It just happened last week. [*Laughter*] It's only been a week.

Can you imagine if some of these reporters were working on a farm, and—[*laughter*]—you know, you planted some seeds, and they came out the next day and they looked, and—"Nothing's happened!" [*Laughter*] "There's no crop! We're going to starve! Oh, no! It's a disaster!" [*Laughter*]

It's been a week, folks. [*Laughter*] So before we find out if people like health care reform, we should wait to see what happens when we actually put it into place. Just a thought.

Now, look, this reform is not going to solve every problem with our health care system. It is a huge, complicated piece of business: a couple of trillion dollars, thousands of people affected, thousands of people working in the industry. It's not going to bring down the cost of health care overnight. We're going to have to make some adjustments along the way. But it represents enormous progress. It enshrines the principle that every American should have the security of decent care and that nobody should go bankrupt because they've got a kid who's sick with a preexisting condition, that small businesses shouldn't be burdened because they want to do the right thing by their employee. So now that this bill is finally law and all the folks who've been playing politics will finally have to confront the reality of what this reform is, they're also going to have to confront the reality of what it isn't.

They'll have to finally acknowledge that this isn't a Government takeover of our health care system. They'll see that if Americans like their doctor, they will keep their doctor. And if you like your insurance plan, you will keep it. No one will be able to take that away from you. It hasn't happened yet. It won't happen in the future.

What this reform represents is basically a middle-of-the-road solution to a very serious problem. It's not single-payer. Some people wanted that, I understood that, but that is not—[*applause*]—see? But—so it's not that. But it's also not what the Republicans were advocating for, which is essentially that you completely deregulate the insurance industry, you let them run wild, and that somehow you are going to benefit. That was their theory. It was called the "foxes guarding the chicken coop" health care plan.

So it's not the plan that some on the left supported in the past. It's not what some on the right supported, but it is a commonsense plan. This reform incorporates ideas from both Democrats and Republicans, including, by the way, a number of ideas from your Senator and somebody I consider a friend, Olympia Snowe, who spent many hours meeting with me on this bill.

And what this reform does is, it builds on the system of private health insurance that we've already got, so that if you have insurance, this reform will make it more secure and more affordable. If you can't afford insurance or if you've been denied coverage, you're finally going to be able to get it. And over time, costs will come down for families, businesses, and the Federal Government, reducing our deficit by more than $1 trillion over the next two decades. That's what this reform will do.

Now, Portland, it will take about 4 years to implement this entire plan, because we've got to do it responsibly, we need to get it right. But there's also a set of reforms that will take effect this year. So I just want to—I want everybody to understand what's going to happen this year.

Starting this year, millions of small-business owners are going to be eligible for a tax credit that will help them cover the cost of insurance for their employees. And let me talk about what this means for a small-business owner like Bill Milliken. Is that—Bill, stand up. That's Bill right there. Now, I want to give a little plug to Bill here. [*Laughter*] Bill owns Market House Coffee and the Maine Beer and Beverage corporation, both here, right here in Portland. In exchange for this publicity, I hope that I'm going to get some samples of the beer. [*Laughter*] Okay, he nodded in the affirmative. [*Laughter*]

Now, he wants to give his part-time employees health insurance, and he wants to give them more hours, but he can't do both. He can't afford to do both. So this tax credit will make it easier for an employer like Bill who wants to do the right thing by his workers.

Starting now, small-business owners like Bill will have the security of knowing that they can qualify for a tax credit that covers up to 35 percent—over a third—of what they pay for their employees' health insurance. And starting now, small-business owners that provide health care for their workers can sit down at the end of the week, they can look at their expenses, and they can begin calculating how much money they're going to save. And for small-business owners who don't currently provide health insurance, they're going to be able to factor in this new benefit when they're deciding to do so.

Now, it won't solve all our problems, but it means that employees that work for Bill have a better chance of keeping their health care or getting health care. And if they're already getting health care, it means Bill has got some extra money. That means he might hire that extra worker, right?

So this health care tax credit is projobs, it's probusiness, and it starts this year. This month we're going to be sending out details on how to apply for this credit to millions of small businesses across the county, but if you want to learn about it today, we're going to put all the facts on our web site, www.whitehouse.gov. All right? So that happens this year.

Here's what else happens this year: Tens of thousands of uninsured Americans with preexisting conditions and parents whose children have a preexisting condition will finally be able to purchase the coverage that they need. That happens this year.

So last week I met a man named David Gallagher, whose daughter Lauren had written me a letter last year. When Lauren's mom lost her job, their entire family lost their health insurance. When they tried to get new insurance, David was denied coverage because he once had a complication-free hernia surgery, but the insurance companies wanted to weed him out. They figured, "Well, the guy has been sick before; we don't want to have to cover him, we

don't want to bear that risk." So Lauren has been worried sick about what would happen if her father became ill or injured. Now, because of this reform, David Gallagher can finally have access to health insurance again. That begins this year; that starts this year.

So that's just one of the insurance reforms that starts this year. Here's what else happens: Insurance companies won't be able to drop people's coverage when they get sick or place lifetime limits or restrictive annual limits on the amount of care they can receive.

Now, this isn't some abstract concept. There was a story in a local paper this week about a woman named Theresa D'Andrea. And Theresa's husband——

Audience member. D'Andrea.

The President. D'Andrea, excuse me. Thank you. Where is she? Are you up there? Stand up. Stand up, Theresa. Now, Theresa's husband passed away recently from cancer, and before he died, he hit the lifetime cap on his insurance. And as a result, Theresa's not only had to cope with the loss of her husband, but with $60,000 in medical bills—and this is after she's already spent all of her retirement savings on medical care. Now, because of this reform, a situation like Theresa's won't happen again in the United States of America. And that's going to start this year. And we're inspired by stories like yours.

Starting this year, all new insurance plans will be required to offer free preventive care. And starting this year—this may interest some of you here—if you are a young person who doesn't have insurance or doesn't have a job that offers insurance, you're going to be able to stay on your parent's insurance policy until you're 26 years old, starting this year—starting this year. So——

Audience member. Thank you.

The President. ——now—you're welcome. [*Laughter*] Thank Chellie and Mike; they voted for it. Thank them.

This year, seniors who fall into the coverage gap known as the doughnut hole—some seniors probably know about that—they're going to receive $250 to help pay for prescriptions, and that's just the first step, because what we're going to be doing is, over the next several years, closing that gap completely. And I want seniors to know, despite some of the stuff that's been said out there, these reforms don't cut into your guaranteed benefits. What they do is eliminate copayments and deductibles for preventive care, like checkups and mammograms. You will be getting those for free now.

This is why AARP supported this bill, because it's good for seniors. It's the right thing to do. It's good for young people. It's the right thing to do. It's good for people who've hit these lifetime limits. It's good for people with preexisting conditions. All that happens this year.

And then, by 2014, each State will set up what we're calling a health insurance exchange, but it's basically just a competitive marketplace where uninsured people and small businesses, who right now are out there on their own trying to negotiate with insurance companies, they can now be part of a big pool: millions of people coming together, leveraging their purchasing power, which is going to lower their rates. They'll get a better deal.

You know, Wal-Mart, the reason they are able to give you low prices is because they buy, and they tell their suppliers, we're the biggest—we're a 800-pound gorilla when it comes to whatever product you're talking about, so you've got to give better prices. Well, the same thing is true when it comes to the insurance market. So everybody who can be part of this pool is going to get a better deal than they would otherwise get.

And by the way, Members of Congress are going to be part of this pool. So you know it's going to be good, because they're going to have to use it themselves for their own families.

So that'll happen in the next few years. And when this exchange is up and running, millions of people are also going to get tax breaks to help them afford coverage. So even though this pool will give you lower rates, you'll get a better deal, some folks still can't afford it. So we're going to give you tax credits to help you afford it. And that adds up to the largest middle class tax cut in health care in history. That's what this bill is about.

So think about it. That's what this is about. We're setting up a pool using the private market to give people a better deal. We're giving tax breaks to working people—some of them working two, three jobs, who still can't get insurance—we're going to give them some help. We're going to give small businesses help so that they can help their workers and improve their bottom line. And we've got a whole bunch of insurance reforms so people like Theresa aren't going to be disadvantaged and taken advantage of when they need it most. That's what this bill is. And it's paid for, and it saves on our deficits.

Now, this is what everybody's been hollering about as the end of freedom. [*Laughter*] And now that it's passed, they're already promising, we're going to repeal it.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. They're going to run on a platform of repeal in November. And my attitude is, go for it. You try to repeal it.

I want these Members of Congress to come out of Washington, come here to Maine, and tell Mr. Milliken there, you know what, we're going to take away your tax credits, essentially raise your taxes. If you want to—if they want to do that, be my guest.

If they want to look at Lauren Gallagher in the eye and tell her they plan to take away her father's ability to get health insurance, that's their right. If they want to go tell Theresa that once again, you could face a lifetime of debt if you lose a family member, they can run on that platform.

If they want to have a fight, I welcome that fight, because I don't believe the American people are going to put the insurance industry back in the driver's seat. I'm happy to have that argument. I'm happy to have that argument.

Now, in fairness—and I want to be scrupulously fair—some of them have now said, "Well, we want to repeal and replace this bill with our brand of insurance reform." But when you poke and prod and you ask them, well, what is it exactly you're going to replace it with, it turns out they want to deregulate the insurance market. We've already been there. We know what that's like. We're not going back. We're not going backwards. This country is ready to move forwards. Portland, Maine, is ready to move forward.

And while we're talking about moving forward, I just want to mention one thing. Kind of lost in the shuffle of all this health care debate is the fact that part of the bill that we signed—that I signed this week—is going to provide an additional $68 billion that used to go to banks and financial services companies, and that's now going to go to the student loan program to expand Pell grants and to make sure that college is affordable for every young person in America. And I want to know, do they want to repeal that as well, because I'm happy to have that discussion.

Now, $68 billion—$68 billion—that was going to banks and financial institutions, we've just taken that money from the banks, from the financial institutions, doubling Pell grants, making sure that young people, if you've got debt when you go out of college—and I know I did, so I—you probably do too—that you will never have to pay more than 10 percent of your income in repayments, so that you're not going broke because you decide to get a college education that makes our economy stronger, that makes America stronger. If they want to repeal that too, we can have that discussion.

You know, the road to this victory has been long. It has been difficult. And it's absolutely true that because health care is such a complicated issue, a lot of people got worried. A lot of people got scared. And the misinformation seeped in. And then the process was ugly and everybody was arguing and there was all kinds of stuff going on in the Senate and the House, and everybody just said, "Ah, you know, this looks like a mess."

I understand that. That's part of our democracy. This is a—democracy is a messy business. It is the worst form of government except for all the other ones that have been tried. [*Laughter*] That's what Winston Churchill said. That's what Winston Churchill said; he's absolutely right. You know, it can be frustrating sometimes, but ultimately that's what makes our country so great, is because everybody is able to voice their opinions; everybody is able to get out there and organize. And you're free to call your President an idiot. [*Laughter*] You know?

Audience member. You're not one.

The President. They——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. No, that's—it's a wonderful thing. As I was driving by, people were waving. Everybody was clapping. And then one guy's like, "Eh." [*Laughter*] He saw me through the window too. He went, "Eh." [*Laughter*] I thought, that's a great thing about the country.

Look—but I want everybody to learn the lesson from this debate. In reaching this milestone, it doesn't represent the end of all our problems. We still have jobs to create and deficits to reduce. We still have children to educate. We still face enormous challenges in this country. Jobs haven't been returning fast enough, despite everything that we're doing. The economy is growing again, but people still haven't been hired back as fast as they need to. Small businesses are still having trouble getting credit out there. So there are all kinds of issues we're going to have to work on.

But what this fight has taught us about ourselves and about this country, it's bigger than any one issue. It reminds us that change is never easy, but it's always possible. It reminds us that in the United States of America, we still have the power to shape our own destiny. And it reminds us that we as a people don't shrink from a challenge. We don't shirk our responsibilities, we embrace challenges. We don't fear the future, we shape the future. That's what we do. That's who we are. That's what you're about. That's why you're here. That's why I ran for President of the United States of America. That's what makes us the United States of America.

Thank you, Portland. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:17 p.m. at the Portland Exposition Building.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on the Free Flow of Information to and Exercise of Universal Rights in Iran
April 1, 2010

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with the authorities contained in section 1264 of the Victims of Iranian Censorship Act (Subtitle D of Title XII of Public Law 111–84, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010), I am providing a report prepared by my Administration. This report details U.S. efforts to ensure the free flow of information to Iran and to enhance the abilities of Iranians to exercise their universal rights.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception in Boston, Massachusetts
April 1, 2010

The President. Hello, Boston. It's good to be back. Good to be back in Beantown.

Audience member. We love you, President Obama!

The President. I love you back.

Audience member. Keep smiling! [*Laughter*]

The President. I can't help it. [*Laughter*] There are a couple people I want to make sure I acknowledge: our Lieutenant Governor Tim Murray is in the house. I believe a sizable portion of the Massachusetts congressional delegation is here. Please wave. Where are they? I see—who do I got? Markey, Capuano—who

else we got here? Delahunt is over here. Love these guys. [*Laughter*]

One of the finest mayors in the country, Tom Menino is in the house. Senator Paul Kirk is here. My dear friend, Vicki Kennedy, is here.

Somebody else who's inspired me—some of you know that the Democrats, when we came in, we decided we'd try to advance this novel concept, and that is that women should get the same pay as men for doing the same work. The bill that we signed was called the Lilly Ledbetter bill because Lilly Ledbetter, through her court case, inspired an entire nation to say that the Supreme Court wasn't right and we needed to do something about it. And Lilly Ledbetter is here. I want everybody to give her a big round of applause.

Now, it's a hard thing being a Governor. It's a hard thing being a Governor and the chairman of the Democratic National Committee. And over the last year, this guy has done it with the grace and the stick-to-it-iveness that has marked his entire career. He's one of my dearest friends, the first person to endorse me outside of Illinois, standing in the seat of the old Confederacy in February of 2007, my dear friend Tim Kaine. I should point out that he was term limited. He only had one term to serve, so he was willing to do something crazy like endorse me that quick. [*Laughter*]

And then let me thank Deval for the extraordinary introduction. And before I begin, I want to say a few words about the record flooding that's been sweeping across a large portion of New England. I stopped by the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency with Deval earlier today to be briefed on relief and recovery efforts, and I want everybody to know that we are working closely, minute by minute, with authorities in both States to provide the necessary assistance.

And I want to thank personally local and State first-responders who've been working tirelessly and under difficult circumstances to save lives and property. I want to thank our team at FEMA that is fully engaged and committed to working with affected communities not only in terms of response efforts, but also in terms of rebuilding efforts. And tomorrow Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano and FEMA Director—or FEMA Deputy Administrator Rich Serino, who is a Boston native, by the way——

Audience member. Woo! [*Laughter*]

The President. ——will be visiting Rhode Island to tour some of the hardest hit areas and make sure that we are doing everything we can.

Audience member. Thank you!

The President. You are welcome, but thank them. And all of our thoughts and prayers are with the families who've been dislocated and are wrestling with this enormous tragedy.

It is worth reminding people at a time when folks who work in Government don't get enough credit that when times are tough, when trouble arises, there are all kinds of civil servants out there who are working 24/7 in order to help folks. And I think it's worth remembering that when you hear some of the rhetoric out there.

Now, it's good to be back in a town that's been so good to me. People forget I once spent 3 years cooped up in a library across the river. [*Laughter*] I still managed to make some good memories though. A few years ago, I gave this speech down at the convention speech that went pretty good. [*Laughter*] Most of you didn't know my name before that. But one man who did is a man who wakes up every single day determined to fight the good fight for Massachusetts families and Massachusetts's future, and that's your Governor, and my dear friend, Deval Patrick.

Deval stood up for me when I was running for the United States Senate that year. Then, right after I took office, he came to me; I had just set up my office at the Hart Building. Deval is saying this is a true story; this is a true story. [*Laughter*] He says "Barack, congratulations. We're so proud of you. I've got this idea. I've got this feeling that the people of Massachusetts might be looking for something a little bit different, and so I've got this hunger to serve. I want to run for Governor." And I thought to myself, "Well, this guy is crazy." [*Laughter*] "He's not going to win. He's never run for anything." At the time there were these candidates who had been planning the race for years. But then I thought to myself, "Well, yes, but he supported me when I was doing this stu-

pid thing running for the United States Senate, so—and I like him, so, what the heck." [*Laughter*]

He had already put himself out there for one hopeless cause, I figured the least I could do was to return the favor. But the reason that I did it happily was because I knew there was a core decency and integrity about Deval. I knew that this was a man who does the right thing, who has a vision for the future, somebody who was going to be tenacious in his pursuit of that vision. And even though he didn't have any money or big-name support, as soon as he started getting organized, I said to myself, "He's going to win."

And I watched him travel across this Commonwealth, listening to you and building his campaign house by house, block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood, and that confidence spread to others. And folks began to say, "You know, this guy Patrick, he's not Irish." [*Laughter*] "But we like him anyway." [*Laughter*] I mean, it was a good trick. Initially, people would come—[*laughter*]—and then when it was too late to—they listened to him and—[*laughter*]. I did the same thing. [*Laughter*] I put an apostrophe after the "O"—[*laughter*]—and it worked out pretty good.

But the reason it worked was because Deval knew that the campaign wasn't about him, it was about you. His core vision was that everyone in this Commonwealth had a part to play in building its future, and so many of you built a movement for change that could not be denied.

So I want you to realize that you've got a tremendous leader in Deval Patrick. In what is an extraordinarily tough time to be a Governor, he has moved forward, not on the easy issues, but on the tough issues: pushing historic ethics reform, making education a top priority, keeping Massachusetts at the forefront of clean technology and biotechnology and all the innovations that are ultimately going to determine how well America is able to compete around the world in the 21st century. He's the Governor that's going to keep leading Massachusetts into the future.

And here's what else I want you to remember, Boston. The campaign Deval Patrick built is the same campaign for change that you and I built across this country, same way: house by house, block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood. Because we shared a simple belief: Change does not come from the top down; change comes from the bottom up. It comes from Americans like you. That's what this movement has been about.

You believed that government of the people and by the people could still work for the people. You believed that we could still stand up to the special interests by standing up for middle class interests. You believed that we should finally solve the problems that had been holding back our families and our businesses year after year after year. You believed that it was still possible to change the United States of America for the better. And Boston, I've come to tell you tonight that we have kept faith with those beliefs. We have begun to solve those problems. The change you fought for is beginning to take hold.

Now, we knew from the beginning that it wouldn't be easy. Change never is. President Kennedy once said: "When we got into office, the thing that surprised me most was that things were as bad as we'd been saying they were." [*Laughter*] Right, Deval?

Governor Deval L. Patrick of Massachusetts. That's right. [*Laughter*]

The President. So when we took office, we faced a financial crisis unseen since the 1930s, economy bleeding 750,000 jobs a month, a $1.3 trillion deficit, and two wars that were costly in every sense of the word.

So priority number one was responding to this incredible economic crisis. And by the way, some of the short-term steps required to do that weren't popular and they weren't easy. The pundits in Washington kept on saying, "What's he doing shoring up the banks and the auto industry and passing a Recovery Act? Doesn't he know it's unpopular? Doesn't he know it will make him vulnerable?"

Well, yes, it turns out I've got pollsters too. [*Laughter*] We usually know what's going to be unpopular before the newspapers do. [*Laughter*] But I also knew that if you govern

by pundits and polls, then you lose sight of why you got into public service in the first place. You lose sight of why all of you fought so hard to put me there in the first place. And I refuse to govern that way. That's not why we fought so hard to win office.

My job is to solve problems for the people who elected me to solve them and for the people who didn't. [*Laughter*] My job wasn't to husband my popularity, make sure that I'm not making waves. That's how a lot of folks who get into office govern. It's easy. But that's part of the reason why we've seen so little progress on the things that matter so much to ordinary people.

So I resolved to do not necessarily what was popular, but what I thought was right. And a year later, the financial system has stabilized. I love, you know, in the midst of the crisis—you guys may remember last March, when the stock market was bottoming out—"This is Obama's stock market." [*Laughter*] Wall Street Journal said that, "Oh, look at his policies." And I notice it's not my market anymore. [*Laughter*] I don't know what happened. You notice that? [*Laughter*]

We recovered most of the money it took to stabilize the financial markets. And I've proposed a fee on the biggest banks to recover every last dime that's still out there, so we are going to make sure that taxpayers get all their money back. A year later, GM is hiring again, on the verge of reopening hundreds of dealerships. A year later, the Recovery Act has put Americans back to work across the country rebuilding our infrastructure, provided nearly $300 billion in tax cuts designed to help small businesses and 95 percent of working Americans, and that's a major reason why the economy that was shrinking a year ago is growing today. Taking those steps was the right thing to do.

Now, think back to just 2 months ago. Everybody thought our chances at progress were suddenly doomed. A Republican had won Ted Kennedy's seat.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Massachusetts, you caused quite a bit of excitement around the country. [*Laughter*] The sky was falling. You remember that? I'm sure none of you felt that way. [*Laughter*]

But we did what our friend Teddy would have done. We kept up the fight, because it was the right thing to do. And because we did, and because of the Members of Congress who are here today, last week we proved that America is a better nation than one that allows illness or accident to endanger the dreams of its people, people who have worked a lifetime to build those dreams. We finally passed comprehensive health insurance reform in America. After a hundred years, we passed health insurance reform and enshrined the idea that everybody should have some security when it comes to their health care. Nobody should be bankrupt when they get sick. No child should languish because of lack of care. After a hundred years.

As Joe Biden said, who has a way with words, this is—[*laughter*]—what? [*Laughter*] He said it's a big deal. [*Laughter*] This reform will begin to end the worst practices of the insurance industry. They're going to rein in our exploding deficits, and over time, finally offer millions of families and small-business owners quality, affordable care and the security and peace of mind that comes with it, some of those folks for the very first time in their lives. And what it doesn't do is it doesn't hand more control to the Government or to health insurance companies; it gives it back to you, the American people.

And then this week, we built on that progress. I signed into law a bill that will finally reform the student loan system so that it works for students and families instead of bankers. We took $68 billion—$68 billion—that would have been going to financial middlemen to pad their profits, even though they weren't taking any risks—because these were all federally guaranteed loans—and we said, why don't we use that to make college more affordable and to strengthen our community colleges, which are a pathway for so many working families to success. Because that's how we'll achieve the goal that I've set: By 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.

And so we're able to say to college students today that we have doubled Pell grants, and we are going to make sure that you never have to

pay more than 10 percent of your income for your college debt, because we don't want you being hampered as you get started in life. And if you go into a job like teaching we will forgive your loans after 10 years. That's an agenda for moving America forward.

And then next week, I'll travel to Prague, where the United States of America and Russia will sign the most comprehensive arms control agreement in nearly 20 years, part of our effort to stop the spread of nuclear weapons and seek a world without them.

So these are some of the recent successes that you made possible. But some of our other successes happened so quick, everybody's forgotten about them. [*Laughter*] I mean, people don't realize we made the largest investment in clean energy in history. Folks don't realize that we made this huge investment in information technologies for the health care system, so that you don't have to fill out as many forms when you go to the doctor and we can all start saving some money and saving some time. Folks don't realize that we put the law behind the principle of equal pay for an equal day's work. We passed laws to protect consumers from getting ripped off by credit card companies and homeowners from being taken advantage of by predatory lenders and our children being targeted from big tobacco. And we appointed Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court. And we made the White House the people's house again. And we passed a service bill named for Senator Ted Kennedy that's giving young and old a chance to serve their country and give back to their communities.

Audience member. What's next? [*Laughter*]

The President. I'm telling you. [*Laughter*] You sound like the reporters. [*Laughter*]

I was up in Maine, and I was joking about—only slightly joking—about the fact that the day after we signed it, everybody started writing these stories about how the country is still divided on health care, it hasn't suddenly become universally popular. [*Laughter*] What's going on? It's been a week, folks. [*Laughter*]

So I said, can you imagine if, you know, the pundits and the cable guys were covering a farm? [*Laughter*] And you know, you sort of till the soil and, look, the soil is all messed up. [*Laughter*] And then you put the seeds in, and the next day they'd write a story: "Nothing is growing." [*Laughter*] "We're going to starve. There are no crops." [*Laughter*] "It's polling really badly." [*Laughter*]

Here's the point—[*laughter*]—I'm starting to have fun, which I should not do—in ways large and small, Boston, we've begun to deliver on the change you believed in. We have done what we said we would do.

That's the other thing that surprises folks in Washington. They said, "Well, you know, why did you keep on doing health care?" Well, because I said—that's what I said I was going to do. [*Laughter*]

What our recent debates have lain bare is that even though we've had some success overcoming political gridlock, we haven't had as much success in changing political gridlock. We have to admit that. And I wanted to change the tone in Washington; it hasn't changed, not yet. But I still believe that if we're going to deal with the great challenges of our time and secure a better future, as past generations of Americans have done, as they did for us, then we're going to have to change our politics, because for all our efforts, change can't come fast enough for so many Americans.

Every time I visit workers in a factory or families in a diner, every night when I sit down and I read letters from everyday Americans, I get the same questions. People ask: "How am I going to find a job? I'm 50 years old. I've known only one skill my entire life, and now I've been laid off. Where do I turn?" Or, "How am I going to retire when I keep spending the savings I—all my savings just to get by, just to pay skyrocketing health care bills?" Or, "How am I going to make it when I'm stretched to the limit on my mortgage and my bills and I'm trying to save for my kids' college education?"

You know, they're not asking me: "Barack, which party is scoring more political points? Who's ahead at the polls? Who won the news cycle today?" They look to Washington, and they see a city that's just obsessed with red versus blue and who's up and who's down and every day is election day. Every day is election

day. There are stories out right now—"We've polled Obama in 2012." [*Laughter*] I'm not joking. I mean, people write entire columns—"Well, you know, matched up against hypothetical Republicans, here's what happening"—less concerned about what's going on in the life of folks in America.

And it's no wonder there's so much frustration out there. And yes, some of it is going to be directed at us because, you know what, one of the things you sign up for when you become a Governor or you become a President is that you're a lightning rod for all these frustrations that build up, legitimate frustrations.

Now, there are always going to be some issues where Democrats and Republicans just don't see eye to eye. That's how our democracy works. It's supposed to be messy. It was designed that way. But it's one thing to disagree out of principle; it's another way to stand—it's another thing to stand in the way just because it's politically expedient. And I don't know how else to describe one of the Republican Senators saying that health care was going to be "Obama's Waterloo." You remember that?

Audience members. Yes.

The President. That's the kind of politics that says, "When you lose, I win," regardless of what it means for the country. And that's an unfortunate approach, especially when this new law has a lot of Republicans in it—or a lot of Republican ideas in it. You know, you've got a former Governor of Massachusetts who's running around—[*laughter*]—saying, "What's this health reform bill?" [*Laughter*] And I keep on scratching my head and I say, boy, this Massachusetts thing, who designed that? [*Laughter*] And I have to say, already you're starting to see some Republicans that are actually claiming credit for some of the ideas in the bill, even though they fought against the bill.

And part of this was a early calculated decision made by Republican leaders in Congress not to work with us on the most important issues facing the American people. And they made this decision even before I was sworn into office. The general strategy was if they could block progress on any big issue, then they could say that the Democrats had failed and they could run on that in November. That's not just short-term politics, that's short-term thinking. And it's especially disappointing in a time of crisis when there's so much work to be done.

Well, it turns out health reform wasn't my Waterloo. [*Laughter*] And it turns out that the day after I signed the bill it wasn't Armageddon. [*Laughter*] No asteroids fell. [*Laughter*] The Earth didn't crack open. Nobody has lost their doctor. Nobody has been manacled and dragged into a Government plan. We're going to be okay. [*Laughter*] We're going to be better than okay. Because in the end, it was a long-overdue victory for the American people, and it's a step, like everything that we've done over the past year, to help restore some certainty and security to middle class families that have felt that security slipping away. And we're going to keep on fighting on those other challenges that we face.

So my friend back there, whoever it was, asked me what was next. Let me tell you. [*Laughter*] Folks can keep on calling me naive if they want. I've been called that before. I'm going to keep on reaching out to Republicans for their help.

Audience member. Don't bother! [*Laughter*]

The President. It may be heresy to say so at an event like this, I know—[*laughter*]—but I believe that those of us in public life have to care less about what's right for a party and more about what's right for the country. So I'm going to keep incorporating their ideas, even if they refuse to consider mine. Maybe we can even get your newest Senator on board with some of our efforts, because there's a lot we should be able to agree on.

We should all agree that we have to rebuild this economy so that hard work is once again rewarded and families feel like they've got a shot at the American Dream again. This isn't just an economic challenge for our country. It's a crisis that tears at our society's soul, because a job is more than just a paycheck. It's about feeling that sense of self-worth from a job well done, the fulfillment in meeting one's responsibilities. No American should be deprived of that dignity. And so we've going to have to think creatively and collaboratively if we're going to put Americans back to work.

We should all agree we have to pursue a comprehensive strategy for energy security that moves us from fossil fuels and foreign oil to homegrown fuels and clean energy, because the nation that leads in the clean energy sector will lead the economy in the 21st century.

We should all agree that we've got to pass commonsense rules for Wall Street to prevent the kind of nonsense that took place and helped to lead to this crisis, where a few reckless financial institutions can bring down an entire economy and burst the dreams of millions of American families.

We should all agree that we've got to bring down our mounting deficits, which is why I signed into law PAYGO rules—very simple concept, you pay as you go—that helped produce the budget surpluses of the 1990s. And that's why I ordered a freeze on discretionary spending and have created a bipartisan, independent commission to help solve our fiscal crisis, because we face some tough choices ahead, and we need to make them together. And they're not going to be made by slogans. They're going to be made by us coming together and deciding to do right by the next generation.

I know we can do this. I know we can overcome the politics of cynicism and come together in common purpose to solve our greatest challenges. And I know this because of you. I was remarking to Deval, the first time I was in this room was after the New Hampshire primary. Some of you were here. You remember that? And as is true, once you're President—folks had gotten carried away on the upswing, all right? So after Iowa, everybody had just gone crazy and "it's over" and this and that and the other. And then we lost New Hampshire, and suddenly, everybody was "ooh"—[*laughter*]. Everybody was sad. [*Laughter*] Well, not everybody; I mean the folks who were supporting me were sad. [*Laughter*]

And I remember coming to this room and—I don't know if some of you remember me saying this—I said, you know, I actually think this is a good thing. Because, I said, the race for the Presidency should not be easy. It should be hard; you should be tested. You should be poked and prodded, and the American people should be able to lift the hood and take candidates out for a test drive and see whether they meet the test. And the process of running for President is so humbling, in part because what you come to realize is the American people are so good, and they're so decent, and they deserve the best possible leadership.

And so I remember speaking to all of you and said, cheer up, stand up. We're in the midst of this remarkable democratic experiment, and I didn't get involved in this because I was a sure thing. I got involved in this because I felt it was the right thing to do, and that maybe my voice combined with your voice and voices of people all across the country could somehow make a meaningful difference.

And my faith is renewed every day by Americans that I meet all across this great country who refuse to settle for the status quo. My resolve is strengthened every time I see an American who rejects the idea that Americans can no longer do big things. I am fired up by every American who still believes that people who love their country can change it. And, Boston, we have seen what happens when we don't back down. We have seen what's happens when we don't quit. I don't quit; you don't quit. And I am absolutely confident, with your help, we will rise to our challenges. We will finish what we've started. We'll reelect Deval Patrick. We will keep the American Dream alive for this generation and for the next generation. You can bank on that.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:58 p.m. at the State Room. In his remarks, he referred to Victoria R. Kennedy, wife of former Sen. Edward M. Kennedy; Lilly Ledbetter, former employee, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company plant in Gadsden, AL; former Gov. Timothy M. Kaine of Virginia, chairman, Democratic National Committee; Sens. Scott P. Brown and James W. DeMint; and former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in Boston
April 1, 2010

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

Let me just begin by acknowledging some great friends. First of all, somebody who I consider one of the finest Governors in the country, and somebody who I know you guys are going to reelect, Governor Deval Patrick is in the house.

To the Massachusetts congressional delegation—I see Ed Markey here, but I want to—I know I saw Congressman Delahunt and Capuano earlier. They have shown such courage and have stuck to it in some very difficult circumstances and are consistently showing the kind of leadership we need. We now got Barney Frank who is about to make sure that we've got financial regulatory reform, which is going to be so critical. So to your congressional delegation, please give them a big round of applause, and Ed Markey in particular.

To my dear friend who has been a constant source of inspiration—Vicki Kennedy is here, and I want everybody to give her a big round of applause. And to all of you who cochaired this elegant event, I assure you I will not break out into song. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Tim Kaine for not only the generous introduction, not only for being an extraordinary Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, but also now being one of the best leaders of our party that we've ever had. Some of you may know, Tim Kaine was the first person, the first elected official outside of Illinois to endorse me when I announced my Presidential race—[*applause*]—on the steps of the old capitol of the Confederacy in Richmond in February of 2007, where most people couldn't pronounce my name. And there was no political gain for him to—in doing it. He just stepped out because he thought it was the right thing to do. And that's the kind of person that Tim Kaine has always been. He is decent; he is smart; he is principled. And to have somebody like that leading our party makes me feel better, and it should make you feel a lot better too. So thank you.

Very quickly, I want to say, obviously, that our hearts go out to all the families who've been affected by the recent flooding throughout New England. I was at the emergency center where Deval walked me through the steps that are being taken coordinating State, local, and Federal resources. We hope that the worst is behind us, but it's at moments like this where leadership is tested. And as usual, Deval has passed with flying colors.

It's also at moments like this—I spoke to a larger group before I came here—that we are reminded of the value of government. There is this notion afoot that somehow it's cool to be cynical about government. And then you go into this emergency center and you see these extraordinarily dedicated people working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, just to help others. And they're not making a lot of money doing it. But they're dedicated, they care. And it's a reminder that we are not just individuals out there pursuing our own self-interest, we're also a community, we're also neighbors, we're also friends. And those values that we care so deeply about, they need to express themselves through our Government as well.

And so it's something that is worth remembering. And I want to thank all the local and State officials who've been working so diligently, as well as our Federal officials, for doing what's so important.

Most of you are dear friends. I have known you through good times and tough times. The event right before we came here was held—Deval, what's the name of that place?

Governor Deval L. Patrick of Massachusetts. The State Room.

The President. The State Room. This room holds a special place in my heart because this is the room where I appeared before a whole bunch of supporters here in Boston the day after I lost the New Hampshire primary. You remember that? A bunch of you guys remember that. Marianne was there; a whole bunch of folks were there.

Most of the folks who were our supporters in Boston had gone up to New Hampshire to

trudge around and knock on doors and help to organize for the primary. And everybody had been on this euphoria coming out of Iowa. Remember, Jane? Everybody thought, oh, my goodness, this is, you know, everybody was talking about McCain already and measuring the drapes. [*Laughter*]

And although everybody worked hard, nobody took it for granted; I do think that there was just sort of a giddiness that was unhealthy in New Hampshire, which was punctured very quickly. And so one minute everybody was full of glee, and then the next moment, everybody was looking down. And that in New Hampshire was where I made the speech talking about "yes we can," that ended up winning a Grammy for Will.i.am—[*laughter*]—I didn't get a share of this.

But I remember going to that room and saying to folks, you know, I know this sounds like revisionist history, I know it sounds like I'm just trying to put some spin on something. I won't lie to you, I would have preferred to have won. But I said, I actually think in the long run this will be a good thing. And the reason I said that was because running for President is such an incredible honor, and the task you are setting for yourself in being President is so profound that it shouldn't be easy. You shouldn't glide into that job.

The American people expect, rightly, that their President will have been tested. And the reason is, is because they're tested all the time. They're tested when they lose their job. They're tested when they're trying to scramble to put together enough savings to send their kids to college. They're tested when somebody in the family gets sick and it turns out that the insurance doesn't cover everything that they're doing. They're tested in all sorts of ways that aren't always easy to anticipate.

And so the least they can expect is that somebody who has the audacity and the megalomania to run for President is going to be put through the paces. And folks want to see—well, we're not going to just hand this to you, we want to see that you can bounce back. We want to see that you have the resilience and the determination to help guide this country through what folks at that time knew was going to be a very difficult period for our country. And so it was fascinating to me to be back in that room with many of the same supporters, because it was a reminder of what this past year and a half has been about.

A lot of people have asked, "Why is it you seem so calm?" And what I've tried to say often—and a lot of times this gets discounted in the press—is that the experience of having traveled throughout this country, having learned the stories of ordinary folks who are doing extraordinary things in their communities, in their neighborhoods, having met all the people who put so much energy and effort into our campaign, having seen the ups and downs, and having seen how Washington was always the last to get what was going on, always the last to get the news, what that told me was that if we were willing to not do what was expedient, and not do what was convenient, and not try to govern based on the polls today or tomorrow or the next day, but rather based on a vision for how we can rebuild this country in a way that works for everybody; if we are focused on making sure that there are ladders of opportunity for people to continue to strive and achieve the American Dream and that that's accessible to all, not just some; if we kept our eye on what sort of future do we want for our kids and our grandkids so that 20 years from now and 30 years from now people look back on this generation the way we look back on the greatest generation and say to ourselves, "Boy, they made some tough decisions, they got through some tough times, but look, we now have a clean energy economy; look, our schools are revitalized; look, our health care system works for every single American; imagine how tough that was and how much resistance they met from the special interests, but they were still willing to do it"—if that was how we governed, then I figured that the politics would take care of itself. And if it didn't, then we could still stand tall and still look at ourselves in the mirror and say, you know what, this was worth it. This is why we worked so hard to get here.

That's what this last year has been about. And I want you to know now that's what this next year will be about. And that's what the

year after that will be about, because we've got a lot of work to do. When we signed up—and I say "we" because all of you guys were early investors. Many of you didn't just write a check, but you bled this stuff. And many of you over the last year have had to answer aggravated e-mails from people or political advice—I'm sure you get those e-mails, "Please tell the President that if he just"—[*laughter*]. Right? I know. I get them too. [*Laughter*] We should expect that it's going to continue to be hard.

These November elections, as Tim said, will be hard, partly because this country is still divided, and after 2006 and 2008, we hit a very high watermark in terms of Democratic representation in Congress and Governorships, and we're in the midst of what is still a very difficult time. And we've got more work to do; we are not finished.

We have to have an energy policy that works for the future. We don't have an option. We can pretend like we've got an option, and we can resort to simplification and say, well, you know what, if we just open up drilling everywhere and have no regulatory oversight whatsoever, that somehow it's all going to work itself out. Or we can simplify it by saying that—by denying the fact that it's going to take some time for us to get up to full capacity on clean energy and we need some breakout technologies in order to make that full transition. So we can play politics with this and take comfort in our own certainties. But the truth of the matter is this is a big, complicated task and it's going to require us to work really hard.

And there is going to be a lot of resistance from a whole range of special interests. And there are going to be legitimate geographical differences that exist when it comes to energy policy. And so we're going to have to work that through.

And when it comes to education, my Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, I think is doing an extraordinary job. And one of the things that has not gotten much attention is the way that we have started to bridge some of the traditional differences between the left and the right and said, yes, we want standards, and we want reform; and yes, we need more resources as well; and yes, everybody is going to have to change: parents and teachers and students and principals and elected officials and communities. But slowly, we are making progress in that direction.

And one of the unsung aspects of last week was me—or this week, in fact, was me being able to sign legislation that really puts higher education into the hands of every single young person that is committed to excelling in this country in a way that hasn't been done in years. But it's still going to be hard. We're not going to change the schools overnight. We have fallen behind on too many measures, and it's going to require us to keep moving.

And we're going to have to continue to work on health care. I know people may not want to hear that, but what we've done is we've enshrined a principle that every single person in this country should not be bankrupt when they get sick, that every child who's got a preexisting condition, they can get health care, that small businesses who want to do the right thing by their employees, that they're going to have the capacity to provide health insurance at reasonable rates.

So we've set up a structure, and it is a good structure and a sensible structure. And we are going down the path of reducing costs. But there are a lot of decisionmakers in a $2 trillion health care system. There are doctors and hospitals and nurses and physician's assistants and there are those of us as consumers. And that process of making the system work smarter and better so that we're all leading healthier lives, and that the States and Federal governments aren't bankrupted, that's going to take a lot of work. It's going to be an ongoing project.

And that's all just on the domestic side. And we've got challenges in terms of bringing about peace in the Middle East. And we've got challenges in dealing with nuclear proliferation. And we've got challenges in making sure that we complete getting our troops out of Iraq and that we complete our mission in Afghanistan, and the extraordinary sacrifices that young men and women are making there as we speak, that they know they are supported not only by the resources they need, but also by a smart strategy in diplomacy and all the elements of Ameri-

can power that go into keeping America safe and secure.

All these things are going to require a steadfast attitude. And they're going to require that all of us occasionally stand up to the immediate winds that are blowing out there. But I'm so confident that we can achieve it. I'm so confident we can get it done. And part of the reason I'm confident is because we've traveled this path before and we've got it done before, not because of me, but because all of you have been willing to stick with this process.

And I think that over time, I just have so much faith and confidence in the American people and their ability, even when they're anxious, even when they're scared, even when they're uncertain, to ultimately have an instinct about what is right, not just right for them individually, not just right for them in the here and now, but what's right for them over the long term, what's right for the country over the long term, what's right for the next generation and not just for the next election.

And that's a hard sense to maintain in this political environment. Some of you saw the speech I gave up in Portland. I started joking about imagine if the Washington press corps were on a farm, and you till the soil, and they would say, "Look, the soil is all broken up; something is wrong." [*Laughter*] And then you'd put the seeds in and cover it up, and the next day they'd have the cameras there and, "Nothing is growing!" [*Laughter*] It's—"there are no crops. We're going to starve." [*Laughter*]

It—that's just the nature of the environment that we're in right now. But we've got to keep the long view. That's our task. That's what this project has always been about. When you helped me get elected President, that wasn't the end, that was the beginning. That wasn't the hard part, that was the easy part. This is the hard part. But this is also the worthy part.

A lot of people win elections. But I'll tell you, the day that we passed health care in the House, you know, I had been in the Roosevelt Room watching it with my team, and I invited everybody up to the residence to celebrate that evening. And we were out on the Truman Balcony looking at the Washington Monument and, beyond that, the Jefferson Monument. And I looked around and I saw these incredible people, most of them a lot younger than me, who had just poured their heart and soul into this effort, and you could see the sense on their part that somehow, some way, working together they had put their shoulders against the wheel of history and moved it in a more just and a more fair direction.

What incredible satisfaction that was, because not only did I know that it was going to be helping all those people who write me letters and talk about all the things that they're burdened with in their lives, but it also told me that all those people, all those young people on my balcony, they're going to believe once again that you can change the country for the better.

That's the great gift that all of you have given in this process. That's what your support means. That's what I'm going to ask you to continue in the weeks and months and years to come, as fellow travelers in this effort for us to perfect our Union.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:55 p.m. at the Boston Opera House. In his remarks, he referred to Victoria R. Kennedy, wife of former Sen. Edward M. Kennedy; Timothy M. Kaine, chairman, and Jane Stetson, national finance chair, Democratic National Committee; political fundraiser Marianne Karmel; Sen. John S. McCain III, 2008 Republican Presidential nominee; and entertainer William "Will.i.am" James Adams, Jr.

Remarks at Celgard, LLC, and a Question-and-Answer Session in Charlotte, North Carolina

April 2, 2010

The President. Hello, everybody! Hello! Good to see you. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat.

Well, thank you so much for the warm welcome. To Bob, thank you very much for the terrific introduction. I want to thank Bryan Moorehead for the great tour, and Mitchell Pulwer for trying to explain to me what was going on here. [*Laughter*]

We've got Governor Beverly Perdue, who's doing just a great job on behalf of all of North Carolina. Please give her a big round of applause. And I think it's important to note that the State of North Carolina has provided enormous support for expansion here at Celgard as well. And I know that the combination of both Federal and State support makes a big difference. So I didn't want to leave the State out.

Lieutenant Governor Walter Dayton—Dalton is here. Please stand up, Walter. The hotshot, young, up-and-coming mayor of Charlotte, Anthony Foxx, is in the house. Give him a big round of applause.

Some outstanding Members of Congress: Congressman Mel Watt, Congressman Larry Kissell, and even though he's from across the border, we love him, Congressman John Spratt of South Carolina.

So it is good to be here at Celgard, and it is good to be back in North Carolina. It is good to be back. We just concluded our tour, where we saw some of the workings of this facility where you're manufacturing components for state-of-the-art batteries. You're building separators to make sure diametrically opposed forces can work successfully together, and I couldn't help but think we could use your help in Congress. [*Laughter*] We could get one of those tripart films and put it between the Democrats and the Republicans. [*Laughter*] And it would improve conductivity, right? Did I get that right?

Audience members. Yes.

The President. Yes? Okay. Now, the truth is, these have been a very tough 2 years for North Carolina, and they've been a tough 2 years for the United States of America. We've been through the worst period of economic turmoil since the Great Depression. Now, keep in mind, when I first took the oath of office, we were already moving towards what some thought was a great depression. We were losing about 700,000, 800,000 jobs per month. And the economy was contracting at a pace that we hadn't seen in generations, about 6-percent contraction that first quarter when I first took office. And I've often had to report bad news during the course of this year as the recession wreaked havoc on people's lives.

But today is an encouraging day. We learned that the economy actually produced a substantial number of jobs instead of losing a substantial number of jobs. We are beginning to turn the corner. This month, more Americans woke up, got dressed, and headed to work at an office or factory or storefront. More folks are feeling the sense of pride and satisfaction that comes with a hard-earned and well-deserved paycheck at the end of a long week of work.

As I said, just 1 year ago, we were losing an average of more than 700,000 jobs each month. But the tough measures that we took, measures that were necessary, even though sometimes they were unpopular, have broken this slide and are helping us to climb out of this recession. And we've now added an average of more than 50,000 jobs each month over the first quarter of this year. And this month's increase of 162,000 jobs was the best news we've seen on the job front in more than 2 years.

Now, at the same time, it's important to emphasize, while we've come a long way, we still got a ways to go. We shouldn't underestimate the difficulties we face as a country or the hardships that confront millions of our fellow citizens; some of your friends, some of your neighbors, some of your relatives you know are still going through a tough time. Eight million people have lost jobs over the past 2 years. That's a staggering sum. Economic statistics don't do justice to the pain and anxiety that results from unemployment. Lasting unemployment takes a toll on families, takes a toll on marriages, takes a

toll on children. It saps the vitality of communities, especially in places that have seen factories and other anchoring businesses shut their doors. And being unable to find work, being able to provide for your family, that doesn't just affect your economic security, that affects your heart and your soul. It beats you up; it's hard.

So we have to be mindful that today's job numbers, while welcome, leaves us with a lot more work to do. It will take time to achieve the strong and sustained job growth that we need. And long before this recession hit—for a decade—middle class families had already been expensing—experiencing a sense of declining economic security. Their paychecks were flatlining, even though the cost of everything, from groceries to college educations to health care, were all going up. And this means that even as we pull out of this immediate crisis, we've got to tackle some of the long-term problems that have been a drag on our economy. And that's why we've been working so hard to turn this economy around.

It's not quick, and it's not easy, and the truth is, there are some limits to what government can do. Government can't reverse the toll of this recession overnight, and government on its own can't replace the 8 million jobs that have been lost. The true engine of job growth in this country has always been the private sector, businesses like Celgard. What government can do is create the conditions for companies to succeed. It can help to create the conditions for companies to hire again. What it can do is build the infrastructure and create the incentives that will allow small businesses to add workers, that will help entrepreneurs to take a chance on an idea, that will lead manufacturers to set up shop in places like Charlotte.

And that's what we did last year through the Recovery Act, also known as the stimulus bill. A lot of folks were down on it—"Well, we don't know what this did." A lot of folks got it mixed up with the steps we had to take to avoid the banking system melting down, and I know that wasn't popular. It wasn't popular with me.

But here's what the Recovery Act did: We cut taxes for small businesses and 95 percent of working families to promote spending and hiring—cut taxes. That's what the Recovery Act did, was cutting people's taxes across America. We're also making investments in our infrastructure, from interstate highways to broadband networks. That not only creates private sector jobs, but it also creates the platform, a better environment in which business can prosper.

It's also what we did through the jobs bill that I signed into law just recently, a bill that cuts taxes for small businesses who hire unemployed workers; and that allows companies to write off investments in equipment, like some of the equipment that we just saw here today; and that encourages job creation by spurring investments in school renovation and clean energy projects and road construction, all of which builds on the investments that we've put into place last year through the Recovery Act.

So as a consequence of all these investments, we've promoted innovation in the private sector not just to create jobs, but also to help America lead in the growth industries of the 21st century. See, I want to improve the short-term jobs picture, but I also want to improve the long-term prospects for our economy. And in no area is America more primed to lead them than in clean energy. And I don't have to tell the folks here at Celgard about that, because through the Recovery Act, this company has received a $50 million matching grant to expand the facility on this site and to add another facility in Concord, North Carolina. And I also know this builds on the work that Governor Perdue did to bring clean energy jobs to this State.

So here's the bottom line: This investment is expected to create nearly 300 jobs for this company, more than a thousand jobs for your contractors and suppliers, and these are all jobs helping America build the batteries that will power cleaner and more efficient cars and trucks. And through investments like this one across the country, we're already seeing an incredible transformation. Here's an interesting statistic: Before the Recovery Act, before I took office, we had the capacity to make less

than 2 percent of the world's lithium ion batteries—less than 2 percent. In the next 5 years, on the trajectory that we're now on, we're going to be able to make 40 percent of the advanced batteries right here in the United States of America—right here.

So the next time somebody asks you, when you're at the grocery store, "Well, what did this Recovery Act do," you can tell them one of the things it helped do is to expand and catalyze an entire new industry, where the United States of America can gain enormous market share across the globe. And that's the kind of strategy we need: helping the private sector thrive in entirely new industries, the industries of the future. It's a strategy that will not only create jobs in the near term, but also sustained growth and opportunity in the long run.

Now, this has been a harrowing time for our country. And it's easy to grow cynical and wonder if America's best days are behind us, especially after such a terrible crisis. And we've seen folks in Washington trying to play the usual politics with the crisis. And that's not surprising, of course. That's how Washington works. Although, I do think it's important for the American people to remember the failed economic policies that got us into this mess, just so we make sure we don't return to them.

But what we can see here, at this plant, is that the worst of the storm is over, that brighter days are still ahead. In Charlotte and all across the country, we can see the promise and possibility that awaits us. If we tap our ingenuity and our inventiveness, our skill and our drive as a people, if we're smart, if we're willing to do what it takes, we can lead in new industries and create new jobs and strengthen the middle class and achieve a shared and lasting prosperity. And we can turn this turmoil into recovery and emerge stronger than before.

I'm convinced that's what we're called to do; I'm confident that that is what we will do. And I want to say to all the employees here at Celgard, we are proud of you because you're helping to point the way and helping to lead not just here in North Carolina, but all across the country.

So thank you very much, everybody. Let me take some questions from you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

So you know, when they let me out of my cage at the White House, I like to actually have a chance to talk to folks. And so we've got time for a few questions, and we've got some young people here in the audience with their microphones. This is not formal, even though I'm sure with some of the cameras a few of you may feel it's a little intimidating. All you got to do is raise your hand. We'll call on you. And it can be a question about anything. If you can introduce yourself, though, that's helpful, so everybody knows who's speaking. And we'll start with that young lady right there since you're right next to the mike.

Sarbanes-Oxley Act/Financial Regulatory Reform

Q. Hi, my name is Jennifer Dakin. I'm here from Charlotte. I'm part of the Polypore parent company. My question is regarding the Sarbanes-Oxley Act. And many people have commented on the fact that it has come at a great cost to many public organizations, the fact that we need to assess and report on our internal controls of our financial reporting. It's also come, many say, without value in the recent financial crisis. What value do you think it may have going forward on the upswing as the economy goes forward?

The President. Well, it's a great question. For those of you who aren't aware of it, Sarbanes-Oxley was instituted not in response to this financial crisis, but in response to the Enron/WorldCom nonsense that took place over a decade ago. And the concern there was that the accounting practices of companies had gotten so out of whack that you had a company like Enron that was essentially booking all these profits, driving up their stock really high; CEOs were making these gazillion-dollar bonuses. But it turned out when you actually got in there and started looking at what they were doing, they were building a house of cards. It was manufacturing profits out of thin air.

And so the concern was, how do we make sure that CEOs and their boards of directors are more accountable to the reporting that

they're doing so that investors, shareholders, the market, customers, suppliers, and employees, a lot of whom had gotten tricked into putting all their savings into a company like Enron and then it turned out that everything they thought they had been saving just went up in a cloud of smoke, that all those folks would be protected.

So the intent around Sarbanes-Oxley was a good idea. It was the right thing to do. There have been, I think, some legitimate criticisms about the fact that although Sarbanes-Oxley is a relatively modest cost for a very big company, it can be a very significant cost for a mid-sized or a small company. Because if they have to abide by all the rules and all the regulations and all the double-checking and triple-checking and quadruple-checking, and so they've got to hire a whole bunch of accountants. It's one thing if you're a Fortune 100 company that's got several billion dollars in revenue to spend a couple million dollars on accountants. It's another thing if you are a company that is making $100 million a year and you're spending a couple million dollars on accountants. That's suddenly—that could be the difference in terms of your profit margin.

So what we're interested in doing is to work with companies to get advice: Are there ways that we can streamline and make this more effective? Are there ways that we can lessen the burden on small and medium-sized companies, but still retain the basic principle that accounting standards have to be met, and they have to be clear, they have to be understandable—you can't cook the books—and that CEOs and boards of directors have to be accountable for the accounting statements that they put out there? And they've got to sign a bottom line. And they're going to be directly liable if, for some reason, it turns out that there were some shenanigans going on there.

So this raises a broader question about regulation. We went through a period of time where, I think, the general theory was, the less regulation, the better. And if you talk to most companies, they'd rather not have any regulations whatsoever. There's nothing wrong with that. That's just the nature of it. You figure companies think they're pretty smart, they know what they're doing. And I'm sure if I talk to Bob, he'd say, there are a whole bunch of things that I've got to do that I wish I didn't have to do.

But it's like any other law. You put the laws in place, even though you know most folks are following the rules and operating decently and common sense, to make sure that those folks who aren't operating that way can't wreak havoc on the system.

And so we're going to be having a big debate when it comes to financial regulatory reform. You're seeing the same pattern come up right now. You essentially had a whole bunch of financial institutions—investment banks like Lehman Brothers—who were taking one dollar and they were able to leverage, essentially bet that—use that dollar to make a $60 bet on subprime loans in housing and take huge, exorbitant risks that almost brought the entire system to heel. And all your friends and neighbors and communities are paying the price, because nobody was minding the store and making sure that these banks and these financial institutions were following basic rules of the road.

So what we've now said is, look, we've got to have a financial system that works. That's how credit flows. That's how businesses finance themselves. But we've got to have some basic rules to make sure that we never find ourselves in a situation again where we've got two choices: Either you bail out the banks, in which case you're thinking, why am I propping up these folks who caused the problems in the first place; or you don't, but then these banks start failing and the whole system breaks down, creating what could have been a great depression.

We can't allow ourselves to be put in that position again. So we've got to have some basic rules, some basic regulations at the front end that say to banks, we're not going to let you get too big to fail; we're not going to put ourselves in a position where somehow you're able to gamble with other people's money in such a way that it can potentially bring down the whole system.

Getting the balance right, how to do that is something that you've got to be very careful

about. But I think now that we've got—we're starting to see a framework emerge both in the House of Representatives and in the Senate, where my hope is, is that we can actually get this done sometime in the next several weeks.

Thank you for the great question. This gentleman right here.

Offshore Oil and Gas Drilling/Alternative Energy Sources

Q. Thank you, sir. My name is Michael Shore. I'm here in Charlotte. First, it's an honor to have you here with us today.

The President. Thank you very much.

Q. I'm concerned that your decision to allow offshore drilling could have the effect of chilling investment into alternate sources of energy. And I'm interested in what incentives you're going to be proposing to establish the conditions and to stimulate research and development and expansion of that critical sector.

The President. Well, I think that's a great question. Look, first of all, understand that the Recovery Act, what we passed last year, represented the single largest investment in clean energy in history, by far. So we invested in wind; we invested in solar; we invested in biomass. We invested in research and development; we invested in commercialization; we invested in battery technologies. We are interested in figuring out how we can improve efficiency across the system, both in buildings and in transportation sectors and—you name it, we're all about increasing energy efficiency and finding new renewable, clean sources of energy. It's one of my highest priorities, and I think it's got to be one of our highest strategic priorities as an economy. It has the potential of being an enormous growth industry.

Here's the challenge that we have. We don't yet have the technological breakthroughs that can completely replace fossil fuels. So for the next 10 years, next 20 years, we're still going to be using oil, we're still going to be using coal, we're still going to be using natural gas. We're still going to be using the traditional sources to fuel our cars, to heat our homes, to run our big power plants, et cetera.

It's my hope that if we're aggressive over the next several years, we can substantially cut our energy use in every sector while still maintaining our high levels of economic growth. So, for example, at the announcement where I talked about offshore drilling, I did so in front of an F–18, a fighter jet, that is actually going to be run half on biomass. So I was joking with the pilot, I said, so this thing runs on vegetable oil. But they're going to break the sound barrier using biomass as fuel.

So the Pentagon is investing huge amounts in energy efficiency. We are promoting weatherization across the country because this is a win-win situation: You put people to work putting in insulation, putting in windows—most of which, by the way, that insulation and windows is manufactured here in the United States—it saves on the individual's energy bill, plus it means that that power plant has to produce less energy to keep that home warm. So it's a win-win all across the board.

That's our biggest priority: energy efficiency and renewable, clean energy. But because we're going to have this transition—unless somebody here invents something tomorrow, which would be very helpful, and if you have it, let me know, we'll get it going right away—but what's most likely is that we're going to have this transition. And so in the interim, we've got to look at our traditional energy sources and figure out how can we use those most effectively and in the most environmentally sound way.

That's why I announced that we were going to start the first nuclear plant in 30 years. Japan, France, other countries have a safe, secure, reliable, and effective nuclear—civilian nuclear energy. We essentially stopped 30 years ago. For those of you who are concerned about climate change, nuclear energy doesn't produce greenhouse gases. It's not a perfect energy source, because it's got the problem with spent fuel and how that is properly stored, but generally speaking, that's going to have to be part of our energy mix.

The decision around drilling, same approach. What we did was we said we're not going to have drilling a mile off the North Carolina coast or 2 miles off. But 50 miles off, 100 miles off, where it is appropriate and environmentally sound and not risky, we should allow explora-

tion to begin taking place to see if there's certain reserves.

There are some areas that we just completely put off limits, like Bristol Bay in Alaska where it's a huge fishery, environmentally very sensitive. There are some areas off the coast in the Gulf of Mexico which don't make sense for us to allow exploration, even though we know that there are existing reserves there. But what we did was we tried to look at the scientific evidence and figure out where are areas where low risk environmentally and a high potential upside.

Now, here's the last thing I'll say about drilling, though, because what you have is you have some environmentalists who just said, "Don't drill anywhere." And then you've got some of my friends on the Republican side who were saying, "Well, this is a nice first step, but it's not enough; you should open up everything."

I don't agree with the notion that we shouldn't do anything. It turns out, by the way, that oil rigs today generally don't cause spills. They are technologically very advanced. Even during Katrina, the spills didn't come from the oil rigs; they came from the refineries onshore.

But the notion that we could drill our way out of the problem—you'll start hearing about this because you know what happens during the summer. As soon as gas prices start going up—every summer it's the same thing, right? And then politicians start standing up and—"we're going to do something about it." And these days, some of my colleagues on the Republican side, what they'll say is, "You got to drill even more."

Just remember the statistics when you start hearing this. We account for 2 percent of the world's oil reserves, but we use 20 percent of the world's oil. We use 20 percent; we only got 2 percent. We can't drill our way out of the problem.

That's why we've got to get moving on this clean energy sector, but we also have to make sure that we've got enough supply that's regular in terms of these other energy—traditional energy sources so that by the time we get to the clean energy sector, we haven't had to sacrifice economic growth along the way. All right?

All right. The gentleman right here, in the white shirt.

Fuel Efficiency Standards/Renewable Energy/ Infrastructure Improvements

Q. James Hill from Greenwood, South Carolina. I work in the PC lab, and I agree, it's an honor for you to be here today. Thank you. My question is, how long do you think—the kind of springboard from which you were just saying, how long do you think it would take for us to have more hybrid vehicles on the road than gas vehicles, and what would it take?

The President. Well, we have already seen a huge spike in the purchase of hybrid vehicles. I mean, if you think about it, just 2 years ago, if you found out somebody had a hybrid vehicle, that was a pretty big deal, and you wanted to go over and test it out and see how it worked. Now it's pretty common. I mean, everybody here knows somebody who's got a hybrid, and you've probably tried it out, and it's kind of cool when you're backing up and it's all quiet.

So I think that that's the future. And consumers are naturally going to start gravitating in that direction. Because here's the fact—we were just talking about oil—not only do we produce only 2 percent and use 20 percent, but countries around the world, everybody is starting to use more oil. I mean, think about it. China, if they get even half of the number of cars per capita, per population that we have right now—there are a lot of folks in China. And there are a lot of folks in India. And their standards of living are all starting to rise, and they're all starting to be interested in buying cars. And the fact of the matter is, is that if they even approach the amount of car ownership that we have, oil will run out very quickly, and on the way, prices will just spike up naturally, no matter what we do.

So it is a huge need for us to increase our fuel efficiency on cars now. And that's why one of the things that I did last year—it's actually taking effect this week—is to raise a national fuel efficiency standard; first time we've done it in a very long time. But frankly, even with us raising those standards, I think consumers, just

in terms of their pocketbook interests, are going to be even more interested in buying hybrids and electric cars.

Two things that we can do that would make a big difference right now: Number one, we've got to make sure that those cars are made here in the United States of America. And so part of the reason why it's so important for us to develop the battery technology here is if we're developing the battery technology, that helps us leverage more auto production here in the United States. And that has—just in the same way that when Bob was talking about what's happening here at Celgard, and the grant we gave creates 300 jobs in the company but potentially a thousand jobs in suppliers, the same is true with the auto industry. Some of you might have said, "Why are we helping out GM?" Well, let me tell you, GM might have employed, along with its dealers and everybody, a hundred thousand, several hundred thousand. But when you looked at all the suppliers involved and the economies, you could have seen another couple million jobs lost. That would have had huge implications for the economy. Now GM is actually making a profit and starting to buy—or starting to hire people back.

But one thing we need to do is make sure that those cars are made here in the United States. The second thing we need to do is to create the electricity grid, what we're calling the smart grid, which is—think about it. Part of the reason that we can drive our cars is because there's a gas station every so often. There are roads; there are gas stations. We know how to fuel up our automobiles. Now, if we want to have everybody getting maximum use out of an electric car or a hybrid car, part of what we have to do is to create a similar distribution mechanism for electricity. And one of the exciting things about these hybrids is we want to get to the point where you've got what's called a plug-in hybrid, where you essentially have a gas station at your house, called your electric socket. And you're going to be able to plug in your car at night. Some of the energy that was stored in the car can actually go back into the house, and then when you're ready to go, you can get that energy and use it to drive.

But to do all that you need a better electricity grid. We've got kind of a creaky infrastructure when it comes to electricity, and that's one of the major investments that we want to start making. And that, by the way, is an investment that only government, working with the private sector, can help to make.

You're hearing a lot of talk these days about government, and government is terrible, and bureaucrats—and they're taking over, and all this stuff. Look, I don't want government any more than is necessary, but there are some things that Bob or any CEO can't invest in. Bob is not going to build the roads to get to Celgard. No company is going to make investments for a public good. None of you would expect a private company to fund our military or our firefighters. There are just some things that you can't do on your own, and the private sector is not going to do. It's not profitable, because if Bob was the guy who had to build the road, he'd have a whole bunch of other people driving on that road that weren't paying for it. So it's not a good investment for him.

That's where government comes in. The same is true when it comes to something like the electricity grid. We're going to have to help create that infrastructure, just like broadband lines, just like a whole bunch of basic 21st-century infrastructure, so we've got the platform in order to succeed and compete economically. That's what the Chinese are doing; that's what the Indians are doing; that's what the Germans are doing. That's what the United States is going to have to do. All right?

I've got time for a couple more questions. I can already see the—this is my guy, Reggie Love, from Charlotte, North Carolina, by the way.

Audience member. Reggie! Reggie!

The President. Yes. He already told me he's not getting on the plane going back. [*Laughter*] He's spending the weekend here.

All right, I think I should—let's see, I want to make sure that—I've got to get a woman in here, make sure that it's balanced. All right, this young lady right there.

Health Care Reform/Cost of Health Care Reform/National Debt

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. We're honored to have you here today. I'm Doris Ravis from Lake Wylie, South Carolina. I work at Celgard. We have wonderful CEOs that keep—take care of us and have really helped the company grow. My question is, though, in the economy times that we have now, is it a wise decision to add more taxes to us with the health care? Because it—we are overtaxed as it is.

The President. Well, let's talk about that, because this is an area where there's been just a whole lot of misinformation, and I'm going to have to work hard over the next several months to clean up a lot of the misapprehensions that people have. Here's the bottom line: Number one is that we are the only—we have been up until last week the only advanced country that allows 15 million of its citizens to not have any health insurance. And the vast majority of those folks work; it's just that they don't happen to work for a company that is either big enough or generous enough to provide them any coverage. So that's point number one. There is a moral imperative that is important.

Number two, you don't know who might end up being in that situation. See, those of us who have health care right now ask ourselves, "Well, is this something that should be a priority right now?" But anybody here who lost their job and then COBRA ran out—or COBRA wasn't subsidized the way the Recovery Act made sure COBRA paid 65 percent of the cost of COBRA—and if you had somebody at home who was sick, or you had a child who got sick, you'd suddenly say to yourself, "Well, now I see the need." And so part of what we have to do is always say to ourselves, there but for the grace of God go I, and have a basic safety net. So that's point number two.

Point number three is that the way insurance companies have been operating, even if you've got health insurance, you don't always know what you got, because what has been increasingly the practice is that if you're not lucky enough to work for a big company that is a big pool, that essentially is almost a self-insurer, then what's happening is, is that you're going out on the marketplace, you may be buying insurance, you think you're covered, but then when you get sick, they decide to drop the insurance right when you need it. Or when you get sick, they try to find what they consider to be a preexisting condition that would justify them canceling your policy. Or there's some fine print in there where you've got a lifetime limit, and it turns out you thought you had coverage, but it turns out the coverage only goes up to a certain point and then afterwards you have to start paying out of pocket. And even after paying all those premiums, you're now in the hole for 100,000 or $200,000, and you're going bankrupt or losing your house.

And the final point is that the costs of health care—setting aside anything we did in reform, I mean, if we just allowed the current trajectory to go on—is out of control. Now, I haven't talked to Bob about what his costs are looking like for Celgard employees, but I can tell you that health care costs have gone up, the price of health care has gone up three times faster than wages. So either the company is having to swallow those costs, which means that's less money that they could use for hiring new workers or investing in new plants and equipment, or they're passing on those costs to their employees in the form of higher premiums, higher deductibles, higher copayments.

And what's happening federally is, because the costs are so out of control, all the programs that we already have—Medicare, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program—all those things are completely out of control. So if you're concerned about the deficit, what you're really concerned about is the cost of Medicare, Medicaid, and all the other programs that are already in place.

So here's what we did: What we said is, number one, we'll have the basic principle that everybody gets coverage. And the way we're going to do that is to say that most people individually shouldn't buy health insurance on their own because they have no leverage and the insurance companies take advantage of it. Instead, what we're going to do is we're going

to set up a big pool, a marketplace that allows everybody to buy into this pool—that Members of Congress, by the way, will be a part of, so you know it's going to be a good deal. Because Members of Congress, they've got to look out for their own families; they wouldn't vote for it if it wasn't going to be a good deal. And just like Wal-Mart is able to leverage a really good price from its suppliers for everything because they're such a big purchaser, well, this pool will be a big purchaser, and it will be able to get a better deal from insurance companies.

So that's point number one. That will drive down the prices for people who are participating, and it will allow everybody to get a decent deal on insurance. And what we do is we provide tax credits to people who still can't afford it so that they can afford it. That's point number one.

Point number two is we've got the strongest insurance reforms in history. So all those things I told you about—you not being able to get insurance because of a preexisting condition, you finding yourself getting dropped, even though you've been paying premiums for 15 years and suddenly they just decide, sorry, we don't want you because you're getting sick—those policies will be over. And so you will be protected as a consumer to make sure you've got security and protection if you've got insurance already. That's the second thing we do.

The third thing we do is we actually put in place a whole bunch of mechanisms to start reducing the actual cost of health care. So, for example, one of the things that we do is to say we're going to start encouraging paying doctors not based on how many tests they take, but based on the quality of the outcome, does somebody end up healthy.

And it turns out that a lot of times if you go to the doctor, you get one test. Then you go—referred to a specialist, you get another test. Then maybe you go to a third person, the surgeon, you get a third test. It's all the same test, but you're paying three times. So what we're trying to say is, we'll pay you for the first test and then e-mail the test to everybody. [*Applause*] Right? Or have all three doctors in the room when the test is being taken.

But that's an example of the kinds of things that save money and will start reducing costs over the long term. So what we've done is we've embedded in how Medicare reimburses, how Medicaid reimburses all these ideas to actually reduce the costs of care.

So our hope is that over time, over the next 3, 4, 5, 6 years, because of all these changes, that we've actually saved money from this, even though more people are covered. And so now you'll hear the critics and the Republicans say: "Now, that just defies common sense. If you're adding 30 million more people, then it's got to cost more money. And you can't pretend like somehow that's going to help us on the deficit." I've heard this criticism; I understand it.

But let me give you an example. If you've got a house and you've got a big hole in your roof, and it's raining and snowing through that roof, and there are some people who are inside the rooms where the roof is okay and they're nice and warm, and then you got a few of your family members in that room where there's a big hole in the roof and they're shivering and they're cold, if you repair the roof, that's going to cost some money. But if all the water damage from your floors and all the heat that's going out of the roof and all—you count all those savings, over time it may turn out that it actually is saving you money, and by the way, all those family members now are warm too. You're not the only one who's warm, right? That's essentially what we're trying to set up.

Now, last point I want to make. All those savings that we're anticipating, we don't even count those when it comes to making sure that this is deficit neutral. Here are the two ways that we're paying for this thing: Number one, we are eliminating a whole bunch of waste, fraud, and insurance subsidies that were being paid out under Medicare that aren't making our seniors any healthier. I mean, you've got a pretty sweet deal for insurance companies right now in a program called Medicare Advantage where they get $18 billion a year paid to them to manage a Medicare program that about 80 percent of seniors are getting directly from the Government, and it's working just fine. It's just a subsidy to them that doesn't make anybody healthier. So what we're saying is, well, let's eliminate

the subsidy. So that's about how we pay for half of this thing.

The other half of it—it is true that we have identified some additional taxes that we think are fair. And let me describe, just to give you an example—I don't think this will affect you, but I don't know your family's circumstances. Right now if you're on salary, you get your salary from Celgard or any of the companies around here, you're paying your Medicare tax on all of that, right? You see it on your—it's part of your FICA. But if you're Warren Buffett and you get most of your money from dividends and capital gains, you don't pay Medicare tax on that. You're eligible for it. You're going to get the same Medicare benefits as anybody else. But because your source of income is what's called unearned income, capital gains and dividends, you don't have to pay this.

Well, I'm thinking to myself, how is it that the guy who is cleaning up the office is paying the Medicare tax and the guy who is making capital gains isn't? So what we said was, look, if you make more than $200 and $250,000 a year, then that money that you make over $200 and $250,000 a year that's unearned—that's from capital gains and dividends—you should have to pitch in to Medicare just like everybody else, because you're going to be using it like everybody else. So it's a concept of fairness.

Now, what the Congressional Budget Office has said—I'm sorry, by the way, these questions sometimes are—or these answers are long, but I want to make sure you guys—that I'm really answering your question. I hope you feel like I really want to respect the importance of your question. What the Congressional Budget Office has said is that as a consequence of the savings from the waste and fraud, combined with the new revenue sources I just mentioned, that this thing is going to actually reduce our deficit by over a trillion dollars—over a trillion dollars. We're actually saving money for the Government because we've closed the roof, the house is now insulated, it's warm, and by the way, in the meantime, we've got a whole bunch of people who were left out in the cold who are now being taken care of.

That's the concept. But I know that for a lot of people, they've got a legitimate concern about, gosh, it just seems like Government spending is out of control. I understand that. I feel that. But understand what happened. When I walked in, we already had a $1.3 trillion deficit. That's an annual deficit of $1.3 trillion. That's the day I got sworn in, before I did a thing. We had $8 trillion in accumulated debt from the war in Iraq, not paid for; the prescription drug plan, Medicare Part D, not paid for; Bush tax cuts, not paid for.

So we already had all this debt that had just been piled up, but nobody had noticed because things were going kind of good. Just like a lot of folks didn't notice their credit card was going up or that their home equity loans were going up, because when things are going good, you tend not to notice.

So all that debt had already accumulated. We then had to spend $787 billion on the Recovery Act to do all the things—unemployment insurance, COBRA, what's called FMAP, which is essentially helping States to keep their budgets afloat so that they didn't have to lay off teachers and cops and firefighters—all of which, if that had happened, would have further depressed the economy and we would have recovered a lot later—the investments we're making in clean energy and things like Celgard to help spur economic growth.

So we had to spend that, but that's only a fraction of what our debt was. And in addition, what happens is when the economy goes south, there are fewer tax revenues. And so you're putting more money out to help people with unemployment insurance and things like that, but you're getting less money in because folks are out of work and businesses aren't making money.

Bottom line is we now have a significant debt that has to be paid down. That's why I'm freezing Government spending. That's why we reinstituted what's called pay as you go. You can't start a program without paying for it. Our health care program is paid for.

But the big thing, if you're really worried about leaving debt to the next generation, which I know you are, the most important thing we're going to have to tackle is our

health care costs because Medicare is by far—Medicare and Medicaid are the biggest things that are looming in the horizon in terms of what our debt is going to be. Nothing else comes close.

If this health care bill never existed, if I didn't do anything about it, we'd actually be a trillion dollars worse off over the long term. But even with what—the savings we're getting from health care, we're still going to have to do more. And if you don't believe that, go on our web site, www.whitehouse.gov, and you can look at how the Federal budget works.

A lot of people think if you just eliminated foreign aid we could balance the budget, or if you just eliminated earmarks you could balance the budget. Earmarks—you know, pork projects, what everybody calls pork—those account for about 1 percent of the budget, less than 1 percent. Foreign aid accounts for about 1½ to 2 percent of the budget.

Most of the budget is Medicare, Social Security, Medicaid, defense spending, and interest on the national debt. That accounts for about 70 percent of the budget. And so all this other stuff that sometimes we argue about, that's not the big stuff. We're going to have to tackle the big stuff if we're going to get our budget under control.

Boy, that was a long answer. I'm sorry. [*Laughter*] But I hope everybody—but I hope I answered your question.

All right, I'm going to—I've got to make this the last question. I'm going to ask this young man right here.

Government Use of Hybrid Vehicles

Q. My name is Matt Litzler, and I flew down from Cleveland, Ohio, this morning. We're a supplier here to Celgard, and about 75 of those 1,000 jobs are in northeast Ohio. A real quick question: If Reggie is not going to go on the plane, can I get a ride back to the airport? [*Laughter*]

The President. You know, come on, let's go.

Q. But secondly, the limousines that you drive—electric with Celgard membranes in them sometime soon?

The President. You know, the answer—I'm going to be honest with you. I'm going to be honest with him. When I first got Secret Service protection, I asked, can we make these cars hybrids? And I apologize, because Secret Service said no.

Now, the reason is not because Secret Service are bad guys. It's because the cars that I'm in are like tanks. I mean, they—as you might imagine, they're—a little bit of extra stuff on there. They're a little reinforced. So they weigh twice or three times what an ordinary car weighs. So they just couldn't get the performance, in terms of acceleration, using a hybrid engine.

But here's the good news, is that as part of our overall energy strategy, I have ordered us to triple the Federal fleet that is hybrid. And so Government purchases an awful lot of cars for all kinds of things. And we're—I think we're the biggest—I'm assuming we're the biggest car purchaser; maybe Hertz is bigger, I don't know—but we're big, and so we are using our purchasing power to help encourage the clean car industry and hopefully to get you more business. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:02 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Robert B. Toth, president, chief executive officer, and director, Polypore International, Inc.; Bryan Moorehead, vice president of operations, and Mitch Pulwer, vice president and general manager, Celgard, LLC; Personal Aide to the President Reginald L. Love; and Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc.

The President's Weekly Address
April 3, 2010

This is a week of faithful celebration. On Monday and Tuesday nights, Jewish families and friends in the United States and around the world gathered for a Seder to commemorate the Exodus from Egypt and the triumph of hope and perseverance over injustice and oppression. On Sunday, my family will join other Christians all over the world in marking the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And while we worship in different ways, we also remember the shared spirit of humanity that inhabits us all, Jews and Christians, Muslims and Hindus, believers and nonbelievers alike.

Amid the storm of public debate, with our 24/7 news cycle, in a town like Washington that's consumed with the day to day, it can sometimes be easy to lose sight of the eternal. So on this Easter weekend, let us hold fast to those aspirations we hold in common as brothers and sisters, as members of the same family, the family of man.

All of us know how important work is, not just for the paycheck, but for the peace of mind that comes from knowing you can provide for your family. As Americans and as human beings, we seek not only the security, but the sense of dignity, the sense of community, that work confers. That's why it was heartening news that last month, for the first time in more than 2 years, our economy created a substantial number of jobs, instead of losing them. We've begun to reverse the devastating slide, but we have a long way to go to repair the damage from this recession, and that will continue to be my focus every single day.

All of us value our health and the health of our loved ones. All of us have experienced an illness, a loss, or personal tragedy. All of us know that no matter what we're doing or what else is going on in our lives, if the health of someone we love is endangered, nothing else matters. Our health is the rock upon which our lives are built, for better and for worse.

All of us value education. We know that in an economy as competitive as ours, an education is a prerequisite for success. But we also know that ultimately education is about something more, something greater. It's about the ability that lies within each of us to rise above any barrier, no matter how high, to pursue any dream, no matter how big, to fulfill our God-given potential.

All of us are striving to make a way in this world, to build a purposeful and fulfilling life in the fleeting time we have here. A dignified life, a healthy life, a life true to its potential, and a life that serves others, these are aspirations that stretch back through the ages, aspirations at the heart of Judaism, at the heart of Christianity, at the heart of all of the world's great religions.

The rites of Passover and the traditions of Easter have been marked by people in every corner of the planet for thousands of years. They've been marked in times of peace, in times of upheaval, and in times of war.

One such war-time service was held on the black sands of Iwo Jima more than 60 years ago. There, in the wake of some of the fiercest fighting of World War II, a chaplain rose to deliver an Easter sermon, consecrating the memory, he said, "of American dead, Catholic, Protestant, Jew. Together," he said, "they huddled in foxholes or crouched in the bloody sands. . . . Together they practiced virtue, patriotism, love of country, love of you and me." The chaplain continued, "The heritage they have left, the vision of a new world, was made possible by the common bond that united them . . . their only hope that this unity will endure." Their only hope that this unity will endure.

On this weekend, as Easter begins and Passover comes to a close, let us remain ever mindful of the unity of purpose, the common bond, the love of you and of me, for which they sacrificed all they had and for which so many others have sacrificed so much. Let us make its pursuit and fulfillment our highest aspiration, as individuals and as a nation. Happy Easter and happy Passover to all those celebrating here in America and around the world.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:25 p.m. on April 2 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for broadcast on April 3. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 2, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 3. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the White House Easter Egg Roll
April 5, 2010

How about Amber? Please give Amber a big round of applause.

Is everybody having a good time? Happy Easter, everybody. We are thrilled that all of you could come. I'm not going to make a long speech, because we've got the best speaker, the smartest and best looking of the older Obamas—[*laughter*]—and that would be the First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:01 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainer Amber Riley, who sang the national anthem. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Amendments
April 5, 2010

Dear Madam Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed amendment to Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 proposals in my FY 2011 Budget. In particular, I am requesting authority to allow the Department of Defense to transfer up to $50 million of funds that will expire in FY 2010 to the Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration for improvements to the Port of Guam. Modernization of the Port is a critical prerequisite for the military construction program supporting the realignment of U.S. Marine Corps forces from Japan to Guam, a part of the overall U.S. strategy for military forces in the Pacific region.

In addition, this transmittal contains a FY 2010 proposal for the Legislative Branch. As a matter of comity between branches, appropriations requests of the Legislative Branch are transmitted without change.

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

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks at an Easter Prayer Breakfast
April 6, 2010

Good morning, everybody. Thank you. Please have a seat. Have a seat. What a great honor and pleasure it is to have all of you here today. Before I begin, I want to just acknowledge two members of my Cabinet who I believe are here: Secretary Gary Locke—is that correct? Where's Gary? There he is—our Commerce Secretary; and Secretary Janet Napolitano, who's keeping us safe each and every day. [*Applause*] Here you go.

I also want to acknowledge the Mt. Ennon Clinton children's chorus for being here.

They're going to be giving us a medley later on. There they are up there, looking very serious. [*Laughter*]

Before I begin, I want to send my deepest condolences, our thoughts and prayers to the families and the friends of the workers who lost their lives after an explosion took place in a West Virginia mine yesterday. At this moment, there are still people missing. There are rescue teams that are searching tirelessly and courageously to find them.

I spoke with Governor Manchin of West Virginia last night and told him that the Federal Government stands ready to offer whatever assistance is needed in this rescue effort. So I would ask that the faithful who've gathered here this morning pray for the safe return of the missing, the men and women who've put their lives on the line to save them, and the souls of those who've been lost in this tragic accident. May they rest in peace, and may their families find comfort in the hard days ahead.

One of my hopes upon taking this office was to make the White House a place where all people would feel welcome. To that end, we held a Seder here to mark the first Passover. We held an iftar here with Muslim Americans to break the daily fast during Ramadan. And today I'm particularly blessed to welcome you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, for this Easter breakfast.

With us are Christian leaders from all across America, men and women who lead small-town churches and big-city congregations and major organizations in service of others, folks whose sermons are heard and whose examples are followed by millions all across the country. So I wanted to join you for a brief moment today to continue the Easter celebration of our risen Savior and to reflect on the work to which His promise calls all of us.

I can't tell any of you anything about Easter that you don't already know. [*Laughter*] I can't shed light on centuries of scriptural interpretation or bring any new understandings to those of you who reflect on Easter's meaning each and every year and each and every day. But what I can do is tell you what draws me to this holy day and what lesson I take from Christ's sacrifice and what inspires me about the story of the resurrection.

For even after the passage of 2,000 years, we can still picture the moment in our mind's eye: young man from Nazareth marched through Jerusalem, object of scorn and derision and abuse and torture by an empire; the agony of crucifixion amidst the cries of thieves; the discovery just 3 days later that would forever alter our world: that the Son of Man was not to be found in His tomb and that Jesus Christ had risen.

And we are awed by the grace He showed even to those who would have killed Him. We are thankful for the sacrifice He gave for the sins of humanity. And we glory in the promise of redemption in the resurrection.

And such a promise is one of life's great blessings, because, as I am continually learning, we are, each of us, imperfect. Each of us errs, by accident or by design. Each of us falls short of how we ought to live. And selfishness and pride are vices that afflict us all.

It's not easy to purge these afflictions, to achieve redemption. But as Christians, we believe that redemption can be delivered by faith in Jesus Christ. And the possibility of redemption can make straight the crookedness of a character and make whole the incompleteness of a soul. Redemption makes life, however fleeting here on Earth, resound with eternal hope.

Of all the stories passed down through the Gospels, this one in particular speaks to me during this season. And I think of hanging—watching Christ hang from the cross, enduring the final seconds of His passion. He summoned what remained of His strength to utter a few last words before He breathed His last breath.

"Father," He said, "into Your hands I commit My spirit." Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit. These words were spoken by our Lord and Savior, but they can just as truly be spoken by every one of us here today. Their meaning can just as truly be lived out by all of God's children.

So, on this day, let us commit our spirit to the pursuit of a life that is true, to act justly, and to love mercy and walk humbly with the Lord. And when we falter, as we will, let redemption—through commitment and through perseverance and through faith—be our abiding hope and fervent prayer.

Many of you are living out that commitment every day. So we want to honor you through this brief program, celebrating both the meaning of Easter and the spirit of service that embodies so much of your work. And our first celebrant today is Reverend Dr. Cynthia Hale, who will deliver our opening prayer.

Thank you all for being here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:50 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Cynthia L. Hale, senior pastor, Ray of Hope Christian Church in Decatur, GA.

Statement on the Release of the Nuclear Posture Review
April 6, 2010

One year ago yesterday in Prague, I outlined a comprehensive agenda to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and to pursue the peace and security of a world without them. I look forward to advancing this agenda in Prague this week when I sign the new START Treaty with President Medvedev, committing the United States and Russia to substantial reductions in our nuclear arsenals.

Today my administration is taking a significant step forward by fulfilling another pledge that I made in Prague to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy and focus on reducing the nuclear dangers of the 21st century, while sustaining a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent for the United States and our allies and partners as long as nuclear weapons exist.

The Nuclear Posture Review, led by the Department of Defense, recognizes that the greatest threat to U.S. and global security is no longer a nuclear exchange between nations, but nuclear terrorism by violent extremists and nuclear proliferation to an increasing number of states. Moreover, it recognizes that our national security and that of our allies and partners can be increasingly defended by America's unsurpassed conventional military capabilities and strong missile defenses.

As a result, we are taking specific and concrete steps to reduce the role of nuclear weapons, while preserving our military superiority, deterring aggression, and safeguarding the security of the American people.

First, and for the first time, preventing nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism is now at the top of America's nuclear agenda, which affirms the central importance of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We have aligned our policies and proposed major funding increases for programs to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons around the world. Our nuclear security summit next week will be an opportunity for 47 nations to commit to specific steps to pursue the goal of securing all vulnerable nuclear materials around the world within 4 years. And next month in New York, we will work with the wider world to strengthen the global nonproliferation regime to ensure that all nations uphold their responsibilities.

Second, we are further emphasizing the importance of nations meeting their NPT and nuclear nonproliferation obligations through our declaratory policy. The United States is declaring that we will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and in compliance with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations. This enables us to sustain our nuclear deterrent for the narrower range of contingencies in which these weapons may still play a role, while providing an additional incentive for nations to meet their NPT obligations. Those nations that fail to meet their obligations will therefore find themselves more isolated and will recognize that the pursuit of nuclear weapons will not make them more secure.

Finally, we are fulfilling our responsibilities as a nuclear power committed to the NPT. The United States will not conduct nuclear testing and will seek ratification of the Comprehensive

Test Ban Treaty. The United States will not develop new nuclear warheads or pursue new military missions or new capabilities for nuclear weapons.

As I stated last year in Prague, so long as nuclear weapons exist, we will maintain a safe, secure, and effective arsenal that guarantees the defense of the United States, reassures allies and partners, and deters potential adversaries. To that end, we are seeking substantial investments to improve infrastructure, strengthen science and technology, and retain the human capital we need to sustain our stockpile, while also strengthening the conventional capabilities that are an important part of our deterrent. The nuclear strategy we're announcing today, therefore, reaffirms America's unwavering commitment to the security of our allies and partners and advances American national security.

To stop the spread of nuclear weapons, prevent nuclear terrorism, and pursue the day when these weapons do not exist, we will work aggressively to advance every element of our comprehensive agenda: to reduce arsenals, to secure vulnerable nuclear materials, and to strengthen the NPT. These are the steps toward the more secure future that America seeks, and this is the work that we are advancing today.

Statement on the Death of Wilma Mankiller
April 6, 2010

I am deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Wilma Mankiller today. As the Cherokee Nation's first female chief, she transformed the nation-to-nation relationship between the Cherokee Nation and the Federal Government and served as an inspiration to women in Indian Country and across America. A recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, she was recognized for her vision and commitment to a brighter future for all Americans. Her legacy will continue to encourage and motivate all who carry on her work.

Michelle and I offer our condolences to Wilma's family, especially her husband Charlie and two daughters, Gina and Felicia, as well as the Cherokee Nation and all those who knew her and were touched by her good works.

Statement on the 16th Anniversary of the Genocide in Rwanda
April 7, 2010

On this 16th commemoration of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, we devote our thoughts to those who were lost and honor those who survived. More than 800,000 men, women, and children were killed and countless others continue to live with the pain and trauma of their memories and their loss. It is not enough to say "never again." We must renew our commitment and redouble our efforts to prevent mass atrocities and genocide. We are inspired by the spirit of the Rwandan people to move forward, and we stand with the people of Rwanda and the international community in commemorating the genocide.

The United States is committed to its partnership with Rwanda and will continue to support efforts to promote sustainable development, respect for human rights, and sustainable peace in Rwanda and the region.

Remarks on Signing the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty With President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia and an Exchange With Reporters in Prague, Czech Republic

April 8, 2010

President Obama. Good afternoon, everyone. I am honored to be back here in the Czech Republic with President Medvedev and our Czech hosts to mark this historic completion of the new START Treaty.

Let me begin by saying how happy I am to be back in the beautiful city of Prague. The Czech Republic, of course, is a close friend and ally of the United States, and I have great admiration and affection for the Czech people. Their bonds with the American people are deep and enduring, and Czechs have made great contributions to the United States over many decades, including in my hometown of Chicago. I want to thank the President and all those involved in helping to host this extraordinary event.

I want to thank my friend and partner, Dmitry Medvedev. Without his personal efforts and strong leadership, we would not be here today. We've met and spoken by phone many times throughout the negotiations of this treaty, and as a consequence, we've developed a very effective working relationship built on candor, cooperation, and mutual respect.

One year ago this week, I came here to Prague and gave a speech outlining America's comprehensive commitment to stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and seeking the ultimate goal of a world without them. I said then, and I will repeat now, that this is a long-term goal, one that may not even be achieved in my lifetime. But I believed then, as I do now, that the pursuit of that goal will move us further beyond the cold war, strengthen the global nonproliferation regime, and make the United States and the world safer and more secure. One of the steps that I called for last year was the realization of this treaty, so it's very gratifying to be back in Prague today.

I also came to office committed to resetting relations between the United States and Russia, and I know that President Medvedev shared that commitment. As he said at our first meeting in London, our relationship had started to drift, making it difficult to cooperate on issues of common interest to our people. And when the United States and Russia are not able to work together on big issues, it's not good for either of our nations, nor is it good for the world.

Together, we've stopped that drift and proven the benefits of cooperation. Today is an important milestone for nuclear security and nonproliferation and for U.S.-Russia relations. It fulfills our common objective to negotiate a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. It includes significant reductions in the nuclear weapons that we will deploy. It cuts our delivery vehicles by roughly half. It includes a comprehensive verification regime, which allows us to further build trust. It enables both sides the flexibility to protect our security, as well as America's unwavering commitment to the security of our European allies. And I look forward to working with the United States Senate to achieve ratification for this important treaty later this year.

Finally, this day demonstrates the determination of the United States and Russia—the two nations that hold over 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons—to pursue responsible global leadership. Together, we are keeping our commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which must be the foundation for global nonproliferation.

While the new START Treaty is an important first step forward, it is just one step on a longer journey. As I said last year in Prague, this treaty will set the stage for further cuts. And going forward, we hope to pursue discussions with Russia on reducing both our strategic and tactical weapons, including nondeployed weapons.

President Medvedev and I have also agreed to expand our discussions on missile defense. This will include regular exchanges of information about our threat assessments, as well as the completion of a joint assessment of emerging ballistic missiles. And as these assessments are completed, I look forward to launching a serious dialogue about Russian-American cooperation on missile defense.

But nuclear weapons are not simply an issue for the United States and Russia, they threaten the common security of all nations. A nuclear weapon in the hands of a terrorist is a danger to people everywhere, from Moscow to New York, from the cities of Europe to South Asia. So next week, 47 nations will come together in Washington to discuss concrete steps that can be taken to secure all vulnerable nuclear materials around the world in 4 years.

And the spread of nuclear weapons to more states is also an unacceptable risk to global security, raising the specter of arms races from the Middle East to East Asia. Earlier this week, the United States formally changed our policy to make it clear that those nuclear [nonnuclear]* weapons states that are in compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and their nonproliferation obligations will not be threatened by America's nuclear arsenal. This demonstrates once more America's commitment to the NPT as a cornerstone of our security strategy. Those nations that follow the rules will find greater security and opportunity. Those nations that refuse to meet their obligations will be isolated and denied the opportunity that comes with international recognition.

That includes accountability for those that break the rules. Otherwise, the NPT is just words on a page. That's why the United States and Russia are part of a coalition of nations insisting that the Islamic Republic of Iran face consequences, because they have continued—continually failed to meet their obligations. We are working together at the United Nations Security Council to pass strong sanctions on Iran. And we will not tolerate actions that flout the NPT, risk an arms race in a vital region, and threaten the credibility of the international community and our collective security.

While these issues are a top priority, they are only one part of the U.S.-Russia relationship. Today I again expressed my deepest condolences for the terrible loss of Russian life in recent terrorist attacks, and we will remain steadfast partners in combating violent extremism. We also discussed the potential to expand our cooperation on behalf of economic growth, trade, and investment, as well as technological innovation, and I look forward to discussing these issues further when President Medvedev visits the United States later this year, because there is much we can do on behalf of our security and prosperity if we continue to work together.

When one surveys the many challenges that we face around the world, it's easy to grow complacent or to abandon the notion that progress can be shared. But I want to repeat what I said last year in Prague: When nations and peoples allow themselves to be defined by their differences, the gulf between them widens. When we fail to pursue peace, then it stays forever beyond our grasp.

This majestic city of Prague is in many ways a monument to human progress. And this ceremony is a testament to the truth that old adversaries can forge new partnerships. I could not help but be struck the other day by the words of Arkady Brish, who helped build the Soviet Union's first atom bomb. At the age of 92, having lived to see the horrors of a World War and the divisions of a cold war, he said, and I quote, "We hope humanity will reach the moment when there is no need for nuclear weapons, when there is peace and calm in the world."

It's easy to dismiss those voices, but doing so risks repeating the horrors of the past, while ignoring the history of human progress. The pursuit of peace and calm and cooperation among nations is the work of both leaders and peoples in the 21st century, for we must be as persistent and passionate in our pursuit of progress as any who would stand in our way.

Once again, President Medvedev, thank you for your extraordinary leadership.

President Medvedev. Dear colleagues, dear members of the media, I fully agree with the assessment that have just been made by my colleague, President Obama, concerning the fact that here in this room, a truly historic event took place: A new Russia-U.S. treaty has been signed on measures for the further re-

* White House correction.

duction and limitation of strategic offensive arms. This treaty has a 10-year duration. It will supersede the START Treaty, which has expired, as well as another existing treaty—Russia-U.S. treaty—on the reduction of strategic offensive capabilities.

And first of all, I'd like to thank my colleague, President of the United States of America, for the successful cooperation in this very complex matter and for the reasonable compromises that have been achieved, thanks to the work of our two teams. We have already thanked them, but let me do it once again in the presence of the media and the public. We thank them for their excellent work.

And I would also like to thank the leadership of the Czech Republic—Mr. President, you—for the invitation to hold this signing ceremony here in this beautiful city, in this beautiful springtime, thereby creating a good atmosphere for the future. And I believe that this signature will open a new page for cooperation between our two countries—between—among our countries—and will create safer conditions for life here and throughout the world.

One word: We aimed at the quality of the treaty. And indeed, the negotiating process has not been simple, but again, our negotiation teams have been working in a highly professional, constructive way that has been nonstop work, and very often they worked 24 hours a day. And that enabled us to do something that just a couple of months looked like mission impossible. Within a short span of time, we prepared a full-fledged treaty and signed it.

As a result, we obtained a document that in full measure maintains the balance of interest of Russia and the United States of America. What matters most is that this is a win-win situation. No one stands to lose from this agreement. I believe that this is a typical feature of our cooperation—both parties have won. And taking into account this victory of ours, the entire world community has won.

This agreement enhances strategic stability, and at the same time, enables us to rise to a higher level for cooperation between Russia and the United States. And although the contents of the treaty have been—are already known, let me point out once again what we have achieved, because this is very important thing: 1,550 developed weapons, which is about one-third below the current level; 700 deployed ICBMs—intercontinental ballistic missile—and sea-launched ballistic missiles and heavy bombers, and this represents more than twofold reduction below the current levels; and 800 deployed and nondeployed launchers for such missiles, as well as deployed and nondeployed heavy bombers, which again represents a twofold reduction below the level that existed prior to the signature of this treaty.

And at the same time, each party can use its own depression—discretion to determine the makeup and structure of its strategic offensive potentials.

The treaty also includes provisions concerning data exchange. We are quite experienced now in this too—matters with my colleague, and we are great experts on these matters—perhaps the greatest experts in the world. And the treaty also includes provisions concerning conversion and elimination, inspection provisions and verification provisions, as well as confidence-building measures.

The verification mechanism has been significantly simplified and much less costly, as compared with the previous START Treaty. But at the same time, it ensures the proper verification, irreversibility, and transparency of the entire process of reducing strategic offensive arms.

We believe—and our American partners are well aware of that this is our open position—we believe that the treaty can be viable and can operate only provided there is no qualitative or quantitative increase in the ABM capabilities, something that could, in the final analysis, jeopardize the strategic offensive weaponry of the Russian side. This is the gist of the statement made by the Russian Federation in connection with the signature of this treaty.

The main task on the post-signature period we regard as achieving the ratification of the treaty, as mentioned by my colleague, Mr. President of the United States, and it is also important to synchronize the ratification process. Our American partners, as I understand, intend to proceed quickly to present this document to the Senate for ratification. We also will be working

with our Federal Assembly to maintain the necessary dynamics of the ratification process.

By and large, we are satisfied with the work done. The result we have obtained is good. But today, of course, we have discussed not only the fact of signing this treaty; we have also discussed a whole range of important key issues of concern to all the countries. Of course, we could not omit the Iranian nuclear problem. Regrettably, Iran is not responding to the many constructive proposals that have been made, and we cannot turn a blind eye to this. Therefore, I do not rule out the possibility that the Security Council of the United Nations will have to review this issue once again.

Our position is well known. Let me briefly outline it now. Of course, sanctions by themselves seldom obtain some specific results, although it's difficult to do without them in certain situations. But in any case, those situation—those sanctions should be smart and aimed not only at nonproliferation, but also to resolve other issues, rather than to produce a humanitarian catastrophe for the Iranian people. We——

[*At this point, the audio feed from the interpreter dropped. President Medvedev continued to speak in Russian, but no translation was provided. The translation later continued as follows.*]

——predictability. In that respect, the treaty we have concluded helps us to embark on a new avenue. And I cannot but say this once again: We have established very good personal relationship, and we have established a well—good personal chemistry, as they say, and I think this helped us to come to this agreement.

But—[*inaudible*]—should not only be between the Presidents. It is, of course, important by itself, but presidents do not address all the issues that have to be tackled by executive structures. Therefore, contacts on working level should be maintained on all levels, and we have very functional bilateral intergovernmental commission, and the leaders of that commission—Secretary of State and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation—have presented their report—[*inaudible*]—work of this commission. All the—almost—all the 16 subgroups have——

[*The audio feed dropped.*]

——agreed upon with my partner. I am convinced that all that has been done so far is just the beginning of a long way—long way ahead. And I wouldn't like to see the relations between Russian Federation and the United States be narrowed down to just limiting strategic offensive arms. To be sure, we shoulder specific responsibility—a special responsibility—in that respect, and we——

[*The audio feed dropped.*]

——and let me once again thank President Barack Obama for our—[*inaudible*]—cooperation in this area.

Thank you.

Moderator. Christi Parsons from the Chicago Tribune.

Treaty Negotiations/Antimissile Defense

Q. Thank you for taking my question, Mr. President. How will the two sides get around your differences on missile defense to work out a follow-on treaty, since that seems to be the biggest impediment to further arsenal reductions, and can the two sides resolve this issue by working out a cooperative agreement on missile defense? Thank you.

President Obama. You know, one of the things that we discussed when we first met in Moscow was the relationship between offensive and defensive capabilities. And what I made clear was that our missile defense systems were not directed at changing the strategic balance between the United States and Russia, but were instead directed at protecting the American people from potentially new attacks from missiles launched from third countries. We recognize, however, that Russia has a significant interest in this issue, and what we've committed to doing is to engaging in a significant discussion not only bilaterally, but also having discussions with our European allies and others about a framework in which we can potentially cooperate on issues of missile

defense in a way that preserves U.S. national security interests, preserves Russia's national security interests, and allows us to guard against a rogue missile from any source.

So I'm actually optimistic that having completed this treaty, which signals our strong commitment to a reduction in overall nuclear weapons, and that I believe is going to strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty regime, that sends a signal around the world that the United States and Russia are prepared to once again take leadership in moving in the direction of reducing reliance on nuclear weapons and preventing the spread of nuclear weapons as well as nuclear materials; that we will have built the kind of trust not only between Presidents, but also between Governments and between peoples that allows us to move forward in a constructive way.

I've repeatedly said that we will not do anything that endangers or limits my ability as Commander in Chief to protect the American people. And we think that missile defense can be an important component of that. But we also want to make clear that the approach that we've taken in no way is intended to change the strategic balance between the United States and Russia. And I'm actually confident that moving forward, as we have these discussions, it will be part of a broader set of discussions about, for example, how we can take tactical nuclear weapons out of theater, the possibilities of us making more significant cuts not only in deployed, but also nondeployed missiles. There are a whole range of issues that I think that we can make significant progress on. I'm confident that this is an important first step in that direction.

President Medvedev. I would like to say a few words on the issue. Doubtless, interrelation between missile defense and START was one of the most difficult topics to discuss. No one tries to reject it. But at present, the language that has been in the treaty we signed satisfies both parties, and we proceed from the fact that on that basis, we will implement the newly signed treaty. We—it matters to us what will happen to missile defense. It is related to the configuration of our potential and our capacities, and we will watch how these processes develop. And the preamble has a language that, to a certain extent, replicates a legal principle according—of the unchangeability of circumstances that were basis for the treaty. But this is a flexible process, and we are interested in close cooperation over it with our American partners.

We have appreciated the steps by the current U.S. administration in terms of their decisions in the area of antimissile defense of the previous administration, and this has led to progress. It doesn't mean that we'll have no digressions in understanding, but it means that we'll have will and wish to address these issues.

We offered it to the United States that we help them establish the global antimissile defense system, and we should think about this, given the vulnerability of our world, the terror—the terrorist challenges, and the possibility of using nuclear arms by terrorists existing in this world.

And I am an optimist, as well as my American colleague, and I believe that we will be able to reach compromise on these issues.

Limiting Global Nuclear Weapon Stockpiles/ Russia-U.S. Relations

Moderator. Vladimir Solovyov, Kommersant, a newspaper.

Q. I have two questions, to each of the Presidents. One, Moscow and Washington—the first is to Mr. Obama—Moscow and Washington, not for the first time, agree on a reduction of strategic offensive arms. But as you have mentioned, Russia and the United States are not the only countries having nuclear weapons. So how, specifically, can the document achieve—well, similar to the—today's document on limitation of nuclear arms—how—well, how soon we will see others sign this document? And will you move along this track together with Russia?

And to the President of the Russian Federation, you have mentioned the fact that sometimes there's an impression that Moscow and Washington are unable to agree on anything else but a mutual reduction of arms. So do—will we see any counter—any things that will counter such a statement? And what will the agreements be?

President Obama. Well, first of all, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, the United

States and Russia account for 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons. And given this legacy of the cold war, it is critical for us to show significant leadership. That, I think, is what we've begun to do with this follow-on START Treaty.

Other countries are going to have to be making a series of decisions about how they approach the issue of their nuclear weapons stockpiles. And as I've repeatedly said—and I'm sure Dmitry feels the same way with respect to his country—we are going to preserve our nuclear deterrent so long as other countries have nuclear weapons, and we are going to make sure that that stockpile is safe and secure and effective.

But I do believe that as we look out into the 21st century, that more and more countries will come to recognize that the most important factors in providing security and peace to their citizens will depend on their economic growth, will depend on the capacity of the international community to resolve conflicts. It will depend on having a strong conventional military that can protect a nation's borders and that nuclear weapons, increasingly, in an interdependent world, will make less and less sense as the cornerstone of security policy.

But that's going to take some time, and I think each country is going to have to make its own determinations. The key is for the United States and Russia to show leadership on this front because we are so far ahead of every nation with respect to possession of nuclear weapons.

The primary concerns that we identified in a recent Nuclear Posture Review—essentially a declaratory statement of U.S. policy with respect to nuclear weapons—said that our biggest concerns right now are actually the issues of nuclear terrorism and nuclear proliferation: more countries obtaining nuclear weapons; those weapons being less controllable, less secure; nuclear materials floating around the globe. And that's going to be a major topic of the discussion that we have in Washington on Monday.

The United States and Russia have a history already—a decade-long history—of locking down loose nuclear materials. I believe that our ability to move forward already on sanctions with respect to North Korea, the intense discussions that we're having with respect to Iran, will increasingly send a signal to countries that are not abiding by their Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty obligations that they will be isolated. All those things will go toward sending a general message that we need to move in a new direction. And I think leadership on that front is important.

Last point I'll make—I will just anticipate or poach the question about other areas of cooperation. Our respective foreign ministers—Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Foreign Minister Lavrov—have been heading a bilateral commission that has been working intensively on a whole range of issues. And President Medvedev and myself identified a series of key areas on the economic front, in trade relations, the potential for joint cooperation on various industries, how we can work on innovation and sparking economic growth. We've already worked together closely in the G–20; I think we can build on that bilaterally.

There are issues of counterterrorism that are absolutely critical to both of us, and I just want to repeat how horrified all of America was at the recent attacks in Moscow. We recognize that that's a problem that can happen anywhere at any time, and it's important for Russia and the United States to work closely on those issues.

And then there are people-to-people contacts and figuring out how we can make sure that there's more interaction and exchange between our two countries on a whole range of issues within civil society.

So I'm very optimistic that we're going to continue to make progress on all of these fronts. But I think we should take pride in this particular accomplishment, because it speaks not only to the security of our two nations, but also the security of the world as a whole.

President Medvedev. It's always good to answer second. First of all, you know what your partner has said, and secondly, you can comment upon what has been said by your interlocutor. As a matter of fact, I will say a couple of words on the first part of the question that was meant for my colleague.

Yes, we have the—90 percent of all the stockpiles, which is the heritage of the cold war—the legacy—and we'll do all that we have agreed upon. Take in mind special mission of Russia and the U.S. on this issue, and we do care about what is going on with nuclear arms in other countries of the world. And we can't imagine a situation when the Russian Federation and the United States take efforts to disarm and the world would move towards a different—principled different direction away—in charge of our peoples and the situation in the world—[*inaudible*].

So all the issues related to the implementation of the treaty and nonproliferation and the threat of nuclear terrorism should be analyzed by us in a complex way, an integrated way. And I'd like this signing to be—not to be regarded by other countries as their—well, stepping aside from the issue. On the contrary, they should be involved to the full and take an active participation in it. They should be aware what is going on.

So we welcome the initiative that has been proposed by the President of the United States to convene a relevant conference in Washington, and I will take part in it, which will be a good platform to discuss nonproliferation issues.

As far as our linkages—but where the nuclear arms are concerned—in this world we have a lot that brings us together, and with the United States as well. And today we have had a very good talk that has started not with the discussion of the documents to be signed—they were coordinated—and not with discussing Iran, North Korea, Middle East, and other pressing issues of foreign affairs, but we started with economic issues.

I have said that there is a gap in our economic cooperation. I have looked at the figures, how the cumulative investment of the United States in Russia is quite small—nearly $7 billion—and the figure has decreased a bit, thanks to—as a result of the crisis. In terms of Russian investment into the U.S., well, it's nearly the same, which testifies to a parity of interests. It's not with all countries that we have such volume of investment, but if we compare the figures with the figures of foreign investors present in the American economy—I mean other countries, including states that can be compared with Russia in terms of volume of their economy—so it's the difference of 20 or 30 times. So we have a field to work upon.

And—to say nothing about the projects we talked about today: modernization, high-tech economy establishment—and in the Russian Federation, we are open for cooperation and would like to use American experience to employ it. These also include issues of energy, cooperation in transport. And I have suggested some time ago returning to the issue of creating a big cargo plane as such a unique experience only two countries have, the U.S. and Russia. Issues of nuclear cooperation are important.

So there can be a lot of economic projects. It's not the business of presidents to deal with each of them, but some key issues are to be controlled by us, as the relations between business, relations between those who would like to develop active ties depend on it—business ties. And humanitarian contacts—people-to-people contacts—are important. And it's significant that we do our best so that our citizens respect each other, understand each other better, so that they are guided by the best practices of American-Russian culture and not perceive each other through the lens of information that sometimes is provided by mass media.

So we should more attentively, more thoughtfully—well, have a more thoughtful attitude towards each other. And I count on this.

Iran/Adherence to Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Obligations

Moderator. Jonathan Weisman. [Wall Street Journal]

Q. Thank you, Presidents Medvedev and President Obama. For President Obama first: Could you elaborate on how the yearlong negotiations over the new START Treaty have advanced U.S. cooperation with Russia on Iran and give us a sense of when you will pursue, move forward, in the United Nations and next week with sanctions discussions, and what those sanctions might look like?

And for President Medvedev: Could you address whether Russia could accept sanctions

against Iran, specifically dealing with its energy industry and energy sector? Thank you.

President Obama. Discussions about sanctions on Iran have been moving forward over the last several weeks. In fact, they've been moving forward over the last several months. We're going to start seeing some ramped-up negotiations taking place in New York in the coming weeks. And my expectation is that we are going to be able to secure strong, tough sanctions on Iran this spring.

Now, I think there are two ways in which these START negotiations have advanced, or at least influenced, Russia-U.S. discussions around Iran. The first is, obviously, that President Medvedev and I have been able to build up a level of trust and our teams have been able to work together in such a way that we can be frank, we can be clear. And that helped to facilitate, then, our ability, for example, to work together jointly to present to Iran reasonable options that would allow it to clearly distance itself from nuclear weapons and pursue a path of peaceful nuclear energy.

That wasn't just an approach that was taken by the United States and Russia, but it was an approach taken by the P–5-plus-1, as well as the International Atomic Energy Agency, the IAEA.

So what we've seen from the start is that a host of countries—but led by countries like the United States and Russia—have said to Iran, we are willing to work through diplomatic channels to resolve this issue. And unfortunately, Iran has consistently rebuffed our approach. And I think that Russia has been a very strong partner in saying that it has no interest in bringing down Iranian society or the Iranian Government, but it does have an interest, as we all do, in making sure that each country is following its international obligations.

The second way in which I think the START Treaty has influenced our discussions about Iran is, it's sent a strong signal that the United States and Iran—the United States and Russia are following our own obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and that our interest in Iran or North Korea or any other country following the NPT is not based on singling out any one country, but rather sends a strong signal that all of us have an obligation, each country has an obligation to follow the rules of the road internationally to ensure a more secure future for our children and our grandchildren.

And so I think the fact that we are signing this treaty, the fact that we are willing, as the two leading nuclear powers, to continually work on reducing our own arsenals, I think should indicate the fact that we are willing to be bound by our obligations, and we're not asking any other countries to do anything different, but simply to follow the rules of the road that have been set forth and have helped to maintain a—at least a lack of the use of nuclear weapons over the last several decades, despite, obviously, the cold war.

And the concern that I have in particular, a concern that I think is the most profound security threat to the United States, is that with further proliferation of nuclear weapons, with states obtaining nuclear weapons and potentially using them to blackmail other countries or potentially not securing them effectively or passing them on to terrorist organizations, that we could find ourselves in a world in which not only state actors, but also potentially nonstate actors are in possession of nuclear weapons, and even if they don't use them, would then be in a position to terrorize the world community.

That's why this issue is so important, and that's why we are going to be pushing very hard to make sure that both smart and strong sanctions end up being in place soon to send a signal to Iran and other countries that this is an issue that the international community takes seriously.

President Medvedev. Let's ask ourselves a question: What do we need sanctions for? Do we need them to enjoy the very fact of reprising—imposing reprisals against another state, or is the objective another one? I am confident that all those present here will say that sanctions—we need sanctions in order to prompt one or another individual or state to behave properly, behave within the framework of international law, while complying with the obligations assumed.

Therefore, when we are speaking about sanctions, I cannot disagree with the—with what has just been said. And this has been the position of the Russian Federation from the very outset. If we are to speak about sanctions, although they are not always successful, those sanctions should be smart sanctions that are capable of producing proper behavior on the part of the relevant sides.

And what sort of sanctions should we need? Today we have had a very openminded, frank, and straightforward manner discussed what can be done and what cannot be done. And let me put it straightforward: I have outlined our limits for such sanctions, our understanding of these sanctions, and I said that in making decisions like that, I, as President of the Russian Federation, will proceed from two premises. First, we need to prompt Iran to behave properly; and secondly, least but not least, aim to maintain the national interests of our countries.

So smart sanctions should be able to motivate certain parties to behave properly, and I'm confident that our teams that will be engaged in consultations will continue discussing this issue.

Ratification of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty

Moderator. Vladimir Kondratyev, NTV.

Q. Now, everyone is concerned whether the treaty will be ratified by the parliaments. You have mentioned that you will be working with the parliamentarians to achieve such ratification. Let me ask you what difficulty you see along this road, and what do you—how do you assess the chances for success? The question is addressed to both Presidents.

President Medvedev. Well, by all appearances, Barack believes that we might have more problems with ratification. Perhaps that's true, but let me say what I think about this question.

Of course, such agreements of major importance, international agreements, under our Constitution and under our legislation are subject to ratification by our parliaments. And of course, for our part, we intend to proceed promptly and to do all the necessary procedures to ensure that our Parliament, our State Duma, starts reviewing this treaty, discussing this treaty.

I will proceed from the following: I believe that we have to ensure the synchronization of this ratification process so that neither party feels in one way or another compromised. Earlier, we had periods when one state ratified while another party said, sorry, the situation has changed; therefore, we cannot do it.

So this is something we have to avoid. That's why I say we have to proceed simultaneously in the conditions of an openminded and straightforward discussion, with subsequent ratification by our parliaments. That's what we need. And we will not be found amiss in that regard.

President Obama. You know, the United States Senate has the obligation of reviewing any treaty and, ultimately, ratifying it. Fortunately, there is a strong history of bipartisanship when it comes to the evaluation of international treaties, particularly arms control treaties.

And so I have already engaged in consultation with the chairmen of the relevant committees in the United States Senate. We are going to broaden that consultation now that this treaty has been signed. My understanding is, is that both in Russia and the United States, it's going to be posted on the Internet, appropriate to a 21st-century treaty. And so people not only within Government, but also the general public will be able to review, in an open and transparent fashion, what it is that we've agreed to.

I think what they will discover is that this is a well-crafted treaty that meets the interests of both countries, that meets the interests of the world in the United States and Russia reducing its nuclear arsenals and setting the stage for potentially further reductions in the future.

And so I'm actually quite confident that Democrats and Republicans in the United States Senate, having reviewed this, will see that the United States has preserved its core national security interests, that it is maintaining a safe and secure and effective nuclear deterrent, but that we are beginning to once again move forward, leaving the cold war behind, to address new challenges in new ways. And I think the START Treaty represents an important first

step in that direction, and I feel confident that we are going to be able to get it ratified.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

President Medvedev. Thank you. See you next time.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:37 p.m. at Prague Castle. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vaclav Klaus of the Czech Republic; and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey V. Lavrov of Russia. President Medvedev and two reporters spoke in Russian, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of a portion of these remarks.

Remarks at a Lunch With President Vaclav Klaus of the Czech Republic and President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia in Prague

April 8, 2010

Thank you very much, everybody. President Klaus, and to the people of the Czech Republic, thank you for your extraordinary hospitality.

To President Medvedev, Dmitry, we have learned to work together, and I'm extraordinarily grateful for your leadership and your clarity. And I think it has served us extraordinarily well during the course of these negotiations.

And to our teams, on both the Russian and the American side, I could not be prouder of the diligence and meticulousness and the degree of effort that all of you poured into crafting what I think is a extraordinarily important document that not only has helped to reset in a very concrete and tangible way U.S.-Russian relations, but I think is going to help lay the foundation for a safer world for generations to come.

We gather today in a magnificent castle, surrounded by history and the relics of thousands of years, a castle that's seen empires rise and fall, that have witnessed great movements in the arts and music and culture, spires that have survived world wars and a cold war and that now grace a capital of a vibrant democracy.

And so I think it's an indication of how we are not just creatures of fate, we can determine our fates; and that when men and women of good will, regardless of previous differences, regardless of history, regardless of a past, determined that they want to seize a better future, they can do so.

I think the Czech Republic is a testament to that ability to seize the future. I think the direction that President Medvedev has moved the Russian Federation is a testimony to the impulse to seek a new future.

In the United States, we are constantly wanting to remake our economy and our politics and our culture in ways that looks forward, even as it's grounded in the deep traditions of our past.

And so today what I'd like to do is to propose a toast not only to the extraordinary work that's been done by the men and the women in this room, but also a toast to the vision of a future in which we are defined not just by our differences, but increasingly defined by our common aims, our common goals, and our common hopes for our children and our grandchildren. And I think this treaty hopefully is one brick on that path towards a brighter future for all mankind.

So thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 2 p.m. at Prague Castle. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on the Accident at the Upper Big Branch Mine in Montcoal, West Virginia

April 9, 2010

Supreme Court Associate Justice John Paul Stevens

Good afternoon, everybody. I want to say a few words about the tragedy that took place this week in West Virginia. But before I do, I'd first like to comment on the news that Justice John Paul Stevens will retire from the Supreme Court at the end of its current term.

When President Ford was faced with a Supreme Court vacancy shortly after the Nation was still recovering from the Watergate scandal, he wanted a nominee who was brilliant, nonideological, pragmatic, and committed above all to justice, integrity, and the rule of law. He found that nominee in John Paul Stevens.

Justice Stevens has courageously served his country from the moment he enlisted the day before Pearl Harbor to his long and distinguished tenure on the Supreme Court. During that tenure, he has stood as an impartial guardian of the law. He's worn the judicial robe with honor and humility. He has applied the Constitution and the laws of the land with fidelity and restraint. He will soon turn 90 this month, but he leaves his position at the top of his game. His leadership will be sorely missed, and I just had an opportunity to speak with him and told him on behalf of a grateful nation that I thanked him for his service.

Now, as Justice Stevens expressed to me in the letter announcing his retirement, it is in the best interests of the Supreme Court to have a successor appointed and confirmed before the next term begins. And so I will move quickly to name a nominee, as I did with Justice Sotomayor.

Once again, I view the process of selecting a Supreme Court nominee as among my most serious responsibilities as President. And while we cannot replace Justice Stevens's experience or wisdom, I will seek someone in the coming weeks with similar qualities: an independent mind, a record of excellence and integrity, a fierce dedication to the rule of law, and a keen understanding of how the law affects the daily lives of the American people. It will also be someone who, like Justice Stevens, knows that in a democracy, powerful interests must not be allowed to drown out the voices of ordinary citizens. Much like they did with Justice Sotomayor, I hope the Senate will move quickly in the coming weeks to debate and then confirm my nominee so that the new Justice is seated in time for the fall term.

Now, let me say a few words about what has happened in West Virginia.

This has been a unimaginably difficult week for the people who live near Montcoal. Thirty-one workers were inside the Upper Big Branch mine when an explosion ripped through its walls on Monday afternoon. Two were saved, twenty-five were lost, and for the four who remain missing, we are praying for a miracle.

I want to offer my deepest condolences to the friends and the families of the fathers and the husbands and brothers, nephews, and sons who were killed in this accident. I'm also in awe of the courage and selflessness shown by the rescue teams who've risked their lives over and over and over this week for the chance to save another. They've worked around the clock, with little sleep, for the past few days, and this Nation owes them a debt of gratitude.

Now, mining has a long and proud history in West Virginia. And for many families and communities, it's not just a way to make a living, it's a way of life. And the jobs they do in these mines help bring heat and electricity to millions of Americans.

It's a profession that's not without risks and danger, and the workers and their families know that. But their Government and their employers know that they owe it to these families to do everything possible to ensure their safety when they go to work each day.

When I was in the Senate, I supported the efforts of Senator Byrd and Rockefeller to try to improve mine safety, but it's clear that more needs to be done. And that's why I've asked my Secretary of Labor as well as the head of Mine Safety and Health Administration to give me a

preliminary report next week on what went wrong and why it went wrong so badly, so that we can take the steps necessary to prevent such accidents in the future.

Because mining is a tradition that's often passed down through generations, it's not uncommon to see an entire family choose this line of work. And sadly, when a tragedy like this occurs, it's also not uncommon to lose almost an entire family all at once.

I spoke to some surviving members of one such family on Wednesday. This week, Tim Davis and two of his nephews, Josh, age 25, and Cory, age 20, were killed in the explosion in the Upper Big Branch mine. Rescuers have reported that Tim and his two nephews were all found together. Two other members of their families that worked in the mine were able to escape unharmed.

And before he left for the mine on Monday, Josh wrote a letter for his girlfriend and young daughter. And in it, he said, "If anything happens to me, I'll be looking down from heaven at you all. I love you. Take care of my baby. Tell her that daddy loves her. She's beautiful. She's funny. Just take care of my baby girl."

Reflecting on that letter and the losses she endured in just one week, Josh's mother Pam simply said, "It is just West Virginia. When something bad happens, we come together." When something bad happens, we come together.

Through tragedy and heartache, that's the spirit that has sustained this community and this country for over 200 years. And as we pray for the souls of those that we've lost and the safe return of those who are missing, we are also sustained by the words of the Psalm that are particularly poignant right now. Those words read: "You, O Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light."

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:03 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health Joseph A. Main. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

The President's Weekly Address
April 10, 2010

All across America are good, decent folks who meet their obligations each and every day. They work hard. They support their families. They try to make an honest living the best they can. And this weekend, many are sitting down to pay the taxes they owe, not because it's fun, but because it's a fundamental responsibility of our citizenship.

But in tough times, when many families are having trouble just making it all work, tax day can seem even more daunting. This year, however, many Americans are seeing some welcome relief.

So far, Americans who have filed their taxes have discovered that the average refund is up nearly 10 percent this year to an alltime high of about $3,000. This is due in large part to the Recovery Act. In fact, one-third of the Recovery Act was made up of tax cuts—tax cuts that have already provided more than $160 billion in relief for families and businesses, and nearly 100 billion of that goes directly into the pockets of working Americans.

No one I've met is looking for a handout, and that's not what these tax cuts are. Instead, they're targeted relief to help middle class families weather the storm, to jump-start our economy, and to bring the fundamentals of the American Dream—making an honest living, earning an education, owning a home, and raising a family—back within reach for millions of Americans.

First, because folks who work hard should be able to make a decent living, I kept a promise I made when I campaigned for this office and cut taxes for 95 percent of working Americans. For most Americans, this Making Work Pay tax credit began showing up in your paychecks last April. And it continues this year,

for a total of $400 per individual and $800 per couple, per year.

Second, because a college education is critical to the success of our workers and our economy, we're helping to make it more affordable for millions of Americans. Millions of students and parents paying for college tuition are now eligible for up to $2,500 under the American Opportunity Credit. Along with a host of other steps we've taken, this will help us reach our goal of once again having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020.

Third, we're restoring the home as a source of stability and an anchor of the American Dream. If you've bought a home for the first time, you're eligible for a credit of up to $8,000. And if you bought a new car last year, you can deduct the State and local sales taxes you paid on that car.

Fourth, whether you bought a home for the first time or you've owned one for a long time, if you invested in making your home more energy efficient with certain improvements like new insulation or windows, or you plan to this year, you're eligible for up to $1,500 in new tax credits. This does more than just put money back in your pocket, it's helping create new clean energy, manufacturing, and construction jobs at small businesses across the country.

Fifth, to help working families with children through difficult times, we increased the earned-income tax credit and allowed more families to qualify for the child tax credit.

Finally, for those who lost their jobs in the recession and need some help getting back on their feet, we provided a 65-percent tax credit to help cover the cost of health care, and we made sure the first $2,400 in unemployment benefits is tax free.

These are among the tax breaks and savings that are available to over 100 million Americans right now. It's also important to note that the new health reform law includes the largest middle class tax cut for health care in history. And once it's implemented, millions of Americans will finally be able to purchase quality, affordable care and the security and peace of mind that comes with it.

And one thing we have not done is raise income taxes on families making less than $250,000 a year. That's another promise that we've kept.

We've also made it easy to find out what's owed to you and your family. After all, the big guys know how to find their tax breaks; it's time you did too. Just visit whitehouse.gov and click on the tax savings tool. It's already been accessed more than 100,000 times by folks who want to see what savings they're owed and how to collect them. If you've already filed your taxes and missed some of the savings available to you, don't worry, you can still amend your returns after April 15 to save hundreds or even thousands of dollars.

And just as each of us meet our responsibilities as citizens, we expect our businesses and our Government to meet theirs in return. That's why I've asked Congress to close some of the biggest tax loopholes exploited by some of our most profitable corporations to avoid paying their fair share or, in some cases, paying taxes at all. That's why we're tightening Washington's belt by cutting programs that don't work and contracts that aren't fair and spending we don't need. And that's why I've proposed a freeze on discretionary spending, signed a law that restores the pay-as-you-go principle that helped produce the surpluses of the 1990s, and created a bipartisan, independent commission to help solve our fiscal crisis and close the deficits that have been growing for a decade. Because I refuse to leave our problems to the next generation.

It's been a tough couple years for America. But the economy is growing again. Companies are beginning to hire again. We are rewarding work and helping more of our people reach for the American Dream again. And while there's no doubt we still face a long journey together, with more steps to take, more obstacles to overcome, and more challenges to face along the way, if there is one thing on which the people of this great country have convinced me, it's that the United States of America will recover, stronger than before.

Thanks for listening, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 12:50 p.m. on April 7 in the Diplomatic

Reception Room at the White House for broadcast on April 10. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 9, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 10. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Death of President Lech Kaczynski of Poland and His Delegation

April 10, 2010

Today I called Polish Prime Minister Tusk to express Michelle's and my deepest condolences to the people of Poland on the tragic deaths this morning of President Lech Kaczynski, First Lady Maria Kaczynski, and all who were traveling with them to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Kaczynski family, the loved ones of those killed in this tragic plane crash, and the Polish nation.

Today's loss is devastating to Poland, to the United States, and to the world. President Kaczynski was a distinguished statesman who played a key role in the Solidarity movement, and he was widely admired in the United States as a leader dedicated to advancing freedom and human dignity. With him were many of Poland's most distinguished civilian and military leaders who have helped to shape Poland's inspiring democratic transformation. We join all the people of Poland in mourning their passing.

Today there are heavy hearts across America. The United States cherishes its deep and abiding bonds with the people of Poland. Those bonds are represented in the strength of our alliance, the friendships among our people, and the extraordinary contributions of Polish Americans who have helped to shape our Nation.

It is a testament to the strength of the Polish people that those who were lost were traveling to commemorate a devastating massacre of World War II as the leaders of a strong, vibrant, and free Poland. That strength will ensure that Poland emerges from the depths of this unthinkable tragedy and that the legacy of the leaders who died today will be a light that continues to guide Poland and the world in the direction of human progress.

Statement on the Accident at the Upper Big Branch Mine in Montcoal, West Virginia

April 10, 2010

It is with a heavy heart that we learn the news that the last four missing miners did not survive the explosion in the Upper Big Branch mine. My thoughts and prayers are with the families of all those who were lost in this tragic accident, and my gratitude goes out to the rescue teams who worked so tirelessly and heroically to search for the missing. This has been America's worst mining disaster in 40 years, and the toll on all West Virginians has been immeasurable. We cannot bring back the men we lost. What we can do, in their memory, is thoroughly investigate this tragedy and demand accountability. All Americans deserve to work in a place that is safe, and we must take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that all our miners are as safe as possible so that a disaster like this doesn't happen again.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Jacob Zuma of South Africa
April 11, 2010

President Obama. Well, good afternoon, everybody. I want to officially welcome the South African delegation to this nuclear summit and thank President Zuma for his extraordinary leadership.

So far today I've already met with Prime Minister Singh of India, as well as the President of Kazakhstan, and now we are meeting with the President of South Africa. I'll be meeting with the Prime Minister of Pakistan after this meeting.

The central focus of this nuclear summit is the fact that the single biggest threat to U.S. security, both short term, medium term and long term, would be the possibility of a terrorist organization obtaining a nuclear weapon. This is something that could change the security landscape in this country and around the world for years to come. If there was ever a detonation in New York City or London or Johannesburg, the ramifications economically, politically, and from a security perspective would be devastating. And we know that organizations like Al Qaida are in the process of trying to secure a nuclear weapon or other weapons of mass destruction, and they have no compunction at using them.

Unfortunately, we have a situation in which there is a lot of loose nuclear material around the world. And so the central focus goal of this summit is getting the international community on a path in which we are locking down that nuclear material in a very specific time frame with a specific work plan. And one of the things that I'm very pleased about is, is that countries have embraced this goal, and they're coming to this summit not just talking about general statements of support, but rather with very specific approaches to how we can solve this profound international problem.

I wanted to especially single out South Africa, because South Africa is singular in having had a nuclear weapons program, had moved forward on it, and then decided this was not the right path, dismantled it, and has been a strong, effective leader in the international community around nonproliferation issues ever since.

And so South Africa has special standing in being a moral leader on this issue. And I wanted to publicly compliment President Zuma, his administration for the leadership they've shown. And we are looking forward toward the possibility of them helping to guide other countries down a similar direction of nonproliferation.

But I feel very good at this stage, in the degree of commitment and a sense of urgency that I've seen from the world leaders so far on this issue. We think we can make enormous progress on this. And this then becomes part and parcel of the broader focus that we've had over the last several weeks, with the signing of the START Treaty between the United States and Russia, reducing our nuclear stockpiles; a Nuclear Posture Review that has been released that sends a clear signal that those who abide by the nonproliferation treaties will have negative assurances, meaning that if they're abiding by their obligations, then they will not be targeted for potential nuclear weapons. And this then becomes a central part of the process, but is probably the most urgent one and one that we're most concerned with in the short term.

So thank you again, Mr. President, for your participation and your leadership.

President Zuma. Thank you very much.

President Obama. Thank you.

All right. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:19 p.m. at the Blair House. In his remarks, he referred to President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan; and Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani of Pakistan.

Statement on Holocaust Remembrance Day
April 11, 2010

I join people here at home, in Israel, and around the world in observing Holocaust Remembrance Day. This year, on the 65th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps, we must recommit ourselves to honoring the memories of all the victims and ensuring that they remain a part of our collective memory. On my visit to Buchenwald last year and during my visit to Yad Vashem in 2008, I bore witness to the horrors of anti-Semitism and the capacity for evil represented by the Nazis' campaign to annihilate the Jewish people and so many others. But even at places like Buchenwald, the dignity and courage of those who endured the horrors of the Holocaust remind us of humanity's capacity for decency and compassion.

The memories of the victims serve as a constant reminder to honor their legacy by renewing our commitment to prevent genocide and to confront anti-Semitism and prejudice in all of its forms. We must never tolerate the hateful stereotypes and prejudice against the Jewish people that tragically continues to this day. We must work, instead, on behalf of a world of justice and peace, in which all nations and peoples value the humanity that we share and the dignity inherent in every human being.

Joint Statement By President Obama and President Viktor Yanukovych of Ukraine
April 12, 2010

President Viktor Yanukovych and President Barack Obama today reaffirmed the strategic partnership between Ukraine and the United States and their intention to realize its full potential. To this end, they committed to build upon the United States-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership and the Strategic Partnership Commission. The two leaders recognized their countries' common interests and shared values mirrored in the Charter: democracy, economic freedom and prosperity, security and territorial integrity, energy security, cooperation in the defense arena, the rule of law and people-to people contacts. The Presidents discussed recovery from the global economic crisis. President Yanukovych stressed his commitment to addressing Ukraine's economic challenges through implementation of systemic reforms and the resumption of Ukraine's cooperation with the IMF. President Obama supports that commitment. The two leaders recognized the potential for increased bilateral trade and investment, and they announced their intention to strengthen engagement on economic, financial and investment-related issues.

President Yanukovych and President Obama reaffirmed their shared vision of a world without nuclear weapons and pledged to work together to prevent proliferation and to realize the Nuclear Security Summit's goal of securing all vulnerable nuclear materials. President Yanukovych offered his congratulations on the signing of the new START Treaty. President Obama recognized Ukraine's unique contribution to nuclear disarmament and reconfirmed that the security assurances recorded in the Budapest Memorandum with Ukraine of December 5, 1994, remain in effect. President Yanukovych announced Ukraine's decision to get rid of all of its stocks of highly-enriched uranium by the time of the next Nuclear Security Summit, while the United States will provide necessary technical and financial assistance to support this effort. Ukraine intends to remove a substantial part of those stocks this year. President Obama praised Ukraine's decision as a historic step and a reaffirmation of Ukraine's leadership in nuclear security and nonproliferation. Ukraine joins the United States in the international effort to convert civil nuclear research

facilities to operate with low enriched uranium fuel, which is becoming the global standard in the 21st century.

The two leaders agreed to explore ways to strengthen cooperation in the peaceful uses of atomic energy, including development of Ukrainian nuclear research capabilities and efforts to diversify Ukraine's nuclear power industry's fuel supply, in accordance with the 123 Agreement and other complementary bilateral arrangements as may be agreed by Ukraine and the United States. They also agreed to continue working together on nuclear safety, including efforts to safeguard the Chornobyl nuclear reactor site. The United States has contributed almost $250 million to this effort and reaffirms its commitment to further support Ukraine and others in restoring the Chornobyl site to a safe condition.

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

Remarks at the Opening Session of the Nuclear Security Summit
April 13, 2010

President Obama. Good morning, everybody. I'd like to get started. Let me begin by thanking all of you for your participation last night. I thought it was a very important discussion.

Before I begin, I want to take this moment once again to acknowledge the terrible tragedy that struck the Polish people this weekend. We are joined today by a distinguished delegation from Poland, led by Ambassador Kupiecki. Mr. Ambassador, all of us were shocked and deeply saddened by the devastating loss of President Kaczynski, the First Lady, and so many distinguished civilian and military leaders from your country. And this was a loss not just for Poland, but for the world.

As a close friend and ally, the United States stands with Poland and Poles everywhere in these very difficult days. As an international community, I know that we will all rally around the Polish people, who have shown extraordinary strength and resilience throughout their history. So our hearts go out to your people. Our thoughts and prayers are with them. We join them in this time of mourning. And so if everybody is agreeable, I would like to ask for a moment of silence to show that solidarity and to honor those who were lost.

[*At this point, a moment of silence was observed.*]

Thank you. It is my privilege to welcome you to Washington and to formally convene this historic summit. We represent 47 nations from every region of the world, and I thank each of you for being here. This is an unprecedented gathering to address an unprecedented threat.

Two decades after the end of the cold war, we face a cruel irony of history: The risk of a nuclear confrontation between nations has gone down, but the risk of nuclear attack has gone up. Nuclear materials that could be sold or stolen and fashioned into a nuclear weapon exist in dozens of nations. Just the smallest amount of plutonium—about the size of an apple—could kill and injure hundreds of thousands of innocent people. Terrorist networks such as Al Qaida have tried to acquire the material for a nuclear weapon, and if they ever succeeded, they would surely use it. Were they to do so, it would be a catastrophe for the world, causing extraordinary loss of life and striking a major blow to global peace and stability.

In short, it is increasingly clear that the danger of nuclear terrorism is one of the greatest threats to global security, to our collective security.

And that's why 1 year ago today in—1 year ago in Prague, I called for a new international effort to secure all vulnerable nuclear materials around the world in 4 years. This is one part of a broader, comprehensive agenda that the United States is pursuing, including reducing our nuclear arsenal and stopping the spread of nuclear weapons, an agenda that will bring us closer to our ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

Over the past year, we've made progress. At the United Nations Security Council last fall, we unanimously passed Resolution 1887 en-

dorsing this comprehensive agenda, including the goal of securing all nuclear materials. Last night, in closed session, I believe we made further progress, pursuing a shared understanding of the grave threat to our people.

And today we have the opportunity to take the next steps. We have the opportunity, as individual nations, to take specific and concrete actions to secure the nuclear materials in our countries and to prevent illicit trafficking and smuggling. That will be our focus this morning.

We have the opportunity to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency, the IAEA, with the resources and authorities it needs to meet its responsibilities. That will be our focus at our working lunch.

And we have the opportunity, as an international community, to deepen our cooperation and to strengthen the institutions and partnerships that help prevent nuclear materials from ever falling into the hands of terrorists. And that will be our focus this afternoon.

And we have the opportunity, as partners, to ensure that our progress is not a fleeting moment, but part of a serious and sustained effort. And that's why I am so pleased to announce that President Lee has agreed to host the next nuclear security summit in the Republic of Korea in 2 years. This reflects South Korea's leadership, regionally and globally, and I thank President Lee and the South Korean people for their willingness to accept this responsibility.

I'd ask President Lee just to say a few words.

President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea. Thank you, President Obama, for inviting me to this historic summit, and thank you for all calling us, for supporting Korea to host next summit in 2012. I assure you I will do best to make this summit a success. So I hope to see all of you in Korea. Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you very much.

So today is an opportunity not simply to talk, but to act; not simply to make pledges, but to make real progress on the security of our people. All this, in turn, requires something else, which is something more fundamental. It will require a new mindset, that we summon the will, as nations and as partners, to do what this moment in history demands.

I believe strongly that the problems of the 21st century cannot be solved by any one nation acting in isolation. They must be solved by all of us coming together.

At the dawn of the nuclear age that he helped to unleash, Albert Einstein said, "Now everything has changed. . . ." And he warned: "We are drifting towards a catastrophe beyond comparison. We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive."

That truth endures today. For the sake of our common security, for the sake of our survival, we cannot drift. We need a new manner of thinking and action, and that is the challenge before us. And I thank all of you for being here to confront that challenge together, in partnership.

And with that, I'm going to ask that we take a few moments to allow the press to exit before our first session.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:45 a.m. at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Poland's Ambassador to the U.S. Robert Kupiecki; and former President Lech Kaczynski of Poland and his wife Maria Kaczynska, who died in a plane crash in Smolensk, Russia, on April 10. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

The President's News Conference
April 13, 2010

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. We have just concluded an enormously productive day.

I said this morning that today would be an opportunity for our nations, both individually and collectively, to make concrete commit-

ments and take tangible steps to secure nuclear materials so they never fall into the hands of terrorists, who would surely use them.

This evening I can report that we have seized this opportunity, and because of the steps we've taken, as individual nations and as an international community, the American people will be safer and the world will be more secure.

I want to thank all who participated in this historic summit: 49 leaders from every region of the world. Today's progress was possible because these leaders came not simply to talk, but to take action; not simply to make vague pledges of future action, but to commit to meaningful steps that they are prepared to implement right now.

I also want to thank my colleagues for the candor and cooperative spirit that they brought to the discussions. This was not a day of long speeches or lectures on what other nations must do. We listened to each other with mutual respect. We recognized that while different countries face different challenges, we have a mutual interest in securing these dangerous materials.

So today is a testament to what is possible when nations come together in a spirit of partnership to embrace our shared responsibility and confront a shared challenge. This is how we will solve problems and advance the security of our people in the 21st century. And this is reflected in the communique that we have unanimously agreed to today.

First, we agreed on the urgency and seriousness of the threat. Coming into this summit, there were a range of views on this danger. But at our dinner last night and throughout the day, we developed a shared understanding of the risk.

Today we are declaring that nuclear terrorism is one of the most challenging threats to international security. We also agreed that the most effective way to prevent terrorists and criminals from acquiring nuclear materials is through strong nuclear security, protecting nuclear materials and preventing nuclear smuggling.

Second, I am very pleased that all the nations represented here have endorsed the goal that I outlined in Prague 1 year ago: to secure all vulnerable nuclear materials around the world in 4 years time. This is an ambitious goal, and we are under no illusions that it will be easy. But the urgency of the threat and the catastrophic consequences of even a single act of nuclear terrorism demand an effort that is at once bold and pragmatic. And this is a goal that can be achieved.

Third, we reaffirmed that it is the fundamental responsibility of nations, consistent with their international obligations, to maintain effective security of the nuclear materials and facilities under our control. This includes strengthening national laws and policies and fully implementing the commitments we have agreed to.

And fourth, we recognized that even as we fulfill our national responsibilities, this threat cannot be addressed by countries working in isolation. So we've committed ourselves to a sustained, effective program of international cooperation on national security, and we call on other nations to join us.

It became clear in our discussions that we do not need lots of new institutions and layers of bureaucracy. We need to strengthen the institutions and partnerships that we already have and make them even more effective. This includes the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the multilateral partnership that strengthens nuclear security, prevent nuclear trafficking, and assist nations in building their capacity to secure their nuclear materials.

But as I said, today was about taking tangible steps to protect our people. So we've also agreed to a detailed work plan to guide our efforts going forward, the specific actions we will take. I want to commend my partners for the very important commitments that they made in conjunction with this summit. Let me give some examples.

Canada agreed to give up a significant quantity of highly enriched uranium. Chile has given up its entire stockpile. Ukraine and Mexico announced that they will do the same. Other nations, such as Argentina and Pakistan, announced new steps to strengthen port security and prevent nuclear smuggling.

More nations, including Argentina, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam, agreed to join, and thus strengthen, the treaties and interna-

tional partnerships that are at the core of our global efforts. A number of countries, including Italy, Japan, India, and China, will create new centers to promote nuclear security technologies and training. Nations pledged new resources to help the IAEA meet its responsibilities.

In a major and welcome development, Russia announced that it will close its last weapons-grade plutonium production reactor. After many years of effort, I'm pleased that the United States and Russia agreed today to eliminate 68 tons of plutonium for our weapons programs, plutonium that would have been enough for about 17,000 nuclear weapons. Instead, we will use this material to help generate electricity for our people.

These are exactly the kinds of commitments called for in the work plan that we adopted today, so we've made real progress in building a safer world.

I would also note that the United States has made its own commitments. We are strengthening security at our own nuclear facilities and will invite the IAEA to review the security at our neutron research center. This reflects our commitment to sharing the best practices that are needed in our global efforts. We're seeking significant funding increases for programs to prevent nuclear proliferation and trafficking.

And today the United States is joining with our Canadian partners in calling on nations to commit $10 billion to extending our highly successful global partnership to strengthen nuclear security around the world.

So this has been a day of great progress. But as I said this morning, this can't be a fleeting moment. Securing nuclear materials must be a serious and sustained global effort. We agreed to have our experts meet on a regular basis to measure progress, to ensure that we're meeting our commitments, and to plan our next steps.

And I again want to thank President Lee and the Republic of Korea for agreeing to host the next Nuclear Security Summit in 2 years.

Finally, let me say, while this summit's focused on securing nuclear materials, this is part of a larger effort: the comprehensive agenda that I outlined in Prague last year to pursue the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. Indeed, in recent days, we've made progress on every element of this agenda.

To reduce nuclear arsenals, President Medvedev and I signed the historic new START Treaty, not only committing our two nations to significant reductions in deployed nuclear weapons, but also setting the stage for further cuts and cooperation between our countries.

To move beyond outdated cold war thinking and to focus on the nuclear dangers of the 21st century, our new Nuclear Posture Review reduces the role and number of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy. And for the first time, preventing nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism is at the top of America's nuclear agenda, which reaffirms the central importance of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

And next month in New York, we will join with nations from around the world to strengthen the NPT as the cornerstone of our global efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, even as we pursue greater civil nuclear cooperation. Because for nations that uphold their responsibilities, peaceful nuclear energy can unlock new advances in medicine, in agriculture, and economic development.

All of these efforts are connected. Leadership and progress in one area reinforces progress in another. When the United States improves our own nuclear security and transparency, it encourages others to do the same, as we've seen today. When the United States fulfills our responsibilities as a nuclear power committed to the NPT, we strengthen our global efforts to ensure that other nations fulfill their responsibilities.

So again, I want to thank my colleagues for making this unprecedented gathering a day of unprecedented progress in confronting one of the greatest threats to our global security. Our work today not only advances the security of the United States, it advances the security of all mankind. And preventing nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism will remain one of my highest priorities as President of the United States.

So with that, I'm going to take a few questions, and I'm going to start with Bill Plante from CBS.

Nuclear Security Summit Commitments

Q. Mr. President, thank you. The communique states in no uncertain terms that all of the unprecedented cooperation for which you're calling will be done on a voluntary basis, not a binding commitment. What's the likelihood that countries which have been at odds over these issues for a number of years are now going to cooperate? How can this be enforced?

The President. Well, let's just take a specific example, Bill. For about 10 years, we had been encouraging Ukraine to either ship out its highly enriched uranium or transform it to a lower grade—a lower enriched uranium. And in part because of this conference, Ukraine took that step, announced that it would complete this step over the next couple of years.

So all the commitments that we talked about are ones that we've already booked, even before the communique and the work plan gets put into place. And that indicates the degree to which I think that there's actually strong unanimity about the importance of this issue as a threat to the global and international community.

Now, keep in mind that we also have a number of international conventions that have been put in place. Not all of them have been ratified. In fact, the United States needs to work on a couple of these conventions dealing with the issues of nuclear terrorism and trafficking. But what this does is it sets out a bold plan. And what I'm encouraged about is the fact that we've already seen efforts that had been delayed for years—in some cases, since the end of the cold war—actually finally coming to fruition here at this summit.

Q. It all depends on good will, sir.

The President. Bill, the point is that we've got world leaders who have just announced that, in fact, this is a commitment that they're making. I believe they take their commitments very seriously.

If what you're asking is, is do we have a international, "one world" law enforcement mechanism, we don't. We never have.

All right? So in all of our efforts internationally, in every treaty that we sign, we're relying on good will on the part of those who are signatories to those efforts. That's the nature of international relations.

Jake Tapper, ABC.

Iran/Nuclear Nonproliferation Efforts

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said today that pressure and sanctions—speaking of Iran's nuclear program—pressure and sanctions cannot fundamentally solve the problem. I was wondering if you could clarify exactly what you believe President Hu Jintao has agreed to, whether you think there actually will be economic sanctions with teeth that the Chinese will sign off on, and what you have told the Chinese in terms of their concern about how much fuel they get from Iran, what the U.S. can help them with in that regard. Thank you, sir.

The President. Here's what I know. The Chinese have sent official representatives to negotiations in New York to begin the process of drafting a sanctions resolution. That is part of the P–5-plus-1 effort. And the United States is not moving this process alone. We've got the participation of the Russians as well as the other members of the P–5-plus-1, all of whom believe that it is important for us to send a strong signal to Iran that their consistent violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions as well as their obligations under the NPT have consequences and that they've got a better path to take.

Now, you're exactly right, Jake, that the Chinese are obviously concerned about what ramifications this might have on the economy generally. Iran is an oil-producing state. I think that a lot of countries around the world have trade relationships with Iran. And we're mindful of that. But what I said to President Hu and what I've said to every world leader that I talk to is that words have to mean something. There have to be some consequences. And if we are saying that the NPT is important, if we're saying that nonproliferation is important, then when those obligations are repeatedly flouted, then it's important for the international community to come together.

And what I would say is that if you consider where we were, say, a year ago with respect to the prospect of sanctions, the fact that we've got Russia and China as well as the other P–5-plus-1 members having a serious discussion around a sanctions regime, following up on a serious sanctions regime that was passed when North Korea flouted its obligations towards the NPT, it's a sign of the degree to which international diplomacy is making it more possible for us to isolate those countries that are breaking their international obligations.

And as I said, I think, several weeks ago, my interest is not having a long, drawn-out process for months. I want to see us move forward boldly and quickly to send the kind of message that will allow Iran to make a different calculation.

And keep in mind, I have said repeatedly that under the NPT, Iran has the right to develop peaceful civilian nuclear energy, as do all signatories to the NPT. The—but given the repeated violations that we've seen on the part of Iran, I think, understandably, the world community questions their commitment towards a peaceful civilian energy program.

They have a way of restoring that trust. For example, we put before them—I'm saying the P–5-plus-1, now, as well as the IAEA—put before them a very reasonable approach that would have allowed them to continue their civilian peaceful nuclear energy needs, but would have allayed many of the concerns around their nuclear weapons program. They have rejected that so far. And that's why it's important—and I said from the start that we're going to move on a dual track, and part of that dual track is making sure that a sanctions regime is in place.

Last point I'll make about sanctions. Sometimes I hear the argument that, well, sanctions aren't really going to necessarily work. Sanctions aren't a magic wand. What sanctions do accomplish is, hopefully, to change the calculus of a country like Iran so that they see that there are more costs and fewer benefits to pursuing a nuclear weapons program. And in that process, what we hope is, is that if those costs get high enough and the benefits are low enough, that in time, they make the right decision, not just for the security and prosperity of the world, but also for their own people.

Scott Wilson, Washington Post. Where's Scott? There we go.

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons/Israel

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You have spoken often about the need to bring U.S. policy in line with its treaty obligations internationally to eliminate the perception of hypocrisy that some of the world sees toward the United States——

The President. Right.

Q. ——and its allies. In that spirit and in that venue, will you call on Israel to declare its nuclear program and sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty? And if not, why wouldn't other countries see that as an incentive not to sign on to the treaty that you say is important to strengthen?

The President. Well, Scott, initially, you were talking about U.S. behavior, and then suddenly, we were talking about Israel. Let me talk about the United States. I do think that as part of the NPT, our obligation as the largest nuclear power in the world is to take steps to reducing our nuclear stockpile. And that's what the START Treaty was about, sending a message that we are going to meet our obligations.

And as far as Israel goes, I'm not going to comment on their program. What I'm going to point to is the fact that consistently we have urged all countries to become members of the NPT.

So there's no contradiction there. We think it is important that we have a international approach that is universal and that rests on three pillars: that those of us who have nuclear weapons are making serious efforts to reduce those stockpiles; that we all are working against the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and those countries that don't currently have nuclear weapons make the decision not to pursue nuclear weapons; and that all countries have access to peaceful nuclear energy.

And so whether we're talking about Israel or any other country, we think that becoming part of the NPT is important. And that, by the

way, is not a new position. That's been a consistent position of the United States Government even prior to my administration.

Let me call on Stephen Collinson of AFP [Agence France-Presse].

China-U.S. Relations/Chinese Economy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. In your meeting with President Hu, did he give you any indication he would heed your call for a more market-oriented exchange rate for the yuan? If there's going to be a change, when would you envisage that taking place? And what happened in the last few weeks to help you move on from a period of—quite a stormy period of public disagreements with China?

The President. The fact is, actually, that the relationship between my administration and the Chinese Government has been very productive during the course of the last year and a half. We started off working together at various multilateral fora, the first one in London with the G–20. I then, out of the bilateral meetings that we had, worked with President Hu to set up a Strategic and Economic Dialogue that looks at a whole range of areas in which the United States and China can cooperate. I made a visit to China that both of us considered very successful.

Now, there are some areas where we've got disagreement. And those disagreements are not new, and I have to say that the amount of turbulence, as you put it, that occurred was actually relatively modest when you look at the overall trajectory of U.S.-China relations. I mean, at no point was there ever a suggestion that it's not in the interests of both our countries to cooperate, and that we have not only important bilateral business to do, but also, we are two very important countries in multilateral settings that have to deal with issues like climate change and the world economy in concert.

With respect to the currency issue, President Hu and I have had a number of frank conversations. As part of the G–20 process, we all signed on to the notion that a rebalancing of the world economy would be important for sustained economic growth and the prevention of future crises. And China, like the United States, agreed to that framework.

We believe that part of that rebalancing involves making sure that currencies are tracking, roughly, the market and not giving any one country an advantage over the other. And I've been very clear of the fact that it is my estimation that the RMB is undervalued and that China's own decision in previous years to begin to move towards a more market-oriented approach is the right one. And I communicated that once again to President Hu. I think China rightly sees the issue of currency as a sovereign issue. I think they are resistant to international pressure when it comes to them making decisions about their currency policy and monetary policy.

But it is my belief that it is actually in China's interest to achieve this rebalancing, because over time, China is going to have to shift away from an economy that is solely oriented on exports and is going to have to start shifting towards an economy that is emphasizing domestic consumption and production and is preventing bubbles from building up within the economy. And all of that will be facilitated with a more market-oriented currency approach.

So I don't have a timetable, but it is my hope that China will make a decision that ultimately will be in their best interest.

Bob Burns of AP [Associated Press].

North Korea

Q. Mr. President, a few minutes ago, when you were explaining the purpose of sanctions against Iran, you said the point is to change Iranian Government calculations, leading to altered behavior. Why hasn't that happened in the case of North Korea, which, unlike Iran, actually does have nuclear weapons?

The President. Well, I'm not going to give you a full dissertation on North Korean behavior. I think it's fair to say that North Korea has chosen a path of severe isolation that has been extraordinarily damaging to its people and that it is our hope that as pressure builds for North Korea to improve its economic performance, for example, to break out of that isolation, that we'll see a return to the six-party talks and that we will see a change in behavior.

Now, as I said, I—sanctions are not a magic wand. Unfortunately, nothing in international

relations is. But I do think that the approach that we've taken with respect to North Korea makes it more likely for them to alter their behavior than had there been no consequences whatsoever to them testing a nuclear weapon. Okay?

Chuck Todd [NBC News].

Pakistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Given the goals of this conference and the goals of your administration on nuclear policy, why does it appear as if Pakistan is playing by a different set of rules? I know they have not signed on to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. But it appears they're expanding their nuclear program, and the proximity to Al Qaida—should there be more pressure internationally on Pakistan, not just coming from the United States, but the world?

The President. I don't think Pakistan's playing by a different set of rules. I think we've been very clear to Pakistan, as we have been to every country, that we think they should join the NPT. I have actually seen progress over the last several years with respect to Pakistan's nuclear security issues.

I want to lower tensions throughout South Asia when it comes to nuclear programs. And I think that the fact that President Gilani came here, signed on to a communique, and made a range of commitments that will make it more likely that we don't see proliferation activities or trafficking occurring out of Pakistan is a positive thing.

Do we have a lot of more work to do? Absolutely. But I think that President—or Prime Minister Gilani's presence here was an important step in assuring that we do not see a nuclear crisis anywhere in South Asia. Okay?

All right, Jeff Mason [Reuters].

Pakistan's Nuclear Security Program/Sanctions Against Iran

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. A follow-up question on two that have been asked: First, how realistic do you believe it is that countries will agree on sanctions in the coming weeks, which is the deadline that you're looking for? And a second, a follow-up on Pakistan: Is the United States confident that Pakistan's nuclear materials are protected and will not be vulnerable to terrorists like Al Qaida?

The President. Yes. To take the second question first, just as a part of a follow-up on Chuck's question, I feel confident about Pakistan's security around its nuclear weapons programs. But that doesn't mean that there isn't improvement to make in all of our nuclear security programs. I mean, you'll recall that we had a little incident a while back where we had nuclear-tipped missiles on a bomber flying across the United States, and nobody knew about it. And Secretary Gates took exactly the right step, which was to hold those in charge accountable and to significantly alter our practices to make sure something like that didn't happen again.

So I think it's important to note that every nuclear power, every country that has a civilian nuclear energy program has to take better steps to secure these materials. And Pakistan is not exempt from that, but we aren't either. And that's, I think, the goal of this summit, and that was the goal of the communique and the work plan that we've put forward.

With respect to sanctions, I think that we have a strong number of countries on the Security Council who believe this is the right thing to do. But I think these negotiations can be difficult. And I am going to push as hard as I can to make sure that we get strong sanctions that have consequences for Iran as it's making calculations about its nuclear program and that those are done on a timely basis. I'm not going to speculate beyond that in terms of where we are.

Last question, Ed Chen of Bloomberg.

U.S. Foreign Policy/Middle East Peace Process

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Good afternoon. Given the progress you have cited in recent days on your foreign policy agenda, to what extent do you feel like you have gained political capital with which to take further to the international stage for the rest of this year to perhaps rejuvenate some initiatives in trouble spots such as the Middle East and elsewhere?

The President. Well, I think the work that we've done in recent days around nuclear security and nuclear disarmament are intrinsically good. They're good just in and of themselves. And so we're very pleased with the progress that we've made. And we could not have done this without extraordinary cooperation first from President Medvedev, when it came to the START Treaty, and then from my colleagues who were here today, when it came to this nuclear security summit.

What I think it signifies is the fact that so many of the challenges that we face internationally can't be solved by one nation alone. But I do think that America's leadership is important in order to get issues on the international agenda and to move in concert with other countries to have an effective response.

There are a host of other issues, obviously, that have to be addressed. And one of the points that was made, actually, during the communique is we're talking here about the instruments of potential war or terrorism, but obviously there are also the reasons, the rationales, the excuses for conflict that have to be addressed as well.

And I remain committed to being a partner with countries around the world, and in particular hot spots around the world, to see if we can reduce those tensions and ultimately resolve those conflicts. And the Middle East would be a prime example. I think that the need for peace between Israelis and Palestinians and the Arab States remains as critical as ever.

It is a very hard thing to do. And I know that even if we are applying all of our political capital to that issue, the Israeli people, through their Government, and the Palestinian people, through the Palestinian Authority, as well as other Arab States may say to themselves, we are not prepared to resolve this—these issues no matter how much pressure the United States brings to bear.

And the truth is, in some of these conflicts, the United States can't impose solutions unless the participants in these conflicts are willing to break out of old patterns of antagonism. I think it was former Secretary of State Jim Baker who said, in the context of Middle East peace, "We can't want it more than they do."

But what we can make sure of is, is that we are constantly present, constantly engaged, and setting out very clearly to both sides our belief that not only is it in the interests of each party to resolve these conflicts, but it's also in the interest of the United States. It is a vital national security interest of the United States to reduce these conflicts, because whether we like it or not, we remain a dominant military superpower, and when conflicts break out, one way or another, we get pulled into them. And that ends up costing us significantly in terms of both blood and treasure.

So I'm going to keep on at it. But I think on all these issues—nuclear disarmament, nuclear proliferation, Middle East peace—progress is going to be measured not in days, not in weeks. It's going to take time. And progress will be halting. And sometimes we'll take one step forward and two steps back, and there will be frustrations. And so it's not going to run on the typical cable news 24/7 news cycle, but if we're persistent and we've got the right approach, then over time, I think that we can make progress.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 4:36 p.m. at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia; and Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani of Pakistan. A reporter referred to Jiang Yu, Deputy Director-General, Information Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of a portion of these remarks.

Videotaped Remarks on the 40th Anniversary of Earth Day
April 13, 2010

Forty-one years ago, in the city of Cleveland, people watched in horror as the Cuyahoga River, choked with debris and covered in oil, caught on fire. Images of the burning Cuyahoga shocked a nation, and it led one Wisconsin Senator the following year to organize the first Earth Day to call attention to the dangers of ignoring our environment.

In the four decades since, we've made remarkable progress. Today, our air and water are cleaner, pollution's been greatly reduced, and Americans everywhere are living in a healthier environment. We've passed the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and founded the Environmental Protection Agency. And in Cleveland, the Cuyahoga River is cleaner than it's been in 100 years.

But the true story of the environmental movement is not about the laws that have been passed. It's about the citizens who've come together time and time again to demand cleaner air, healthier drinking water, and safer food and who've demanded that their representatives in government hold polluters accountable.

That progress continues today, as individuals and entrepreneurs across the country help lay the foundation for a clean energy economy one solar panel or smart meter and energy-efficient home at a time.

Since taking office, my administration's been a partner in the fight for a healthier environment. Through the Recovery Act, we've invested in clean energy and clean water infrastructure across the country. We're taking the necessary steps to keep our children safe and hold polluters accountable. And we've rejected the notion that we have to choose between creating jobs and a healthy environment, because we know that the economy of the 21st century will be built on infrastructure powered by clean energy.

But even though we've made significant progress, there is much more to do. And as we continue to tackle our environmental challenges, it's clear that change won't come from Washington alone. It will come from Americans across the country who take steps in their own homes and their own communities to make that change happen.

That's why, as we get ready to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, I want to leave you with a challenge. I want you to take action in your home or your community, at your school or your business, to improve our environment. It can be as simple as riding the bus or the subway to work, making your home more energy efficient, or organizing your neighbors to clean up a nearby park.

Just go to whitehouse.gov/earthday to learn how you can help. And then tell us your story about what you're doing to make a difference.

In the end, it's people like you, the small-business owners and community leaders, the teachers and the students, the young people and the grandparents, who've made Earth Day so successful. And it's going to be up to you to make an even bigger difference over the next 40 years.

So let's get to work. Together, we can continue to make progress towards a cleaner environment and a healthier planet.

NOTE: The President's remarks were videotaped at approximately 5:55 p.m. on March 19 in the Green Room at the White House for later broadcast.

Statement on Russia's Decision to Shut Down the Zheleznogorsk Plutonium Reactor
April 13, 2010

I welcome this significant announcement from President Medvedev. This important step forward continues to demonstrate Russia's leadership on nuclear security issues and will add momentum to our shared global effort.

Message to the Congress on Blocking Property of Certain Persons Contributing to the Conflict in Somalia
April 13, 2010

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with subsection 204(b) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, 50 U.S.C. 1703(b) (IEEPA), and section 301 of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1631 (NEA), I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order (the "order") blocking the property of certain persons contributing to the conflict in Somalia. In that order, I declared a national emergency to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States posed by that conflict, as described below.

The United Nations Security Council, in Resolution 1844 of November 20, 2008, reaffirmed its condemnation of all acts of violence in Somalia and incitement to violence inside Somalia, and expressed its concern at all acts intended to prevent or block a peaceful political process. United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1844 also expressed grave concern over the recent increase in acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea against vessels off the coast of Somalia, and noted the role piracy may play in financing violations of the arms embargo on Somalia imposed by UNSCR 733 of January 23, 1992. In UNSCR 1844, the United Nations Security Council determined that the situation in Somalia poses a threat to international peace and security in the region and called on member States to apply certain measures against persons responsible for the continuing conflict. The United Nations Security Council has continued to express grave concern about the crisis in Somalia in UNSCR 1846 of December 2, 2008, UNSCR 1851 of December 16, 2008, and UNSCR 1872 of May 26, 2009.

Pursuant to the IEEPA and the NEA, I have determined that the deterioration of the security situation and the persistence of violence in Somalia, and acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia, constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. The order declares a national emergency to deal with this threat.

The order is not targeted at the entire country of Somalia, but rather is intended to target those who threaten peace and stability in Somalia, who inhibit the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Somalia or the distribution of such assistance in Somalia, or who supply arms or related materiel in violation of the arms embargo. The order blocks the property and interests in property in the United States, or in the possession or control of United States persons, of the persons listed in the Annex to the order, as well as of any person determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State:

- to have engaged in acts that directly or indirectly threaten the peace, security, or stability of Somalia, including but not limited to (1) acts that threaten the Djibouti Agreement of August 18, 2008, or the political process, or (2) acts that threaten the Transitional Federal Institutions, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), or other international peacekeeping operations related to Somalia;
- to have obstructed the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Somalia, or access to, or distribution of, humanitarian assistance in Somalia; or
- to have directly or indirectly supplied, sold, or transferred to Somalia, or to have been the recipient in the territory of Somalia of, arms or any related materiel, or any technical advice, training, or assistance, including financing and financial assistance, related to military activities.

The designation criteria will be applied in accordance with applicable Federal law including, where appropriate, the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. The designation criteria will also be applied taking into consideration the arms embargo on Somalia imposed by

UNSCR 733 of January 23, 1992, as elaborated upon and amended by subsequent resolutions.

The order also authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to designate for blocking any person determined to have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, logistical, or technical support for, or goods or services in support of, the activities described above or any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order. I determined that, among other threats to the peace, security, or stability of Somalia, acts of piracy or armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia threaten the peace, security, or stability of Somalia. I further authorized the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to designate for blocking any person (defined as an individual or entity) determined to be owned or controlled by, or to have acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order.

I delegated to the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, the authority to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA and the United Nations Participation Act, as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of the order. All executive agencies are directed to take all appropriate measures within their authority to carry out the provisions of the order.

The order, a copy of which is enclosed, became effective at 12:01 a.m. eastern daylight time on April 13, 2010.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
April 13, 2010.

NOTE: The Executive order of April 12 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

April 14, 2010

The President. All right. Hello, everybody. I want to welcome congressional leaders to one of our periodic meetings. We're obviously at the beginning of a lengthy work period, coming off a very tough work period.

One of the things that we're going to be talking about is the economy. I'm going to be presenting to them the latest report from the Council of Economic Advisers on the impact of the Recovery Act. What we're seeing, I think, is some significant improvement in the economy and stabilization. But obviously, everybody here, Republican and Democrat, recognizes we've still got work to do, that there are too many people who are still unemployed, the housing market is still very soft, too many small businesses who aren't getting credit. And so we're going to spend some time exploring how can we build on the progress that has been made to make sure that ordinary Americans are seeing improvements in their own lives.

I'm also going to be interested in talking to them about our ability to move quickly on a financial regulatory reform package. I think all of us recognize that we cannot have a circumstance in which a meltdown in the financial sector once again puts the entire economy in peril and that if there's one lesson that we've learned, it's that a unfettered market, where people are taking huge risks and expecting taxpayers to bail them out when things go sour, is simply not acceptable.

As a consequence, I am actually confident that we can work out a effective bipartisan package that assures that we never have "too big to fail" again, that consumers are adequately protected when it comes to financial instruments, whether it's mortgages or credit cards or debit cards, that we have a strong mechanism to regulate derivatives, something

that we have not had. A derivatives market that is in the shadow economy, but is enormously powerful, enormously risky, we want to get that into daylight so that regulators and ordinary Americans know what's going on when it comes to this huge segment of the financial system.

And I am confident that if we work together diligently over the next several weeks, that we can come up with a package that serves the American people well and does not put Americans ever again in a position where they're having to choose between a terrible economic situation or rewarding people for failed policies and bad risk-taking. And so that's going to be a top priority of this meeting.

Finally, we've got a range of issues—from a Supreme Court vacancy, a START Treaty that I believe needs to be ratified, a host of other issues related to appointments—that we're going to talk about. And I'm going to be also, obviously, listening to congressional leaders about their priorities over the next several months.

So I very much appreciate them taking the time to come, and I'm hopeful that this will not only be a productive meeting, but we will see a productive session over the next several weeks.

All right? Thank you, everyone.

Financial Regulatory Reform

Q. Is this a bailout bill, as Senator McConnell says?

The President. No, not—well, the—I am absolutely confident that the bill that emerges is going to be a bill that prevents bailouts. That's the goal. All right?

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:53 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Remarks Following a Meeting on Mine Safety
April 15, 2010

Good morning, everybody. On April 5, the United States suffered the worst mine disaster in more than a generation. Twenty-nine lives were lost. Families have been devastated; communities have been upended. And during this painful time, all of us are mourning with the people of Montcoal and Whitesville and Naoma and the Coal River Valley. The people of West Virginia are in our prayers.

But we owe them more than prayers. We owe them action. We owe them accountability. We owe them an assurance that when they go to work every day, when they enter that dark mine, they are not alone. They ought to know that behind them, there is a company that's doing what it takes to protect them and a Government that is looking out for their safety.

In the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, I asked the officials standing with me, Labor Secretary Hilda Solis and Joe Main and Kevin Stricklin with the Mine Safety and Health Administration, to lead an investigation into what caused the explosion at Massey Energy Company's Upper Big Branch mine. I asked them to report back with preliminary findings this week.

We just concluded a meeting where they briefed me on their investigation. I want to emphasize that this investigation is ongoing and there's still a lot that we don't know. But we do know that this tragedy was triggered by a failure at the Upper Big Branch mine, a failure first and foremost of management, but also a failure of oversight and a failure of laws so riddled with loopholes that they allow unsafe conditions to continue.

So today I've directed Secretary Solis, Assistant Secretary Main, and Administrator Stricklin to work closely with State mining officials to press ahead with this investigation so we can help make sure a disaster like this never happens again. Owners responsible for conditions in the Upper Big Branch mine should be held accountable for decisions they made and preventive measures they failed to take. And I've asked Secretary Solis to work with the Justice Department to ensure that every tool in the Federal Government is available in this investigation.

But this isn't just about a single mine. It's about all of our mines. The safety record at the Massey Upper Big Branch mine was troubling.

And it's clear that while there are many responsible companies, far too many mines aren't doing enough to protect their workers' safety.

And that's why yesterday Governor Manchin announced that West Virginia miners will take this Friday off from coal production so they can mourn their loss, but also reevaluate safety procedures. He also called for additional inspections in West Virginia mines. The Federal Government is taking sweeping actions as well. Starting today, we'll go back and take another look at mines across this country with troubling safety records and get inspectors into those mines immediately to ensure they aren't facing the same unsafe working conditions that led to this disaster.

Second, I've directed Secretary Solis, Assistant Secretary Main, and Administrator Stricklin to work with Congress to strengthen enforcement of existing laws and close loopholes that permit companies to shirk their responsibilities. Stronger mine safety laws were passed in 2006 after the Sago mine disaster. But safety violators like Massey have still been able to find ways to put their bottom line before the safety of their workers, filing endless appeals instead of paying fines and fixing safety problems. To help ensure that mine companies no longer use a strategy of endless litigation to evade their responsibilities, we need to tackle the backlog of cases at the Mine Safety and Health Review Commission.

And to help hold companies accountable, I've also asked Secretary Solis to streamline the rules for proving that a mining company has committed a pattern of violations so that we can empower the mine safety agency to take essential steps to keep miners safe. If a mining company consistently violates safety standards, they should be subjected to the tougher enforcement that comes with being placed on an updated pattern of violations list.

Third, we can't just hold mining companies accountable; we need to hold Washington accountable. And that's why I want to review how our Mine Safety and Health Administration operates. For a long time, the mine safety agency was stacked with former mine executives and industry players. The industry [agency]* is now run, I'm proud to say, by former miners and health safety experts like Joe Main and Kevin Stricklin. Even so, we need to take a hard look at our own practices and our own procedures to ensure that we're pursuing mine safety as relentlessly as we responsibly can. In addition, we need to make sure that miners themselves, and not just the Government or mine operators, are empowered to report any safety violations.

I think we all understand that underground coal mining is, by its very nature, dangerous. Every miner and every mining family understands this. But we know what can cause mine explosions, and we know how to prevent them. I refuse to accept any number of miner deaths as simply a cost of doing business. We can't eliminate chance completely from mining any more than we can from life itself. But if a tragedy can be prevented, it must be prevented. That's the responsibility of mine operators, that's the responsibility of Government, and that is the responsibility that we're all going to have to work together to meet in the weeks and months to come.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:39 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health Joseph A. Main; Coal Mine Safety and Health Administrator Kevin G. Stricklin; and Gov. Joseph Manchin III of West Virginia.

* White House correction.

Remarks at the John F. Kennedy Space Center in Merritt Island, Florida
April 15, 2010

Thank you, everybody. Thank you so much. Please have a seat. Thank you. I want to thank Senator Bill Nelson and NASA Administrator Charlie Bolden for their extraordinary leadership. I want to recognize Dr. Buzz Aldrin as well, who's in the house. Four decades ago, Buzz became a legend, but in the four decades since, he's also been one of America's leading visionaries and authorities on human space flight.

Now, few people, present company excluded, can claim the expertise of Buzz and Bill and Charlie when it comes to space exploration. I have to say that few people are as singularly unimpressed by Air Force One as those three. [*Laughter*] Sure, it's comfortable, but it can't even reach low Earth orbit. And that obviously is in striking contrast to the Falcon 9 rocket we just saw on the launch pad, which will be tested for the very first time in the coming weeks.

A couple of other acknowledgments I want to make. We've got Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee from Texas visiting us, a big supporter of the space program. My Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy—in other words, my chief science adviser—John Holdren is here. And most of all, I want to acknowledge your Congresswoman, Suzanne Kosmas, because every time I meet with her, including the flight down here, she reminds me of how important our NASA programs are and how important this facility is. And she is fighting for every single one of you and for her district and for the jobs in her district. And I—you should know that you've got a great champion in Congresswoman Kosmas. Please give her a big round of applause.

I also want to thank everybody for participating in today's conference. And gathered here are scientists, engineers, business leaders, public servants, and a few more astronauts as well. And last but not least, I want to thank the men and women of NASA for welcoming me to the Kennedy Space Center and for your contributions not only to America, but to the world.

Here at the Kennedy Space Center, we are surrounded by monuments and milestones of those contributions. It was from here that NASA launched the missions of Mercury and Gemini and Apollo. It was from here that Space Shuttle *Discovery*, piloted by Charlie Bolden, carried the Hubble telescope into orbit, allowing us to plumb the deepest recesses of our galaxy. And I should point out, by the way, that in my private office just off the Oval, I've got the picture of Jupiter from the Hubble. So thank you, Charlie, for helping to decorate my office. [*Laughter*] It was from here that men and women, propelled by sheer nerve and talent, set about pushing the boundaries of humanity's reach.

That's the story of NASA. And it's a story that started a little more than half a century ago, far from the space coast, in a remote and desolate region of what is now called Kazakhstan, because it was from there that the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first artificial satellite to orbit the Earth, which was little more than a few pieces of metal with a transmitter and a battery strapped to the top of a missile. But the world was stunned. Americans were dumbfounded. The Soviets, it was perceived, had taken the lead in a race for which we were not yet fully prepared.

But we caught up very quickly. President Eisenhower signed legislation to create NASA and to invest in science and math education, from grade school to graduate school. In 1961, President Kennedy boldly declared before a joint session of Congress that the United States would send a man to the Moon and return him safely to the Earth within a decade. And as a nation, we set about meeting that goal, reaping rewards that have, in the decades since, touched every facet of our lives. NASA was at the forefront. Many gave their careers to the effort. And some have given far more.

In the years that have followed, the space race inspired a generation of scientists and innovators, including, I'm sure, many of you. It's contributed to immeasurable technological advances that have improved our health and well-being, from satellite navigation to water purification, from aerospace manufacturing to medi-

cal imaging. Although, I have to say, during a meeting right before I came out on stage, somebody said, "You know, it's more than just Tang." And I had to point out, I actually really like Tang. [*Laughter*] I thought that was very cool.

And leading the world to space helped America achieve new heights of prosperity here on Earth, while demonstrating the power of a free and open society to harness the ingenuity of its people.

And on a personal note, I have been part of that generation so inspired by the space program. Nineteen sixty-one was the year of my birth, the year that Kennedy made his announcement. And one of my earliest memories is sitting on my grandfather's shoulders, waving a flag as astronauts arrived in Hawaii. For me, the space program has always captured an essential part of what it means to be an American: reaching for new heights, stretching beyond what previously did not seem possible. And so as President, I believe that space exploration is not a luxury, it's not an afterthought in America's quest for a brighter future; it is an essential part of that quest.

So today I'd like to talk about the next chapter in this story. Now, the challenges facing our space program are different and our imperatives for this program are different than in decades past. We're no longer racing against an adversary. We're no longer competing to achieve a singular goal like reaching the Moon. In fact, what was once a global competition has long since become a global collaboration. But while the measure of our achievements has changed a great deal over the past 50 years, what we do—or fail to do—in seeking new frontiers is no less consequential for our future in space and here on Earth.

So let me start by being extremely clear: I am 100 percent committed to the mission of NASA and its future. Because broadening our capabilities in space will continue to serve our society in ways that we can scarcely imagine. Because exploration will once more inspire wonder in a new generation, sparking passions and launching careers. And because, ultimately, if we fail to press forward in the pursuit of discovery, we are ceding our future and we are ceding that essential element of the American character.

Now, I know there have been a number of questions raised about my administration's plan for space exploration, especially in this part of Florida, where so many rely on NASA as a source of income as well as a source of pride and community. And these questions come at a time of transition, as the space shuttle nears its scheduled retirement after almost 30 years of service. And understandably, this adds to the worries of folks concerned not only about their own futures, but about the future of the space program to which they've devoted their lives.

But I also know that underlying these concerns is a deeper worry, one that precedes not only this plan, but this administration. It stems from the sense that people in Washington, driven sometimes less by vision than by politics, have for years neglected NASA's mission and undermined the work of the professionals who fulfill it. We've seen that in the NASA budget, which has risen and fallen with the political winds.

But we can also see it in other ways: in the reluctance of those who hold office to set clear, achievable objectives, to provide the resources to meet those objectives, and to justify not just these plans, but the larger purpose of space exploration in the 21st century.

All that has to change. And with the strategy I'm outlining today, it will. We start by increasing NASA's budget by $6 billion over the next 5 years, even—[*applause*]—I want people to understand the context of this. This is happening even as we have instituted a freeze on discretionary spending and sought to make cuts elsewhere in the budget.

So NASA, from the start, several months ago when I issued my budget, was one of the areas where we didn't just maintain a freeze, but we actually increased funding by $6 billion. By doing that, we will ramp up robotic exploration of the solar system, including a probe of the Sun's atmosphere, new scouting missions to Mars and other destinations, and an advanced telescope to follow Hubble, allowing

us to peer deeper into the universe than ever before.

We will increase Earth-based observation to improve our understanding of our climate and our world, science that will garner tangible benefits, helping us to protect our environment for future generations.

And we will extend the life of the International Space Station likely by more than 5 years, while actually using it for its intended purpose: conducting advanced research that can help improve the daily lives of people here on Earth as well as testing and improving upon our capabilities in space. This includes technologies like more efficient life support systems that will help reduce the cost of future missions. And in order to reach the space station, we will work with a growing array of private companies competing to make getting to space easier and more affordable.

Now, I recognize that some have said it is unfeasible or unwise to work with the private sector in this way. I disagree. The truth is, NASA has always relied on private industry to help design and build the vehicles that carry astronauts to space, from the Mercury capsule that carried John Glenn into orbit nearly 50 years ago to the Space Shuttle *Discovery* currently orbiting overhead. By buying the services of space transportation rather than the vehicles themselves, we can continue to ensure rigorous safety standards are met. But we will also accelerate the pace of innovations as companies, from young startups to established leaders, compete to design and build and launch new means of carrying people and materials out of our atmosphere.

In addition, as part of this effort, we will build on the good work already done on the Orion crew capsule. I've directed Charlie Bolden to immediately begin developing a rescue vehicle using this technology, so we are not forced to rely on foreign providers if it becomes necessary to quickly bring our people home from the International Space Station. And this Orion effort will be part of the technological foundation for advanced spacecraft to be used in future deep space missions. In fact, Orion will be readied for flight right here in this room.

Next, we will invest more than $3 billion to conduct research on an advanced heavy lift rocket, a vehicle to efficiently send into orbit the crew capsules, propulsion systems, and large quantities of supplies needed to reach deep space. Now, in developing this new vehicle, we will not only look at revising or modifying older models, we want to look at new designs, new materials, new technologies that will transform not just where we can go, but what we can do when we get there. And we will finalize a rocket design no later than 2015 and then begin to build it. That at—[*applause*]—and I want everybody to understand, that's at least 2 years earlier than previously planned, and that's conservative, given that the previous program was behind schedule and over budget.

At the same time, after decades of neglect, we will increase investment right away in other groundbreaking technologies that will allow astronauts to reach space sooner and more often, to travel farther and faster for less cost, and to live and work in space for longer periods of time more safely. That means tackling major scientific and technological challenges. How do we shield astronauts from radiation on longer missions? How do we harness resources on distant worlds? How do we supply spacecraft with energy needed for these far-reaching journeys? These are questions that we can answer and will answer. And these are the questions whose answers no doubt will reap untold benefits right here on Earth.

So the point is, what we're looking for is not just to continue on the same path, we want to leap into the future. We want major breakthroughs, a transformative agenda for NASA.

Now, yes, pursuing this new strategy will require that we revise the old strategy. In part, this is because the old strategy, including the Constellation program, was not fulfilling its promise in many ways. That's not just my assessment, that's also the assessment of a panel of respected nonpartisan experts charged with looking at these issues closely. Now, despite this, some have had harsh words for the decisions we've made, including some individuals who I've got enormous respect and admiration for.

But what I hope is, is that everybody will take a look at what we are planning, consider the details of what we've laid out, and see the merits

as I've described them. The bottom line is, nobody is more committed to manned space flight, to human exploration of space than I am. But we've got to do it in a smart way, and we can't just keep on doing the same old things that we've been doing and thinking that somehow is going to get us to where we want to go.

Some have said, for instance, that this plan gives up our leadership in space by failing to produce plans within NASA to reach low Earth orbit, instead of relying on companies and other countries. But we will actually reach space faster and more often under this new plan, in ways that will help us improve our technological capacity and lower our costs, which are both essential for the long-term sustainability of space flight. In fact, through our plan, we'll be sending many more astronauts to space over the next decade.

There are also those who've criticized our decision to end parts of Constellation as one that will hinder space exploration below low Earth orbit. But it's precisely by investing in groundbreaking research and innovative companies that we will have the potential to rapidly transform our capabilities, even as we build on the important work already completed, through projects like Orion, for future missions. And unlike the previous program, we are setting a course with specific and achievable milestones.

Early in the next decade, a set of crewed flights will test and prove the systems required for exploration beyond low Earth orbit. And by 2025, we expect new spacecraft designed for long journeys to allow us to begin the first-ever crewed missions beyond the Moon into deep space. So we'll start by sending astronauts to an asteroid for the first time in history. By the mid-2030s, I believe we can send humans to orbit Mars and return them safely to Earth. And a landing on Mars will follow. And I expect to be around to see it.

But I want to repeat—I want to repeat this: Critical to deep space exploration will be the development of breakthrough propulsion systems and other advanced technologies. So I'm challenging NASA to break through these barriers. And we'll give you the resources to break through these barriers. And I know you will, with ingenuity and intensity, because that's what you've always done.

Now, I understand that some believe that we should attempt a return to the surface of the Moon first, as previously planned. But I just have to say pretty bluntly here, we've been there before. Buzz has been there. There's a lot more of space to explore and a lot more to learn when we do. So I believe it's more important to ramp up our capabilities to reach and operate at a series of increasingly demanding targets, while advancing our technological capabilities with each step forward. And that's what this strategy does. And that's how we will ensure that our leadership in space is even stronger in this new century than it was in the last.

Now, finally, I want to say a few words about jobs. Suzanne pointed out to me that the last time I was here, I made a very clear promise that I would help in the transition into a new program to make sure that people who are already going through a tough time here in this region were helped. And despite some reports to the contrary, my plan will add more than 2,500 jobs along the space coast in the next 2 years compared to the plan under the previous administration. So I want to make that point.

We're going to modernize the Kennedy Space Center, creating jobs as we upgrade launch facilities. And there's potential for even more jobs as companies in Florida and across America compete to be part of a new space transportation industry. And some of those industry leaders are here today. This holds the promise of generating more than 10,000 jobs nationwide over the next few years. And many of these jobs will be created right here in Florida, because this is an area primed to lead in this competition.

Now, it's true, there are Floridians who will see their work on the shuttle end as the program winds down. This is based on a decision that was made 6 years ago, not 6 months ago, but that doesn't make it any less painful for families and communities affected as this decision becomes a reality.

So I'm proposing—in part because of strong lobbying by Bill and by Suzanne as well as Charlie—I'm proposing a $40 million initiative led by a high-level team from the White House, NASA, and other agencies to develop a plan for regional economic growth and job creation. And I expect this plan to reach my desk by August 15th. It's an effort that will help prepare this already skilled workforce for new opportunities in the space industry and beyond.

So this is the next chapter that we can write together here at NASA. We will partner with industry. We will invest in cutting-edge research and technology. We will set far-reaching milestones and provide the resources to reach those milestones. And step by step, we will push the boundaries not only of where we can go, but what we can do.

Now, 50 years after the creation of NASA, our goal is no longer just a destination to reach. Our goal is the capacity for people to work and learn and operate and live safely beyond the Earth for extended periods of time, ultimately in ways that are more sustainable and even indefinite. And in fulfilling this task, we will not only extend humanity's reach in space, we will strengthen America's leadership here on Earth.

Now, I'll close by saying this. I know that some Americans have asked a question that's particularly apt on tax day: Why spend money on NASA at all? Why spend money solving problems in space when we don't lack for problems to solve here on the ground? And obviously, our country is still reeling from the worst economic turmoil we've known in generations. We have massive structural deficits that have to be closed in the coming years.

But you and I know this is a false choice. We have to fix our economy. We need to close our deficits. But for pennies on the dollar, the space program has fueled jobs and entire industries. For pennies on the dollar, the space program has improved our lives, advanced our society, strengthened our economy, and inspired generations of Americans. And I have no doubt that NASA can continue to fulfill this role. But that is why—[*applause*]—but I want to say clearly to those of you who work for NASA, but to the entire community that has been so supportive of the space program in this area: That is exactly why it's so essential that we pursue a new course and that we revitalize NASA and its mission, not just with dollars, but with clear aims and a larger purpose.

Now, little more than 40 years ago, astronauts descended the nine-rung ladder of the lunar module called *Eagle* and allowed their feet to touch the dusty surface of the Earth's only Moon. This was the culmination of a daring and perilous gambit, of an endeavor that pushed the boundaries of our knowledge, of our technical prowess, of our very capacity as human beings to solve problems. It wasn't just the greatest achievement in NASA's history, it was one of the greatest achievements in human history.

And the question for us now is whether that was the beginning of something or the end of something. I choose to believe it was only the beginning.

So thank you. God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:55 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to *Gemini 12* and *Apollo 11* astronaut Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin, Jr.

Statement on House Energy and Commerce Committee Passage of Home Star Legislation

April 15, 2010

Today's bipartisan committee vote is an important step forward in our effort to create jobs, save consumers money, and increase energy efficiency. In my State of the Union Address and in the months since, I have called on Congress to pass a program of incentives to homeowners who make their homes more energy efficient. The Home Star legislation approved today would do just that, providing consumers with upfront rebates on investments in things like insulation, heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, and windows that have been proven to save energy. This proposal is not a Democratic or Republican idea, it's a commonsense

strategy to help put Americans back to work while giving American consumers a break. I want to thank the Members of Congress from both parties that have worked to support this legislation, as well as their colleagues in the Senate who are working to promote Home Star legislation. I look forward to working with Congress to get this bill to my desk without delay.

Statement on the Death of Benjamin L. Hooks
April 15, 2010

Michelle and I were saddened to hear of the passing of Dr. Benjamin L. Hooks. As I was running for this office, I had the honor of spending some time with Dr. Hooks and hearing about his extraordinary place in our American story. For 16 years, he led the NAACP with a strong hand and a nimble mind. And all the while, he not only reminded us of that historic organization's noble mission, he inspired each and every one of us to play our part in forging a stronger nation for all Americans. While many would have been satisfied with that achievement, Dr. Hooks was a man driven to accomplish so much more. A true trailblazer, he served as the first African American criminal court judge in his native Tennessee. He became the first African American to serve on the Federal Communications Commission. He earned the Presidential Medal of Freedom. And throughout it all, he made the time to serve others as a mentor and preach the Gospel as a pastor.

Our national life is richer for the time Dr. Hooks spent on this Earth. And our Union is more perfect for the way he spent it, giving a voice to the voiceless. Michelle and I offer our thoughts and prayers to his wife Frances, his daughter Patricia Gray, and all who knew Dr. Hooks through his extraordinary good works.

Statement on Congressional Passage of Legislation Temporarily Extending Various Programs Including Unemployment Insurance
April 15, 2010

In these tough economic times, it is more critical than ever to bring relief to Americans who are working every day to find a job and families that are struggling to make ends meet. Millions of Americans who lost their jobs in this economic crisis depend on unemployment and health insurance benefits to get by as they look for work and get themselves back on their feet. I'm grateful that the House and Senate moved forward on this temporary extension today. But as I requested in my budget, I urge Congress to move quickly to extend these benefits through the end of this year. I also urge Congress to move forward on legislation to help small businesses grow and hire and other measures to increase the pace of job growth. This is my top priority, and I will fight day and night until every American who wants a good job has one.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception in Miami, Florida
April 15, 2010

The President. Hello, Miami! Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Everybody have a seat, everybody have a seat. Settle down here for a second. Oh, it is good to be back in Miami. It's good to be back in the Sunshine State. I came to Florida today to visit NASA, lay out a bold new vision for America's future in space. And I figured, hey, while I'm here—[*laughter*]—let's beam down and visit some old friends in Miami, so—[*applause*].

Thank you, Tim Kaine, not only for the generous introduction, but for the great job he is doing—[*applause*]—an unbelievable job as DNC chair, just like he did an unbelievable job as the Governor of the great Commonwealth of Virginia.

Thank you to your vice chair, your own Debbie Wasserman Schultz. We love Debbie. We have in the house Florida's next Governor, Alex Sink. We've got Florida's next CFO and one of the first people in Florida to stand up and endorse my campaign—Loranne Ausley is here as well. Somewhere around here is the next Senator from the great State of Florida, Kendrick Meek. He's here somewhere. There he is. Kendrick's doing a great job.

I also want to point out a great friend of mine, a former member of my administration who just yesterday announced he is running for Congress in Florida's 25th, Joe Garcia is in the house—Joe Garcia. So is Florida's next agricultural commissioner, Scott Maddox. And a wonderful Member of Congress from further up north—I don't know if she came out, but she's doing unbelievable work, so keep her in mind—Suzanne Kosmas. There's Suzanne. There she is. She came out.

And thank you to the talented Esperanza Spalding. Isn't she terrific? I love listening to Esperanza; she is wonderful.

I also want to thank all the leaders of the Haitian American community who are with us tonight. So—[*applause*]—I think some of you know my political director, Patrick Gaspard, is from Haiti. And so through him, we understood how much you've lost and how much you've given. And some of you know, I think, Michelle just took her first solo trip abroad as First Lady. Her first stop was to Haiti. The devastation moved her deeply, and she also saw, though, the resiliency and the resolve of the people. And that filled her with hope. And so I asked her to give the people of Haiti a message from me, which is, the United States of America will continue to stand with the people of Haiti as they recover and they rebuild. That is something that we are committed to.

So it's good to be among friends in Florida. I spent a lot of time here during our campaign. Many of you were on the frontlines, devoting your time, your energy, knocking on doors, making phone calls, arguing with people—[*laughter*]—most of all, affirming that unyielding faith in the promise of America. And so I want to thank you for being part of this journey.

In a time of incredible economic uncertainty, you believed that we could still make the American Dream accessible for everybody who was willing to work for it. And at a time of cynicism, you believed that we could still solve problems that had held us back for years, decades. At a time of great challenge—especially when we were challenged—you believed that change was still possible in the United States of America.

So, Miami, I've come back here to tell you tonight that we have kept the faith with those beliefs. We've begun to fix the problems that we identified during the campaign. The change you fought for is beginning to take hold in Washington and all across the country.

Now, change is never easy. I don't know if you've noticed this. [*Laughter*] People tend to be comfortable with the status quo, even when the status quo isn't working for them. And the fact is that with all the turbulence that's been taking place this year, for many Americans, change still can't come fast enough. But I wanted people to understand what we were looking at when we first came into office: a financial crisis unlike any we had seen in generations; an economy that was bleeding 750,000 jobs a month; challenges that ranged from the specter of terrorism to the impacts of globalization to two wars that were costly in every sense of the word.

And before we could start healing, we had to stop the bleeding. We needed to make sure that an economic disaster did not become a full-blown depression. And some of those short-term steps designed to stabilize the economy, they weren't popular. The Recovery Act, even though we gave tax cuts to everybody, somehow got confused with the bank bailout. And then there was the auto thing, and everybody said, "Gosh, what's Obama doing?" [*Laughter*] "He's not listening to the polls; this is unpopular."

But it turns out that there are some things that, shockingly enough, are more important than polls, more important than elections. The

country was in trouble. We had to respond. We had to respond to the problems that were facing the American people with the same sense of urgency that they felt in their own lives. That was just over a year ago.

Now, we've still got a long way to travel. There's still a lot of people hurting out there. You see them in your communities, you see them in your own family, maybe you see them in your own lives. But 1 year later, we can say that the financial system has stabilized. People have recouped a lot of what they had lost in their 401(k)s. We had—we've seen that an economy that was contracting is now growing again. We were losing jobs; now we're gaining jobs.

As far as the bank system goes, we recovered most of the money that it cost to stabilize it. And I've proposed a fee on the Nation's biggest banks so that we recover every dime the taxpayers put into them.

So 1 year later, we've made progress: The economy is growing again; the markets are rising again; America's businesses are creating jobs again. One year later, more than 2 million Americans, more than 100,000 Floridians are at work today who otherwise would not be there—because of the Recovery Act, because of what Debbie Wasserman Schultz did and Suzanne Kosmas did and Kendrick Meeks did.

And since today happens to be tax day—[*laughter*]—I should just point out that one-third of the Recovery Act went to tax cuts, tax cuts that strengthened the cornerstone of the American Dream: working for a living, earning an education, owning a home, raising a family. We cut taxes for 95 percent of working Americans, just like I promised we would on the campaign. That made a difference for 7 million families in Florida alone. We cut taxes on small businesses. We cut taxes for students and parents paying for college. We cut taxes for first-time home buyers, more than 128,000 here in Florida. In all, we passed 25 different tax cuts last year. And one thing we haven't done is raise income taxes on families making less than $250,000 a year, another promise that we kept.

So I've been a little amused over the last couple of days where people have been having these rallies—[*laughter*]—about taxes, taxes. You would think they would be saying thank you. [*Laughter*] That's what you'd think.

So we're headed in the right direction on our road to recovery. But the true measure of our progress is the progress that the American people feel in their lives. And there's still a lot of hurt out here, too many folks still out of work. That's why we're doing everything we can in the short term to accelerate private sector job creation. But here's the thing, Miami: If we want our economy to fuel job creation in the long term, if we want to grow in the way that brings the middle class along for the ride, then we need to rebuild it on a new and a stronger foundation for growth. And that's what we've been doing. We're working to give every American the world-class education they need to compete and win in the global economy—every child in America.

We launched a national competition to improve our schools. We took on the special interests, and with the help of Debbie and Suzanne and Kendrick, we reformed the school loan system—$68 billion that was going to banks is now going to students and families to help pay for their education. So we're making college education more affordable and more accessible.

We've made the largest investment in clean and renewable energy in our Nation's history, because there are factories to reopen and assembly lines to restart and workers ready to build wind turbines and solar panels and advanced batteries for the new electric cars right here in America. And the nation that leads the clean energy economy will lead the 21st-century economy. And I believe that America has to be that nation. And that's what we're going to fight for.

And, Miami, for the sake of our families and businesses, and with your help, we finally passed comprehensive health reform right here in the United States of America. Now, as—[*applause*].

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. We did it thanks to Debbie and thanks to Suzanne and thanks to Kendrick and thanks to you. As my Vice President said,

this is a big deal. [*Laughter*] Joe's got a way with words. And he was right. It's a big deal.

I mean, think about what we accomplished here. This reform is the strongest, most sweeping insurance reform in history. It will begin to end the worst practices of the insurance industry. It cuts the deficit by over $1 trillion, puts in place all sorts of reforms that are going to make sure that we are getting better quality health care for less money, and it's going to finally offer millions of families and small-business owners quality, affordable care and the security and peace of mind that comes with it—a lot of people for the very first time in their lives.

So for all the sound and fury and all the scare tactics, here's what you need about health care reform. The law doesn't hand more control to the Government. It doesn't hand more control to health insurance companies. It gives it back to you, the American people. This law doesn't weaken Medicare; it strengthens it and extends its life almost by a decade. This law doesn't increase our deficits, it's going to reduce them, more than $100 billion over the next decade, over $1 trillion the decade after that.

And there's an array of consumer protection and benefits that take effect this year. I just want to list some of these off, just in case you're having a conversation with your—[*laughter*]—you know, a coworker or a friend. I know you've had some of those conversations. [*Laughter*]

This year, seniors who fall into the doughnut hole coverage gap will receive $250 to help them pay for their prescriptions, and that begins a pathway where we are closing that doughnut hole completely so that seniors have the coverage they need and the security they need for their prescription drug coverage. This year, millions of small-business owners will be eligible for tax credits to cover the cost of insuring their employees—this year. This year, ten thousands—tens of thousands of uninsured Americans with a preexisting condition and parents with children with preexisting conditions will finally be able to purchase the coverage they need. This year, insurance companies can't drop you when you get sick. This year, insurance companies can't apply lifetime limits on your coverage. These are big deals for families all across America.

Now, this reform's not perfect. There are going to be adjustments that we're going to have to make. This is going to take a few years to fully implement, because we've got the responsibility to get it right.

But when you turn on the television, you've got pundits saying that the country's still divided on health care; it's not universally popular yet. Folks, I want to repeat what I said in Maine: It's only been a couple weeks. [*Laughter*] You know, sometimes the way they cover stuff in Washington—I was talking about how—the way they'd cover a farm, you know? You'd be up there tilling the soil, and the press would look, and, "Look, the dirt's all messed up!" [*Laughter*] And then you'd put the seeds in and pack it down. And next morning they'd come up, "There are no crops! It's not working! We're going to starve!" [*Laughter*] Let me tell you.

And then you've got—then you have some of my Republican friends who were warning that after health care, this was going to be Armageddon—[*laughter*]—wanted to repeal health reform before the signature was even dry.

So I went to NASA today, and I asked some of the guys, I said, are asteroids coming? [*Laughter*] Are you sending Bruce Willis and Ben Affleck out to—[*laughter*]. They told me, "America's going to be okay." [*Laughter*]

And for those Republicans and folks who are on the "repeal" platform, my attitude is, go for it. I'll have that fight. We'll have that argument. We'll take that argument across the country. If they want to let kids be barred from getting insurance because of preexisting conditions, we can have that discussion. If they want to take back tax cuts from small businesses who want to do the right thing by their employees, I'm happy to have that argument. They want to allow insurance companies to take away your insurance right when you get sick and need it most, I'm happy to have that debate. Are they really willing to look that senior in the eye and say, we're not going to help you afford that medicine?

Audience member. Yes, they are.

The President. Well, they may—[*laughter*]—but I tell you what, if they do it, I don't

think they're going to get a very good response. I don't think they're going to look a small-business owner in the eye and take away their tax credits or say that your son can't have health care after all; too bad, tough luck, you're on your own.

Look what happened the other day, just north of here. Ted Deutch won the first congressional election since health reform passed. Now, look, I mean, let's not get too excited; it's a Democratic district. [*Laughter*] But to listen to the Republicans, they were warning over and over again this would be a referendum on health care, this is a referendum on the Recovery Act, this is a referendum on Obama. Well, maybe it was. [*Laughter*] I'm just listening to them.

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. I——

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. Here's what I think, Miami. Here's what I think. I think if we stay true to our principles, if we do what's right for the American people, then elections will take care of themselves. You know, I noticed that this was one of the great things about running for President, especially for 2 years—[*laughter*]—is it gives you a little perspective, because you realize that these things go in cycles, the mood of the media and how things get portrayed. And so you're like a genius for about a month, and then you're an idiot for about 6 months. [*Laughter*] And then, you know, you're smart again for—you're not as smart as you were, but you're a little smarter than they thought you were. [*Laughter*] And then you're an idiot again. [*Laughter*]

But what it shows you is that you can't hyperventilate about the day-to-day politics and the gamesmanship and the polls. What you've got to focus on is that true north, that lodestar, which is, are the things we're doing over the long term going to help not just this generation, but the next generation? Is this going to make America stronger? Is it going to help the economy grow? Is it going to help equip our children to compete in a new economy?

There are always going to be issues that Democrats and Republicans don't see eye to eye on. That's how our democracy works. I have to say, though, it's one thing to disagree out of principle, it's another to stand in the way simply because of politics. And too often, that's been what's going on. And we had Republican leaders who made a decision even before I took office—now, this is their quote, so I'm not making this up—who just said, you know, "We're not going to work with the Obama administration on the most important issues facing the American people."

A few weeks into my Presidency, I went to the Capitol to meet with some of my Republican friends on the House to talk about what were we going to do about this economy plunging into disaster. It turned out there was a press release issued before I got to the meeting saying they had already decided to vote against it. They didn't know what "it" was—[*laughter*]—but they were going to oppose it.

Early in the health care debate, a Republican Senator said, "If we are able to stop Obama on this, it will be his Waterloo; it will break him."

When it comes to fiscal responsibility—now, these are the folks who inherited this massive surplus from Bill Clinton and the Democrats, right? So they conveniently forget when they're in charge that they turned this massive surplus into massive deficits, voting for two tax cuts for the wealthy that weren't paid for, two wars, a new entitlement program—paid for none of it. Suddenly, we're in, and they've got the green visors out, and they're sharpening the pencils—[*laughter*]—and they're deficit hawks again, blamed me for all of it. I walked in with a $1.3 trillion deficit. Suddenly, it's mine. This is a sight to see. [*Laughter*]

So I said, okay, I'm President, I'm going to take responsibility for it. I embraced a Republican idea: We're going to create a bipartisan fiscal commission to help us close the deficit. What happened? Some of the same folks who had proposed the idea—they were sponsors of the bill—suddenly they're against it. [*Laughter*] So I'm sensing a pattern. [*Laughter*] So somebody's got to tell them, you talk and you share ideas first, then you can say no. You don't say no first. [*Laughter*]

So not surprisingly, people are frustrated with Washington. But if folks spent less time trying to score points and more time thinking about the needs and the hopes of the American people, imagine all that we could accomplish together. I know this may be heresy to say in front of a crowd like this, at an event like this, but there are more important things than political party.

So I'm going to keep on reaching out to Republicans. I'm going to keep on incorporating good ideas when they have them, even if they refuse to consider my good ideas, because there is a lot that we should be able to agree on. We should be able to agree on rebuilding our economy so that hard work is rewarded and families feel like they've got a shot at achieving the American Dream again. This is more than just an economic challenge, because jobs are more than about a paycheck. It's about feeling a job well done, the sense of self-worth and dignity, the fulfillment of meeting one's responsibilities. We've got to think creatively and collaboratively if we want to put America back to work in well-paying jobs.

We should all agree we've got to close our mounting deficits. I take this very seriously. Even as we've had to spend our way out of this recession in the near term, helping people with unemployment insurance and their health insurance needs and helping States so they're not having to lay off teachers and cops and firefighters, we've still been making hard choices necessary to put our country on a more stable fiscal footing in the long run.

But we're going to face more tough choices ahead, and we've got to work on them together. We should all agree that we've got to pass commonsense Wall Street reform that prevents the kind of situation that led us into this crisis in the first place and damaged the dreams of millions of Americans.

Now, it's no surprise that the financial institutions that profit from the status quo have sent hordes of lobbyists to kill reform. It's like throwing a piece of meat into a piranha tank. They're going to race to see how fast they can tear it apart. But we can't allow them to succeed. Every Member of Congress is soon going to have to make a decision; they're going to have to make a choice. And the choice is going to be very simple, between special interests and the American people. If you want the status quo, where banks are able to take wild risks to pump up their bonuses and leave you footing the bill when things go south, that's one option. I don't think it's the right one. And there's going to be a very clear choice to make. And I believe that all of us, Democrat and Republican, can find some common ground here.

So the bottom line is, we've come a long way to go—we've come a long way this past year, but we've got a long way to go. We've got a lot of work left to do. Times are still tough for too many of our fellow Americans. But here's what I want you to remember: America's endured tough times before, tougher times than these, even. And we always come out of them stronger; we always come out of them smarter; we always come out more united. And, Miami, I'm convinced that if we keep at it, if we see this through, if we shun the cynics, if we heed the better angels of our nature, if we look beyond the next election, do what's right for the next generation, then we're going to meet our common challenges and we are going to finish what we've started. We are going to keep the promise and hope of America alive for this generation and for the next generation and every generation after that. And we're only going to do it because of you guys and the incredible work that you're doing each and every day.

Thank you. I love you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:42 p.m. at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County. In his remarks, he referred to musician Esperanza Spalding; actors Bruce Willis and Ben Affleck; and Sen. James W. DeMint. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 16.

Remarks at the White House Conference on America's Great Outdoors
April 16, 2010

Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. Thank you.

It is a great privilege to join for this conference on America's great outdoors. There are a number of people that, obviously, I want to acknowledge here who have worked tirelessly to move this agenda forward. At the top of our list, our Secretary of the Interior, who I believe is going to be one of the best Secretaries of Interior in American history, Ken Salazar, who has just fully embraced this issue. We're thrilled with the work he's done. Thank you. Thank you, Ken.

Secretary Tom Vilsack, Administrator Lisa Jackson, Nancy Sutley—all have been part of what we call our green team and are consistently providing creative ideas to make sure that we understand that conservation is not contrary to economic growth, it is an integral part of economic growth. And they have just done a fabulous job on that, so please give them a big round of applause.

We have my outstanding NOAA Administrator, Dr. Jane Lubchenco. We have Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Jo-Ellen Darcy; Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Installations and the Environment, Dr. Dorothy Robyn. And in the audience, if I'm not mistaken, we've got some luminaries. Is Governor Bill Richardson in the house? There he is—from New Mexico, a great conservationist. Former Secretary of the Interior, Secretary Bruce Babbitt is here; one of the finest young mayors in the country, Mayor Cory Booker; and to all the outstanding Members of Congress who have been so diligent in promoting a conservation agenda.

Now, I am mindful that the first such conference was held over one century ago by one of my favorite Presidents, one of our greatest Presidents, and certainly our greatest conservation President. Upon taking office, Theodore Roosevelt—avid birdwatcher, bear hunter—set out on a tour of the American West that would change his life and the life of a nation forever.

He stood in awe of the geysers at Yellowstone. He camped in a snow blizzard at Yosemite. He stood on the lip of the Grand Canyon. "The ages have been at work on it," he declared. "Man can only mar it."

And from that sense of commitment sprang 5 national parks, 18 national monuments, 51 Federal bird reservations, and 150 national forests. From that commitment sprang an effort to save the great redwoods of California and the petrified forest of Arizona, the great bird rocks of the Aleutian Islands and the Tongass of Alaska. From that commitment sprang a breathtaking legacy of conservation that still enhances our lives.

Now, that legacy is an extraordinary achievement, and no matter how long I have the privilege of serving as President, I know I can never match it. And I will probably never shoot a bear. [*Laughter*] That's a fair bet there, fair guess. [*Laughter*] But I do intend to enrich that legacy, and I feel an abiding bond with the land that is the United States of America.

And I do for the same reasons that all of you do, for the same reasons families go outside for a picnic or campers spend a night in a national park and sportsmen track game through the woods or wade deep into a river. It's a recognition passed down from one generation to the next that few pursuits are more satisfying to the spirit than discovering the greatness of America's outdoors.

And when we see America's land, we understand what an incredible bounty that we have been given. And it's our obligation to make sure that the next generation enjoys that same bounty.

That recognition has been a touchstone of this Presidency, thanks to the outstanding leadership of Ken Salazar and Secretary Vilsack and Lisa Jackson and Nancy Sutley. They have done extraordinary work.

Last year, I signed into law a public lands bill—the most significant in decades—that designated 2 million acres of wilderness, over 1,000 miles of wild and scenic rivers, and three

national parks. We better protected cherished places like Oregon's Mount Hood. We're taking a new approach to our national forests to make sure they're not just providing timber for lumber companies, but water and jobs for rural communities. We are restoring our rivers and coasts, from the Chesapeake Bay to the Gulf Coast, from the Great Lakes to the Everglades.

So yes, we are working faithfully to carry on the legacy of Teddy Roosevelt in the 21st century. But we also know that we must adapt our strategies to meet the new challenges of our time. Over the last century, our population grew from about 90 million to 300 million people, and as it did, we lost more and more of our natural landscape to development. Meanwhile, a host of other factors, from a changing climate to new sources of pollution, have put a growing strain on our wildlife and our waters and our lands.

So rising to meet these challenges is a task and an obligation, but it's one that Government cannot and should not meet alone. There are roughly 1,600 privately run land trusts in this country that have protected over 10 million acres through voluntary efforts. And by working with farmers and ranchers and landowners, the Department of Agriculture's Conservation Reserve Program has protected over 30 million acres, and its Natural Resource Conservation Service, a service that is 75 years old this year, has protected almost 3 million more. So together, we are conserving our working lands in a way that preserves the environment and protects local communities.

And that's the kind of collaborative spirit at the heart of the America's Great Outdoors Initiative that we're launching today. In the months ahead, members of this administration will host regional listening sessions across America. We'll meet with everybody, from tribal leaders to farmers, from young people to businesspeople, from elected officials to recreation and conservation groups. And their ideas will help us form a 21st-century strategy for America's great outdoors to better protect our natural landscape and our history for generations to come.

Now, understand, we're not talking about a big Federal agenda being driven out of Washington. We're talking about how we can collect best ideas on conservation, how we can pursue good ideas that local communities embrace, and how we can be more responsible stewards of tax dollars to promote conservation.

First, we're going to build on successful conservation efforts being spearheaded outside of Washington—by local and State governments, by tribes, and by private groups—so we can write a new chapter in the protection of rivers, wildlife habitats, historic sites, and the great landscapes of our country.

Secondly, we're going to help farmers, ranchers, property owners who want to protect their lands for their children and their grandchildren.

Third, we'll help families spend more time outdoors, building on what the First Lady has done through the "Let's Move!" initiative, to encourage young people to hike and bike and get outside more often.

And fourth, we want to foster a new generation of community and urban parks so that children across America have the chance to experience places like Millennium Park in my own Chicago.

We're launching this strategy because it's the right thing to do, because, as TR said, we must not mar the work of the ages. But we're also doing it because it's the right thing to do for our economy. It's how we're going to spur job creation in the tourism industry and the recreation industry. It's how we'll create jobs preserving and maintaining our forests, our rivers, our great outdoors.

In a time of great difficulty, when we are recovering from the worst recession in generations and waging two wars abroad, some may ask whether now's the time to reaffirm our commitment to our national heritage. But I want everybody to recall, it was in the midst of the Civil War that Abraham Lincoln set aside lands that are now Yosemite. It was in the midst of a Great Depression that FDR formed the Civilian Conservation Corps that built the trails and campgrounds and parks we enjoy today.

Even in times of crisis, we're called to take the long view to preserve our national heritage,

because in doing so, we fulfill one of the responsibilities to—that falls to all of us as Americans and as inhabitants of this same small planet. And that is the responsibility that we are rising to meet today.

So thank you all for the outstanding work that you're doing individually. I look forward to the work that you're going to be doing collectively in advising this administration. Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:17 a.m. at the Department of the Interior. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Cory A. Booker of Newark, NJ.

Remarks During a Meeting of the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board and an Exchange With Reporters

April 16, 2010

The President. Hello, everybody. All right, don't break anything. [*Laughter*] You guys all set? All right.

Well, thank you all for coming. We have a few topics to discuss today, and I'm eager to hear from all of you about how the economy looks from your perspective and your forecast for the next few months. We're particularly interested, obviously, in the issue of hiring and how we're putting Americans back to work. And I'm also going to be focused on hearing from you your recommendations in terms of how we can increase exports in the years to come, because we know that if we are selling products overseas and not just purchasing products and services, then that is going to directly benefit the growth of our economy.

I do want to say a few words quickly about the issue of Wall Street reform. I know that some of you have worked in the financial industry or been leading financial regulators. Many of you have been advocates of reform for some time. Paul and Bill, in particular, have been active in this area for more years than they probably care to remember.

As I've said before, we need a strong and healthy financial sector to grow jobs and our economy. And it's exactly because of the centrality and importance of the financial sector that we have to act. The devastating recession that we just went through offered a very painful lesson in what happens when we don't have adequate accountability and transparency and consumer protection.

We can't allow history to repeat itself. Never again should American taxpayers be forced to step in and pay the price for the irresponsibility of speculators on Wall Street who made risky bets with the expectation that taxpayers would be there to break their fall. And we can't leave in place a tattered set of rules that will allow another crisis to develop, without the tools to deal with it. And that's why I expect that we are going to have a strong reform proposal that demands new accountability from Wall Street and provides new protections for consumers.

This is reform that will force banks and financial institutions to pay for bad decisions that they make and not have taxpayers pay for those bad decisions. And that means no more bailouts.

This reform would also bring new transparency and accountability to the derivatives market, and this is something that Paul Volcker spoke publicly about just the other week. The derivatives market is where a lot of the big, risky financial bets by companies like AIG took place. There are literally trillions of dollars sloshing around this market that basically changes hands under the cover of darkness. And when things go wrong, as they did in AIG, they can bring down the entire economy, and that's why we've got to bring more transparency and oversight when it comes to derivatives and bring them into a framework in which everybody knows exactly what's going on, because we can't afford another AIG.

Now, let's be honest. Some in the industry are not happy with the prospect of these reforms. We've seen the usual army of lobbyists dispatched up on Capitol Hill. They have

found some willing allies on the other side of the aisle in Congress who have been trying to carve out a lot of exceptions and special loopholes so that folks on Wall Street can keep making these risky bets without any oversight.

I hope that we can pass a bipartisan bill. But bipartisanship cannot mean simply allowing lobbyist-driven loopholes that put American taxpayers at risk. That would not be real reform.

So in the coming weeks, every Member of Congress is going to have to make a decision: Are they going to side with the special interests and the status quo, or are they going to side with the American people? And anyone who opposes this reform is going to be leaving taxpayers on the hook if a crisis like the one that we've just seen ever happens again. And I consider that unacceptable.

My hope and belief is that all of us, Democrats and Republicans, are going to be able to find some common ground on this issue and move it forward. It is too important to become bogged down in the same partisan gridlock and politics that we've seen. It's time that we demanded accountability from Wall Street and protections for consumers so that we don't find ourselves in this same mess again.

All right. So with that, we're going to officially convene the meeting, which will be livestreamed. So let's clear out the room a little bit.

All right. Everybody was much better behaved than usual. [*Laughter*]

Board Chairman Paul A. Volcker. Well, I guess we're making progress.

The President. Yes, obviously. Usually, I get at least one shouted question. This time everybody was very well behaved. It was good.

Participant. Friday afternoon.

The President. Yes, exactly. [*Laughter*]

Use of Presidential Veto on Financial Regulatory Reform Legislation

Q. Well, Mr. President, can I ask you—[*laughter*]——

Participant. You took the bait.

The President. Go ahead. Go ahead.

Q. ——if you would veto legislation if the derivatives language isn't as strong as what Senator Dodd has?

The President. You know, I want to see what emerges, but I will veto legislation that does not bring the derivatives market under control and some sort of regulatory framework that assures that we don't have the same kind of crises that we've seen in the past.

Okay. All right. With that, I'm going to turn it over to our chairman, Mr. Paul Volcker.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:38 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to William H. Donaldson, member, President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board.

Statement on the Anniversary of Washington, DC, Emancipation Day
April 16, 2010

On this occasion, we remember the day in 1862 when President Lincoln freed the enslaved people of Washington, DC, 9 months before he issued the Emancipation Proclamation. I am proud that an original copy of that document now hangs in the Oval Office, and we remain forever grateful as a nation for the struggles and sacrifices of those Americans who made that emancipation possible.

Americans from all walks of life are gathering in Washington today to remind Members of Congress that although DC residents pay Federal taxes and serve honorably in our Armed Services, they do not have a vote in Congress or full autonomy over local issues. And so I urge Congress to finally pass legislation that provides DC residents with voting representation and to take steps to improve the Home Rule Charter.

The President's Weekly Address
April 17, 2010

There were many causes of the turmoil that ripped through our economy over the past 2 years. But above all, this crisis was caused by the failures in the financial industry. What's clear is that this crisis could have been avoided if Wall Street firms were more accountable, if financial dealings were more transparent, and if consumers and shareholders were given more information and authority to make decisions.

But that didn't happen. And that's because special interests have waged a relentless campaign to thwart even basic, commonsense rules, rules to prevent abuse and protect consumers. In fact, the financial industry and its powerful lobby have opposed modest safeguards against the kinds of reckless risks and bad practices that led to this very crisis.

The consequences of this failure of responsibility—from Wall Street to Washington—are all around us: 8 million jobs lost, trillions in savings erased, countless dreams diminished or denied. I believe we have to do everything we can to ensure that no crisis like this ever happens again. And that's why I'm fighting so hard to pass a set of Wall Street reforms and consumer protections.

A plan for reform is currently moving through Congress. Here's what this plan would do. First, it would enact the strongest consumer financial protections ever. It would put consumers back in the driver's seat by forcing big banks and credit card companies to provide clear, understandable information so that Americans can make financial decisions that work best for them.

Next, these reforms would bring new transparency to financial dealings. Part of what led to this crisis was firms like AIG and others making huge and risky bets, using things like derivatives, without accountability. Warren Buffett himself once described derivatives bought and sold with little oversight as "financial weapons of mass destruction." That's why through reform we'd help ensure that these kind of complicated financial transactions take place on an open market. Because ultimately, it is a marketplace that is open, free, and fair that will allow our economy to flourish.

We'd also close loopholes to stop the kind of recklessness and irresponsibility that we've seen. It's these loopholes that allowed executives to take risks that not only endangered their companies, but also our entire economy. And we're going to put in place new rules so that big banks and financial institutions will pay for the bad decisions they make, not taxpayers. Simply put, this means no more taxpayer bailouts. Never again will taxpayers be on the hook because a financial company is deemed too big to fail.

Finally, these reforms hold Wall Street accountable by giving shareholders new power in the financial system. They'll get a say on pay, a vote on salaries and bonuses awarded to top executives. And the SEC will ensure that shareholders have more power in corporate elections so that investors and pension holders have a stronger voice in determining what happens with their life savings.

Now, unsurprisingly, these reforms have not exactly been welcomed by the people who profit from the status quo, as well their allies in Washington. This is probably why the special interests have spent a lot of time and a lot of money lobbying to kill or weaken the bill. Just the other day, in fact, the leader of the Senate Republicans and the chair of the Republican Senate campaign committee met with two dozen top Wall Street executives to talk about how to block progress on this issue.

Lo and behold, when he returned to Washington, the Senate Republican leader came out against commonsense reforms that we've proposed. In doing so, he made the cynical and deceptive assertion that reform would somehow enable future bailouts, when he knows that it would do exactly the opposite. Every day we don't act, the same system that led to bailouts remains in place, with the exact same loopholes and the exact same liabilities. And if we don't change what led to the crisis, we will doom ourselves to repeat it. That's the

truth. Opposing reform will leave taxpayers on the hook if a crisis like this ever happens again.

So my hope is that we can put this kind of politics aside. My hope is that Democrats and Republicans can find common ground and move forward together. But this is certain: One way or another, we will move forward. This issue is too important. The costs of inaction are too great. We will hold Wall Street accountable. We will protect and empower consumers in our financial system. That's what reform is all about. That's what we're fighting for. And that's exactly what we're going to achieve.

Thanks so much.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:55 p.m. on April 16 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on April 17. In the address, the President referred to Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 16, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 17. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Funeral Service for President Lech Kaczynski of Poland
April 17, 2010

I spoke with Acting President Komorowski and told him that I regret that I will not be able to make it to Poland due to the volcanic ash that is disrupting air travel over Europe. Michelle and I continue to have the Polish people in our thoughts and prayers and will support them in any way I can as they recover from this terrible tragedy. President Kaczynski was a patriot and close friend and ally of the United States, as were those who died alongside him, and the American people will never forget the lives they led.

Statement on the 62d Anniversary of the State of Israel
April 19, 2010

On the 62d anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel, I join the American people in congratulating the Government and people of Israel on this celebration of their independence. Minutes after David Ben-Gurion declared Israel's independence, realizing the dream of a state for the Jewish people in their historic homeland, the United States became the first country to recognize Israel. To this day, we continue to share a strong, unbreakable bond of friendship between our two nations, anchored by the United States enduring commitment to Israel's security. Israel remains our important partner and key strategic ally in the Middle East, and I am confident that our special relationship will only be strengthened in the months and years to come. I look forward to continuing our efforts with Israel to achieve comprehensive peace and security in the region, including a two-state solution, and to working together to counter the forces that threaten Israel, the United States, and the world.

On this day, we once again honor the extraordinary achievements of the people of Israel and their deep and abiding friendship with the American people. I offer my best wishes to President Peres, Prime Minister Netanyahu, and the people of Israel as they celebrate this happy occasion.

Remarks at a Fundraiser for Senator Barbara Boxer in Los Angeles, California
April 19, 2010

The President. Hello, California! Hello. I am fired up. It's good to see you. All right, all right, all right. Okay. Thank you. Thank you, California.

I want to begin by just thanking—everybody's a special guest, but let me just point out some folks who are here who I want to acknowledge. First of all, somebody who was one of the finest Governors in the country, is now one of the best DNC chairmen of the country, Tim Kaine—give it up for Tim Kaine; attorney general, and may soon be another great Governor, Jerry Brown—where's Jerry?—he's around here somewhere; State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell is in the house; Congresswoman—outstanding Congresswoman Jane Harman; Congressman Joe Baca; Congresswoman Diane Watson; Congresswoman Laura Richardson; Congresswoman Judy Chu; former Governor Gray Davis; Speaker Emeritus—that's a pretty fancy title—[*laughter*]—Speaker Emeritus of the California Assembly Karen Bass is in the house.

I haven't seen her, but I'm told she's here, and I love this woman's music and her spirit, India Arie is supposedly in the house. Hello, India, wherever you are. Where is she?

Audience members. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Right there—there she—there—no—where you are?

Audience member. Backstage.

The President. Backstage—she's backstage, okay. I was like, where? I don't see her.

Somebody else who I'm very honored to have—I want everybody to acknowledge——

Audience members. There she is.

The President. There she is; there's my girl, India Arie.

And while we're at it with special people, somebody who helped Major League Baseball become what it is, but also helped America become what it is, Hall of Fame pitcher Don Newcombe is in the house. I just had the honor of meeting him. Just had the honor of meeting him and taking a picture with him, and he was very gracious in saying, "You know, Jackie would be proud." And I said, "Well, I would not be here if it were not for Jackie and it were not for Don Newcombe."

It is nice to be back. It is nice to be in California, not just because it's good to get out of Washington—[*laughter*]—but one of the things that I enjoy most about coming to events like this is the chance to be with some old friends, to be with some of the people who were there with me at the beginning, who knocked on doors and made telephone calls and who helped us win the Presidency in 2008.

But as happy as I am to see you, I am even happier to be with my good friend and great Senator, Barbara Boxer. It was one of the privileges of being a Senator that I had a chance to work alongside Barbara. You know, California has been——

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. ——you know, California has been a leader in promoting hybrids and cleaner burning fuels, and appropriately, you have in Barbara Boxer a subcompact Senator with a seemingly inexhaustible supply of energy.

Now, a lot of you are aware of how deeply Barbara cares about the environment, about her work to pursue clean—a clean energy future, and that work's vitally important. But what I also want you to know is that this is a woman who has a deep passion for fighting for you, fighting for all her constituents here in California.

She's passionate about fighting for jobs, jobs with good wages, jobs with good benefits. She's passionate about fighting for California's families. She is——

Audience member. Repeal "don't ask, don't tell"!

The President. We are going to do that.

[*At this point, there was a disruption in the audience.*]

The President. Hey, hold on a second, hold on a second. We are going to do that.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. So let's——

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. There we go. All right——

[*The disruption continued.*]

The President. Guys, guys——

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. All right. I agree. I agree. I agree. Now——

[*The disruption continued.*]

The President. No, no, no—no, listen. What the young man was talking about was, we need to repeal "don't ask, don't tell," which I agree with and which we have begun to do. But let me say this: When you've got an ally like Barbara Boxer and you've got an ally like me who are standing for the same thing, then you don't know exactly why you've got to holler, because we already hear you, all right? I mean, it would make more sense to holler that at the people who oppose it.

When you've got Barbara Boxer, who is passionate about fighting to give people all across this State a fair shake, to put the American Dream within reach for all Americans, then what we should be worrying about is how are we going to make sure Barbara Boxer gets elected.

And that's mostly what I want to talk about tonight. I am proud of the work we've done to bring the world together around a host of problems, from terrorism to the nuclear threat, from climate change to deprivation and poverty around the globe. I was gratified to sign a new START Treaty with Russia and to host so many world leaders in Washington last week, working in concert to reduce the perilous risk that nuclear materials could fall into the wrong hands.

But reviving our own economy remains the central challenge that we're facing today. I don't have to tell you that. This State has been hit as hard as any State in the Union with economic troubles these past few years. Jobs have been lost at a heartbreaking level all across this State, and they've devastated families and devastated communities.

The housing crisis hit this State with a particular vengeance, driving your friends, your neighbors out of their homes, injecting a sense of fear and financial insecurity into too many people's lives.

Audience member. It's time for equality for all Americans!

The President. I'm sorry, do you want to come up here? You know, the—all right, because can I just say, once again, Barbara and I are supportive of repealing "don't ask, don't tell," so I don't know why you're hollering.

Now, the problems that we have here put a further strain on folks in this State, forcing painful choices about where to spend and where to save. And the challenges folks have been facing here——

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. Barbara——

[*The President talked privately with Sen. Boxer. He continued his remarks as follows.*]

I just—everybody, I just wanted to confirm—I just checked with Barbara, so if anybody else is thinking about starting a chant, Barbara didn't even vote for "don't ask, don't tell" in the first place, so you know she's going to be in favor of repealing "don't ask, don't tell."

Now, that is a key issue, but I think putting Californians back to work is also a key issue, because there are folks, gay and straight, who are out of work right now. And the challenges that are being faced right here in California are facing Americans all across the country.

Now, these aren't challenges that suddenly appeared when I got sworn into office. They didn't come out of nowhere. When I walked into the White House on that very first day, America was embroiled in a series of crises the likes of which we hadn't seen in some time.

Abroad, we were confronting a war in Iraq that needed to come to a responsible end, a war

in Afghanistan that demanded greater focus, a new world of threats and new dangers.

And at home, we were facing a financial crisis that just about every credible economist said had the potential to plunge us into another great depression, an economic crisis that was producing stagnant wages, falling incomes, and a shaken middle class, and a deficit crisis that was saddling our children with a mountain of debt. That's what we inherited when we came in.

And while we've still got a long and difficult road ahead of us, while too many of our neighbors are still struggling, especially here in California, these are challenges that Barbara and I and others are working hard to solve together. We're beginning to see some signs of progress all across America: adding jobs instead of losing them; spending—people spending again; orders rising again; an economy that's growing instead of shrinking.

And, California, this progress we're seeing didn't happen by accident. It happened because we've taken a number of necessary but not always popular steps to break the back of this recession and to get our economy moving again. But you didn't send us to Washington just to manage the crisis or rescue the economy. You sent us there to rebuild it so that it was stronger than before, to make it more prosperous than it was before, more competitive than it was before. You sent us there to make the 21st century another American century and lay a new foundation for growth that will reach all our people.

And that's what health insurance reform was about. That's why we embarked on historic education reform. That's why we're embarking on clean energy reform. That's what our future's about. That's why we have restored science to its rightful place. That's why we renewed our commitment to research and development, from medical labs to nanotechnology. We're focusing on the next generation, California, not just the next election.

That's the mission that I've been trying to faithfully carry out on your behalf. And that's the mission that Members of Congress like Barbara have been carrying out faithfully on your behalf. Now, I'll be honest, it would have been nice if we had had a little more help from the other side of the aisle sometimes.

Audience member. Any help.

The President. Say any help—[*laughter*]—and I—just a smidgen of help. [*Laughter*] And I've been disappointed sometimes that that little smidgen hasn't been more forthcoming. You would have expected that Republican leaders would have been willing to help out, cleaning up after this mess, since they had more than a little to do with creating it.

And we all have a stake in cleaning it up. We're all, after all, Americans. Not Democrats, not Republicans first; we're Americans first. So we should all have a stake in seeing success in cleaning this situation up. And yet, after driving our economy into the ditch, they decided to stand on the side of the road and watch us while we pulled it out of the ditch. They asked, "Why haven't you pulled it out fast enough?" [*Laughter*] "I noticed there's, like, a little scratch there in the fender. Why didn't you do something about that?" [*Laughter*]

Now, look, you know, that's their prerogative, California. That's also what elections are for. And the American people will have a clear choice when they head to the polls in November. And they'll have to do—all they'll have to do is look what we've been for and what the other side's been against.

For example, tax cuts—you know, we just had tax day, and there were a bunch of folks out there complaining about their taxes. I understand that. Nobody likes paying taxes, except I just want to make sure their anger is properly directed, because we were for putting $200 billion in tax cuts into the pockets of the American people, tax cuts for making college more affordable, tax cuts for buying a first home. Altogether, we gave 25 different tax cuts for families and for businesses, several of them directed at small businesses that they're the backbone of our economy. Here in California, 98 percent of working families are getting a tax cut. So that's what we were for, and that's what the other side was against.

Audience member. Thank you for my tax cut.

The President. You're welcome. [*Laughter*]

We—Barbara and I and the other Members of Congress here—we thought it was wasteful and wrong to give billions of dollars to banks to act as unnecessary middlemen in administering student loans. So we said, let's use that money to help more students go to college and get the skills they need to outcompete workers around the world. We said, let's make the repayment of student loans more manageable so that kids don't start out with a crushing debt. That's what we were for; that's what they were against.

We thought it was unfair to deny health insurance to Americans with preexisting conditions. We thought it was wrong to let hard-working families and small businesses continue to get crushed by skyrocketing health care costs and families go bankrupt because somebody gets sick in their family. So we did what Americans have been trying to do for a century—Republican Presidents and Democratic Presidents and Republican Congresses and Democratic Congresses—and we finally enshrined the principle that all of us ought to have a sense of security when it comes to our health care. That's what we were for; that's what they were against.

In fact, the Republican leader in the House said the other day that repealing health insurance reform would be his number-one priority if he becomes Speaker of the House in November.

Audience members. No! Boo!

The President. So he would say to you and 800,000 Californians with preexisting conditions, "You know what? We think it was a mistake to make sure that you can get coverage." And he'd tell all those seniors, "Give back that $250 you'll get this year to help pay for prescription drugs." And then he'll say to millions of small-business men and women who today qualify for new tax credits to help them cover their workers, "You know what? Your workers don't need health insurance, and you don't need help either."

Now, that—if he wants to run on that appealing agenda—[*laughter*]—go ahead. But Barbara Boxer's not going to let it happen, and I'm not going to let it happen, and you're not going to let it happen, and the American people are not going to let it happen, because we believe that Americans should have affordable, quality health care.

Audience member. Thank you!

The President. You're welcome. [*Laughter*]

Now, even as we speak, we're in the midst of another important battle in Washington. I want everybody to be paying attention these next several weeks, because one of the main reasons our economy faltered was because some on Wall Street made irresponsible bets with no accountability. The rules weren't adequate. Sometimes the Government simply looked the other way. And as a result, we had a financial crisis that led to the loss of 8½ million jobs, a crisis that's caused millions of Californians to lose their homes and cost families and businesses trillions of dollars in savings and assets.

Now, I've said this many times before: I believe in the free financial market. I believe that's—that it's essential that we have a strong financial market, because that helps to boost dynamic economic growth.

But a free market doesn't mean you should be free to do whatever you want, however you can get it, without regard to consequences. There have to be some rules of the road, there's got to be some accountability, there's got to be some transparency, or else we're going to see more abuses and disastrous meltdowns like the ones we just experienced.

So Barbara and the Members of Congress who are here and I believe that we've got to update the rules governing the financial markets to bring greater accountability, greater transparency to Wall Street and greater protections to consumers and taxpayers and the broader economy.

And not surprisingly, Wall Street has fought some of these reforms—shocking. [*Laughter*] They've sent down an army of lobbyists. They're just waiting to water them down. The truth is, that's a big reason we got into this mess in the first place, because of the disproportionate power of these lobbies. So this time, we've got to get it right. This time, we have a responsibility to meet, a responsibility to the American people and to America's future.

Now, the Senate Republican leader, he paid a visit to Wall Street a week or two ago. He took along the chairman of their campaign commit-

tee. He met with some of the movers and shakers up there. I don't know exactly what was discussed. All I can tell you is when he came back, he promptly announced he would oppose the financial regulatory reform. He would oppose it.

Audience member. Shocking.

The President. Shocking. [*Laughter*] And once again, he's threatening to tie up the Senate with a filibuster to try to block progress.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. And he made the cynical argument that is just plain false that this plan that is essential to avoiding future taxpayer bailouts was somehow going to create taxpayer bailouts.

Now, understand, I'm not saying Democrats and Republicans ought to agree on everything. There are some things we just philosophically disagree on. And that's a good thing. That's part of our democracy. But a wise man once said, "He has the right to criticize who has the heart to help."

And all we're looking right now for is some help, some common sense and some help. That's what we hope the other side is going to do, not just criticize, but help, exercise some common sense. Don't just stand in the way, but lend a hand and help. Because the fact is, we need everybody's help. The problems we face are too great for any one party to solve. And all of us, Democrats and Republicans, have to come together to solve them.

All of us together have to tackle exploding deficits. That's why I directed my team to go through the budget line by line to cut what we don't need so we can pay for what we do. That's why I took a Republican idea, an idea they'd been fighting for, and set up a bipartisan fiscal commission to rein in our deficits. And Barbara and I set a clear goal to cut our deficits in half over the next 3 years.

All of us need to come together on behalf of clean energy. It's the right thing to do for the environment. It's the right thing to preserve our natural heritage. It's the right thing to do for our economy. And that's why, following California's lead, I worked to bring everybody up to a tough, new standard for cars and trucks, ushering in the first national standard for fuel economy and greenhouse gas reductions. That's why Barbara and I worked together to provide incentives for companies building wind turbines and solar panels and green jobs that can't be outsourced. That's why we need to build on Barbara's good work and pass comprehensive energy and climate legislation, because the country that leads the energy economy will lead the global economy. Barbara and I want that country to be the United States of America.

All of us—all of us—need to come together to expand the reach of the American Dream. And that's why the first bill I signed as President helps ensure equal pay for equal work for men and women alike. And yes, that's why I'm committed to ending "don't ask, don't tell" and upholding nondiscrimination in the workplace.

That's why last week, I signed an order to help end the cruel practice of denying loved ones hospital visitation rights because of who they are. We need to keep a fundamental promise of America. We've got to keep a fundamental promise that it doesn't matter who you are, what you look like, where you come from, the blessings of this country are open to every single American.

So let me close by saying this: These have been difficult years for California, and they've been difficult years for America. And I can't pretend we're over all the tough times. There are going to be some more hard days ahead.

But here is what I want you to know: I have never been more optimistic about America's future. And I am optimistic because I know there are people like you out there and I know there are people like Barbara Boxer in the Senate who's fighting to change this country for the better. And because you are out there fighting and because Barbara is there fighting, I draw inspiration. And there are people all across this country who are dreaming of a better tomorrow, and then they are willing to fight for those dreams to come true.

And you know what? That's the story of California. This is a State that always drew dreamers, men and women with the courage to pursue their dreams. It's a State that inspired pioneers to head out across an unforgiving wilderness, a State that spurned—spurred glory

seekers to rush westward for gold, and the State that draws innovators and entertainers, from Hollywood Hills to Mountain View. And there's always been something about California that inspires us to dream, that's called on us to build a better life, that has helped us imagine the world as it is and then recognize that the world as it might be is out there.

And I'm absolutely confident that if folks in Washington can recapture that same spirit, that same boundless, resilient American spirit, we're not only going to rescue our economy, we're not only going to rebuild it stronger than before, but we're going to do what generations did before and make the American Dream more secure for our children and our grandchildren. That's what Barbara Boxer is about. That's what you're about. And that's why I expect you to be out there making phone calls and knocking on doors and rallying the troops, just like you did in 2008, to make sure that you return Barbara Boxer to the United States Senate.

Thank you very much, California. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:12 p.m. at the California Science Center. In his remarks, he referred to State Attorney General Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown, Jr., of California; entertainer India.Arie Simpson; Rep. John A. Boehner; and Sen. John Cornyn, in his capacity as chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee.

Remarks at a Reception for Senator Barbara Boxer in Los Angeles
April 19, 2010

The President. Hello, hello. Good to see you. We've got a whole bunch of the congressional delegation—[*applause*]—you know who you are. [*Laughter*] I see a whole bunch of supporters from way back. It's good to see you again. It is just wonderful to be back in California. And I can't think of a better reason to come back to California than to get Barbara Boxer reelected.

Barbara was taking us down memory lane there for a second. [*Laughter*] So I won't go into every detail about what Barbara and I, together, and every Member of Congress here together has had to deal with over the last year and a half. Barbara mentioned two wars, the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, a housing market that had completely collapsed. I forgot about the pirates, but you—[*laughter*]—you forgot about the pandemic. [*Laughter*] That was kind of—that was like seventh or eighth on the list. [*Laughter*]

But look, the fact is, is that as tough as the situation has been in Washington, it's been a lot tougher on the ground for American people all across this country. You know about it because you've been dealing with it. In your capacity as community leaders, as elected leaders, you've seen what's happening here in California. And California, in a lot of ways, has been ground zero for what's been happening all across the country: millions of people thrown out of work; millions of people losing their health care in the process of being thrown out of work; choices having to be made by local and State officials about are they going to hang on to teachers, are they going to lay off teachers, how are they going to pay off a burgeoning debt, how are we going to deal with the social services that are needed more than ever because of the crisis, but unfortunately, we've got less revenue to deal with.

So there have been a lot of people hurting out there. And I know that. I get 10 letters every single day that I read out of the 40,000 that I receive, and about half of them call me an idiot—because the charge of those selecting the letters is to make sure that we're evenhanded. [*Laughter*] But the other half—actually, the other three-quarters—tell again and again just heartbreaking stories about children asking why is it that they're having to move even though they really like the house they're living in and the neighborhood they live in; or families talking about how are they going to take care of their parents now that their retirement accounts were completely decimated, or how are they going to make their mortgage when both adults in the household have lost their jobs.

And nothing is harder and nothing is more heartbreaking than reading these letters and knowing that change has not come as fast as we'd like. But here is the main message that I have for all of you: Change is coming. Change has come. An economy that was contracting is now expanding. Folks who were losing their jobs, now we're seeing employers hiring again. Businesses are beginning to invest again. Tax revenue is starting to percolate up again.

And the reason is, is because we made a series of decisions that were not always popular but were the right thing to do. And nobody is tougher and nobody is more determined to do the right thing, even when in the face of fierce opposition, than Barbara Boxer.

You all know that Barbara is a huge champion for clean energy; she is a huge champion for the environment. She is a huge champion of hybrid cars and electric plug-ins. So it's appropriate that we have here this subcompact model—[*laughter*]—that is an inexhaustible source of energy. And I could not have a better partner in the fights that have to be fought.

Now, we've made all this progress because of people like Barbara Boxer and the Members of Congress who are here today. And if you just tick off what has been accomplished this year in yanking this economic out of depression and getting it on a trajectory again, on having about as ambitious a education reform agenda that not many people talk about, but millions more young people are going to be able to afford to go to college—[*applause*]. We've cracked down on housing fraud; we've cracked down on credit card fraud. We are moving through the stimulus package——

[*At this point, Sen. Boxer's grandchild came onto the stage.*]

Are you stealing my lines here? Come on. [*Laughter*] Talk about—wasn't it W.C. Fields who said, you never perform with kids or animals? [*Laughter*] Because they always, like, steal your thunder. [*Laughter*]

On clean energy, on investments in science, on reversing the stem cell ban. We're now moving forward and reversing "don't ask, don't tell." On health care reform so that every single—[*applause*]—on each and every one of those issues, Barbara Boxer has been right in—[*applause*].

But here is my message: We've got a lot more work to do. Our work is not yet done. And because some of the things that we did were not popular, we're going to have a tough political fight coming up. November is going to be tough. Barbara is going to have a tough race. It's always a tough race if you're an incumbent in this kind of economic environment. Even though it's picking up, people are still hurting like they haven't hurt in a long time. And so it's tough being an incumbent. And it's even tougher when you've got the other side of the aisle—which helped to cause the mess but doesn't seem to want to help in cleaning up after the mess—distorting the record of somebody like Barbara Boxer.

So we're going to have some work ahead of us. But when you're asked by your friends, your neighbors, people who you're making sure contribute to Barbara Boxer's campaign, I just want you to remind them what Barbara has been for and what the other side has been for. If they want to talk about the stimulus, you just remind them that one-third of that is tax cuts. We have 25 different tax cuts, and 98 percent of Californians got a tax cut because of the vote that Barbara Boxer cast, the biggest tax cut in history, biggest investment in clean energy in history, biggest investment in education in history. When they were against it, Barbara Boxer was for it.

You ask them, are you in favor of children with preexisting conditions not being able to get insurance and parents having to figure out how to scramble to find the care that their children need? Because they were against health care reform; Barbara Boxer was for health care reform. You ask them if they want to give away those millions of dollars' worth of tax credits to small businesses so they can do the right thing by their employees. Barbara Boxer was for it; they are against it.

We're going to have some more choices coming up, because right now we've got a big battle on financial regulatory reform. And I don't know about you, the notion that we would settle for the status quo and create a situation in which Wall Street could gamble with

somebody else's money, take exorbitant risks, and put the entire economy at risk and force taxpayers to try to pick up the tab when things went south on them makes absolutely no sense, which is why Barbara Boxer and the present congressional delegation right here want to do something about it and have tough restrictions on the kinds of risks that—[*applause*]—and where the consumers can be protected.

And I think that that's something that is worthy of support. Now, it turns out Mitch McConnell thinks differently. [*Laughter*] I don't know exactly what happened, but he and the chairman of the Senate committee went up to Wall Street, had a powwow with them, and came away; the next thing we knew, they were all opposed to financial regulatory reform. [*Laughter*] I don't know the nature of the conversation—[*laughter*]—but I'm hoping that they will do the right thing.

I don't welcome some of the pitched, partisan rhetoric that we've been seeing. Barbara doesn't either. None of us do. Because the problems we face are big enough that we've got to have Republicans and Democrats working together. But here's what I won't do, what I'm not going to do, and what Barbara Boxer is not going to do, is compromise our principles and sell out the American people just in order to try to create some false sense of peace. There are some stands that are worth fighting for, and financial regulatory reform is one of those stands.

Here is my bottom line. We've got a lot of work to do on a whole range of issues. We still need comprehensive immigration reform. We still need to make sure our K through 12 education is serving our children. We still have to make our economy more competitive and spur on greater innovation and investment in research and development. We've still got to have some control over our fiscal system. And you are going to need somebody who is as passionate and as caring and as committed and as tough as the Senator that you've got right here, right now.

So I don't want anybody here taking this for granted. A lot of you worked on my campaign in 2008, and sometimes it's easy to get excited about Presidential campaigns. But you know what? This is where the rubber hits the road. And unless Barbara gets the help that she needs from all of you—and that means digging deep and reaching out to your friends and your neighbors and carrying that message forward everywhere you go—unless she's got our support, she might not win this thing. And I don't think that's an acceptable outcome.

All right? So I want everybody to work hard, make phone calls, knock on doors, talk to your friends, talk to your neighbors, write big checks——

Audience member. Fired up! Ready to go!

The President. ——be fired up, and be ready to go, because Barbara Boxer is ready to go. And you are not going to have a better Senator than Barbara Boxer.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:30 p.m. at the California Science Center. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. John Cornyn, in his capacity as chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 20. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Dinner for Senator Barbara Boxer in Los Angeles
April 19, 2010

Hello, everybody. Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. Have a seat. I've got so many good friends in this magnificent setting that I don't want to single anybody out, but there are a couple of people that I do have to acknowledge. First of all, our two DNC southern California cochairs, John Emerson and Ken Solomon, thank you for everything that you've done to make this evening possible.

I feel bad for the Emersons, though. Apparently they were on their way to Paris—[*laughter*]—and the ash got in the way. So this is a consolation—[*laughter*]—spending time with me. But I'm thrilled to be here. They've been

longtime supporters ever since I first ran for the United States Senate. And Ken's been just a terrific supporter of Democratic causes and my campaigns as well. So thank you, to all of you.

He started off not only as one of the finest Governors in the country, he was also the first person to endorse me outside of the State of Illinois. Now, I have to admit that he was term-limited, so—[*laughter*]—maybe there wasn't that much of a downside to it. But at a time when nobody could pronounce my name and nobody gave me a chance, this person stood beside me in the seat of the old Confederacy, in Richmond, Virginia. And I am so grateful to him for not only the leadership he showed on behalf of the Commonwealth of Virginia, but the leadership he's shown as our DNC chair. Please give Tim Kaine a big round of applause.

Now, I don't know if he's still here, but you've got an outstanding mayor in Mayor Villaraigosa, so please give him a big round of applause.

And obviously, I want everybody to give a bunch of whoops and hollers on behalf of our honoree, the person who we are going to make sure gets four terms in the United States Senate, Barbara Boxer. Give Barbara a big round of applause. And give Stew a big round of applause for putting up with Barbara. Thank you, Stew.

You know, many of you know that Barbara has been a huge champion of clean energy, energy independence, environmental protection; she loves hybrids and plug-ins. And it is, therefore, appropriate that we have as a Senator a subcompact model—[*laughter*]—with inexhaustible energy. [*Laughter*]

I'm not going to be long tonight. I just want to say a little bit about Barbara, but also a little bit about the state of our Union.

You know, when we came into office at the beginning of last year, we were confronting as many difficulties, as many challenges, as probably any President since FDR. We had a war in Iraq that required us to begin phasing down effectively. We had a war in Afghanistan that needed more focus. We had the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, losing 750,000 jobs every single month. And California has obviously been hit as hard as any State in the Union. We had a housing crisis, a crisis in the auto industry. We had a crisis in the financial industry that looked like it might be on the verge of meltdown. And obviously, the pain and difficulty that small businesses, large businesses, and their employees were suffering throughout this State and States all across the country were something that we just had not seen in a generation.

And so we had to act swiftly, and we did. We put in place the largest stimulus in history that included the largest investment in clean energy in history, the largest investment in Federal education in history, the largest investment in R&D and science in history, the biggest tax cuts that we've seen in a very, very long time—going to 98 percent of Californians—all of which were designed to do two things, not just to wrench ourselves out of this immediate crisis, but were also designed to start laying a foundation for growth, because we knew that we couldn't keep repeating a pattern of bubble and bust that we'd been seeing, that it wasn't a tenable model for our future and of our—the future of our children and our grandchildren.

And we still have a long way to go. I mean, you travel across this State, or you travel across this country, and people are hurting everywhere. People are still out of work. Small businesses are still struggling to get credit. And we're not going to rest until those folks who are willing to work hard and put their blood, sweat, and tears into achieving the American Dream have that opportunity once again.

But what we can say is that an economy that was shrinking rapidly is now growing again, that businesses that were shedding workers are now hiring again, that consumers are now spending again, that business investment is taking place again, that the financial market is stabilized and a lot of folks who were counting on that 401(k) being there for their retirement, that that has not—if not completely been restored in value, has come a long way from those dark days just a year ago.

All of this would not have been possible had it not been for folks like Barbara Boxer. And

so—[*applause*]—and I don't want you to underestimate the courage of Barbara, because we knew some of the steps that we were taking were going to be unpopular at the time. Sometimes, reporters act as if we don't have pollsters. [*Laughter*] We do. We take polls all the time. We know when something is not going to be popular. But we also know that sometimes, if you're doing right by the country, you've got to ignore the short-term politics. You can't make decisions based on what's good for the next election; you make decisions based on what's good for the next generation. And that's what Barbara Boxer has done consistently throughout his—her career.

I love a story she told me backstage. She said a reporter came up to her and said, "You know what? You've been one of the most consistent Senators, politically, I've ever seen, but your hair is not consistent." [*Laughter*] Sometimes it's—[*laughter*]. My hair is consistent, Barbara, by the way. [*Laughter*]

But it's true. One of the reasons to support Barbara Boxer is because you know exactly where she stands. You know where she came from. You know that she cares about working families. You know that she cares about giving them not a handout, but a hand up. You know that she cares about making sure that every child gets a decent education, that workers are getting decent wages and basic workplace protections. You know that she cares about making sure this environment and our natural resources are passed on to the next generation. You know that she cares about making sure that we've got a foreign policy that is smart and balanced and thinks about how we can work cooperatively with other nations even as we are adamant about our security.

And Barbara hasn't wavered. And she wants to cooperate with folks on the other side of the aisle where she can, but she's willing to fight where she has to. And that's not a bad adage, by the way, for the Democratic Party. In this entire year and a half of cleaning up the mess, it's been tough because the folks very responsible for a large portion of this mess decided to stand on the sidelines. It was as if somebody had driven their car into the ditch and then just watched you as you had to yank it out and asked you, "Why didn't you do it faster, and why do I have that scratch on the fender?" [*Laughter*] And you want to say, "Why don't you put your shoulder up against that car and help to push?" That's what we need, is some help.

And it wasn't forthcoming. It wasn't forthcoming when it came to economic recovery, and I don't know if you noticed, but it wasn't forthcoming when it came to trying to make sure that every American has secure health care in this country. And yet we got it done anyway without their help.

But you know, they've still got some opportunities to help. Right now there's some unfinished business that remains. We have passed a historic health care bill because of people like Barbara Boxer. We have seen the economy begin to recover. But there remains some structural changes, some structural fixes to this extraordinary system that we've got that we're going to have to undertake. And we're going to need people like Barbara in the trenches fighting for those things.

We're going to need a comprehensive energy bill that makes sure that we are finally moving away from the old ways of doing business into the new ways of doing business, that we're seizing the opportunities of the 21st century, that we're creating jobs here in the United States building wind turbines and solar panels and making sure that those jobs are created right here in the United States, that we're building the cars of the future.

Just one small statistic, because it gives you a sense of what's possible: Before the Recovery Act, the United States made 2 percent of the world's advanced batteries. We are now poised to have 20 percent of the market, and in a few years, we can have as much as 40 percent of the market. We're seeing an entirely new industry being created right here in the United States of America because of the investments we made in clean energy.

Now, you duplicate that across sectors, and you think about what that can do to put Californians back to work—because Californians have always been at the forefront of this stuff—and do it in a way that at the same time deals with this threat of climate change and makes sure that we are preserving our natural inheritance

for the next generation. It is something that we're going to have to do and we will do, building on the work that Barbara has already done in her committee. We thank you, Barbara, for that. And I'm going to be right next to you to make sure that we can get a comprehensive energy bill done. That is something that we've got to fight for.

And then we've got financial regulatory reform. Now, I have consistently said, I believe fiercely in a free market. And I believe that a vibrant, dynamic financial sector is part of that free market. We can't have successful businesses if we don't have a successful and vibrant financial sector. But we have to acknowledge that the status quo has not worked. We've got to acknowledge that it hasn't worked for ordinary Americans, it hasn't worked for the economy as a whole. It's worked for a few but not for the many.

When we've got a situation where people are allowed to take wild risks and all the downsides are socialized even as the profits are privatized, then something's going to have to change. When we don't have basic rules of the road in place that assures that consumers aren't abused and tricked, and investors don't know what's going on, then something's got to change.

Now, we've got the opportunity to change coming up in the next few weeks. And you watch where Barbara Boxer is going to be, because she's going to be on the sides of investors and consumers and small businesses and on the side of making sure that we never again have any kind of taxpayer bailouts. And then you look at some of the rhetoric that's coming out of the other side of the aisle, and you see folks that so far, at least, don't seem to acknowledge that we're going to have to make some tough decisions and reform the system. The American people understand it. It should be common sense. But unfortunately, the lobbies and the money that is poured into campaigns has ended up distorting that basic truth

Fortunately, Barbara Boxer is not swayed. She knows what she stands for. She knows whose side she's on. And that's why you've got to send her back to the United States Senate, because she is going to help us get this stuff done.

Comprehensive immigration reform, we've got to get done. Making sure that we continue the progress that's already been made and we overturn "don't ask, don't tell," that has to get done. Making sure that we're investing in science and technology and continuing to make our education system work better than any education system in the world so that our children can compete, that remains to be done.

So we've got a lot of business to do here. And I can't think of somebody I'd rather have beside me, somebody who has been a tougher fighter, but also a happy warrior, somebody who is just thrilled every day to serve her constituents and just bleeds with them when they're down and celebrates with them when they're doing well, who just wears her heart on her sleeve and cares so deeply about this country, than Barbara Boxer.

And so these midyear races are the ones where, historically, it's always been hardest to get folks activated, particularly the party in power. I mean, you remember 2008. That was fun, right? [*Laughter*] Because it was so obvious that the course we were on wasn't working. And everything felt fresh and new. And now we've gone through a year and a half of tough fights. And some folks are impatient, and some folks just didn't realize how long this was going to take and how hard each battle was going to be. And so people get kind of worn down, and in some cases, people get complacent; some cases, people take things for granted.

But you can't take it for granted. You can't take for granted that the next Supreme Court appointee or the Supreme Court appointee after that is going to reflect your values. You can't take that for granted, unless you know that you've got not just a President, but also a United States Senate that is willing to work on behalf of the things that we care about: making sure that everybody's got a chance, making sure that opportunity is open to all; making sure that those ladders into the middle class, into the American Dream, are there; making sure that there's a basic safety net for the vulnerable and the aged and the infirm; making

sure that the thing that makes us Democrats, this notion that this country is there for everybody, that everybody has got to have a shot, and that it's nothing—there's nothing wrong with us, even as we affirm our individualism, saying, you know what, I'm going to help my neighbor, I'm going to help my friend, I'm going to help my coworker, I'm going to help somebody I may not know because that's part of what America is all about.

You can't take for granted that spirit. It has to be fought for; it has to be worked on. And people who embody it have to be supported. Barbara Boxer is one of those people. And so I want you to work just as hard, I want you to write just as many checks, I want you to call just as many people, I want you to knock on just as many doors as you did for me on behalf of Barbara Boxer. And if you do, I guarantee you we're going to send her back for another term as a great United States Senator from the great State of California.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:01 p.m. at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. In his remarks, he referred to Stewart Boxer, husband of Sen. Boxer. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 20.

Statement on the Death of Dorothy I. Height
April 20, 2010

Michelle and I were deeply saddened to hear about the passing of Dorothy Height, the godmother of the civil rights movement and a hero to so many Americans. Ever since she was denied entrance to college because the incoming class had already met its quota of two African American women, Dr. Height devoted her life to those struggling for equality. She led the National Council of Negro Women for 40 years and served as the only woman at the highest level of the civil rights movement, witnessing every march and milestone along the way. And even in the final weeks of her life, a time when anyone else would have enjoyed their well-earned rest, Dr. Height continued her fight to make our Nation a more open and inclusive place for people of every race, gender, background, and faith.

Michelle and I offer our condolences to all those who knew and loved Dr. Height and all those whose lives she touched.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and Senate Judiciary Committee Members and an Exchange With Reporters
April 21, 2010

The President. All right, everybody. We are here to talk about the Supreme Court. Obviously, we have lost one of—the services of one of the finest Supreme Court Justices that we've seen. Justice Stevens announced that he will be retiring at the end of this term. Those are going to be some tough shoes to fill. This is somebody who operated with extraordinary integrity and fidelity to the law.

But I'm confident that we can come up with a nominee who will gain the confidence of the Senate and the confidence of the country and the confidence of individuals who look to the Court to provide evenhanded justice to all Americans.

Last time, when I nominated Sonia Sotomayor, I have to say that all of the individuals who are sitting here—Mitch McConnell, Harry Reid, Jeff Sessions, and Patrick Leahy—worked very cooperatively on what I considered to be a smooth, civil, thoughtful nomination process and confirmation process. And I very much thank, particularly, the ranking member and the chairman of the Judiciary Committee for running a smooth process.

My hope is, is that we can do the exact same time—same thing this time. Last time, the nomination went up at the end of May. We are certainly going to meet that deadline, and we hope maybe we can accelerate it a little bit so that we have some additional time. But my hope is, is that we're going to be able to get a Supreme Court nominee confirmed in time for the next session.

As Justice Stevens said, I think it's very important, particularly given the important cases that may be coming before the Supreme Court, that we get this process wrapped up so that a new Justice can be seated and staffed and can work effectively with his or her colleagues in time for the fall session.

So I just want to again thank all of these gentlemen for their input. They are here to consult with me. One of the things that we did last time was to listen to the thoughts and views of our colleagues before I nominated a candidate. I take this process very seriously. And so I'm going to be interested in hearing their thoughts and concerns before any final decisions are made.

All right. With that, let me call on one question. Ben [Ben Feller, Associated Press], you get the shot.

Abortion Rights

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Would you be willing to nominate someone who did not support a woman's right to choose?

The President. You know, I am somebody who believes that women should have the ability to make often very difficult decisions about their own bodies and issues of reproduction. Obviously, this has been a hugely contentious issue in our country for a very long time. I will say the same thing that every President has said since this issue came up, which is, I don't have litmus tests around any of these issues.

But I will say that I want somebody who is going to be interpreting our Constitution in a way that takes into account individual rights, and that includes women's rights. And that's going to be something that's very important to me, because I think part of what our core Constitution—constitutional values promote is the notion that individuals are protected in their privacy and their bodily integrity, and women are not exempt from that.

All right? Thank you. I appreciate it.

President's Supreme Court Nominee

Q. Are you getting close to a decision?

The President. You know, I think we've got some terrific potential candidates.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:43 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Remarks at the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York City

April 22, 2010

Thank you very much. Everybody, please have a seat. Thank you very much. Well, thank you. It is good to be back. It is good to be back in New York. It is good to be back in the Great Hall at Cooper Union.

We've got some special guests here that I want to acknowledge: Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney is here in the house; Governor David Paterson is here; Attorney General Andrew Cuomo; State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli is here; the mayor of New York City, Michael Bloomberg; Dr. George Campbell, Jr., president of Cooper Union; and all the citywide elected officials who are here. Thank you very much for your attendance.

It is wonderful to be back in Cooper Union, where generations of leaders and citizens have come to defend their ideas and contest their differences. It's also good to be back in lower Manhattan, a few blocks from Wall Street.

[*Laughter*] It really is good to be back, because Wall Street is the heart of our Nation's financial sector.

Now, since I last spoke here 2 years ago, our country has been through a terrible trial. More than 8 million people have lost their jobs. Countless small businesses have had to shut their doors. Trillions of dollars in savings have been lost, forcing seniors to put off retirement, young people to postpone college, entrepreneurs to give up on the dream of starting a company. And as a nation, we were forced to take unprecedented steps to rescue the financial system and the broader economy.

And as a result of the decisions we made—some of which, let's face it, were very unpopular—we are seeing hopeful signs. A little more than 1 year ago, we were losing an average of 750,000 jobs each month. Today, America is adding jobs again. One year ago, the economy was shrinking rapidly. Today, the economy is growing. In fact, we've seen the fastest turnaround in growth in nearly three decades.

But you're here and I'm here because we've got more work to do. Until this progress is felt not just on Wall Street, but on Main Street, we can't be satisfied. Until the millions of our neighbors who are looking for work can find a job and wages are growing at a meaningful pace, we may be able to claim a technical recovery, but we will not have truly recovered. And even as we seek to revive this economy, it's also incumbent on us to rebuild it stronger than before. We don't want an economy that has the same weaknesses that led to this crisis. And that means addressing some of the underlying problems that led to this turmoil and devastation in the first place.

Now, one of the most significant contributors to this recession was a financial crisis as dire as any we've known in generations, at least since the thirties. And that crisis was born of a failure of responsibility—from Wall Street all the way to Washington—that brought down many of the world's largest financial firms and nearly dragged our economy into a second great depression.

It was that failure of responsibility that I spoke about when I came to New York more than 2 years ago, before the worst of the crisis had unfolded. It was back in 2007. And I take no satisfaction in noting that my comments then have largely been borne out by the events that followed. But I repeat what I said then because it is essential that we learn the lessons from this crisis so we don't doom ourselves to repeat it. And make no mistake: That is exactly what will happen if we allow this moment to pass. And that's an outcome that is unacceptable to me and it's unacceptable to you, the American people.

As I said on this stage 2 years ago, I believe in the power of the free market. I believe in a strong financial sector that helps people to raise capital and get loans and invest their savings. That's part of what has made America what it is. But a free market was never meant to be a free license to take whatever you can get, however you can get it. That's what happened too often in the years leading up to this crisis. Some—and let me be clear, not all—but some on Wall Street forgot that behind every dollar traded or leveraged, there's a family looking to buy a house, or pay for an education, open a business, save for retirement. What happens on Wall Street has real consequences across the country, across our economy.

I've also spoken before about the need to build a new foundation for economic growth in the 21st century, and given the importance of the financial sector, Wall Street reform is an absolutely essential part of that foundation. Without it, our house will continue to sit on shifting sands, and our families, businesses, and the global economy will be vulnerable to future crises. That's why I feel so strongly that we need to enact a set of updated, commonsense rules to ensure accountability on Wall Street and to protect consumers in our financial system.

Now, here's the good news: A comprehensive plan to achieve these reforms has already passed the House of Representatives. A Senate version is currently being debated, drawing on ideas from Democrats and Republicans. Both bills represent significant improvement on the flawed rules that we have in place today, despite the furious effort of industry lobbyists to shape this legislation to their special interests.

And for those of you in the financial sector, I'm sure that some of these lobbyists work for

you, and they're doing what they are being paid to do. But I'm here today specifically—when I speak to the titans of industry here—because I want to urge you to join us instead of fighting us in this effort. I am here because I believe that these reforms are, in the end, not only in the best interest of our country, but in the best interest of the financial sector. And I'm here to explain what reform will look like and why it matters.

Now, first, the bill being considered in the Senate would create what we did not have before, and that is a way to protect the financial system and the broader economy and American taxpayers in the event that a large financial firm begins to fail. If there's a Lehmans or an AIG, how can we respond in a way that doesn't force taxpayers to pick up the tab or, alternatively, could bring down the whole system?

In an ordinary local bank, when it approaches insolvency, we've got a process—an orderly process through the FDIC that ensures that depositors are protected, maintains confidence in the banking system, and it works. Customers and taxpayers are protected, and owners and management lose their equity. But we don't have that kind of process designed to contain the failure of a Lehman Brothers or any of the largest and most interconnected financial firms in our country.

That's why, when this crisis began, crucial decisions about what would happen to some of the world's biggest companies, companies employing tens of thousands of people and holding hundreds of billions of dollars in assets, had to take place in hurried discussions in the middle of the night. And that's why, to save the entire economy from an even worse catastrophe, we had to deploy taxpayer dollars. Now, much of that money has now been paid back, and my administration has proposed a fee to be paid by large financial firms to recover all the money, every dime, because the American people should never have been put in that position in the first place.

But this is why we need a system to shut these firms down with the least amount of collateral damage to innocent people and innocent businesses. And from the start, I've insisted that the financial industry, not taxpayers, shoulder the costs in the event that a large financial company should falter. The goal is to make certain that taxpayers are never again on the hook because a firm is deemed too big to fail.

Now, there's a legitimate debate taking place about how best to ensure taxpayers are held harmless in this process. And that's a legitimate debate, and I encourage that debate. But what's not legitimate is to suggest that somehow the legislation being proposed is going to encourage future taxpayer bailouts, as some have claimed. That makes for a good sound bite, but it's not factually accurate. It is not true. In fact, the system as it stands is what led to a series of massive, costly taxpayer bailouts. And it's only with reform that we can avoid a similar outcome in the future. In other words, a vote for reform is a vote to put a stop to taxpayer-funded bailouts. That's the truth. End of story. And nobody should be fooled in this debate.

By the way, these changes have the added benefit of creating incentives within the industry to ensure that no one company can ever threaten to bring down the whole economy. To that end, the bill would also enact what's known as the Volcker rule—and there's a tall guy sitting in the front row here, Paul Volcker, who we named it after. And it does something very simple: It places some limits on the size of banks and the kinds of risks that banking institutions can take. And this will not only safeguard our system against crises, this will also make our system stronger and more competitive by instilling confidence here at home and across the globe. Markets depend on that confidence. Part of what led to the turmoil of the past 2 years was that in the absence of clear rules and sound practices, people didn't trust that our system was one in which it was safe to invest or lend. As we've seen, that harms all of us.

So by enacting these reforms, we'll help ensure that our financial system and our economy continues to be the envy of the world. So that's the first thing, making sure that we can wind down one firm if it gets into trouble without bringing the whole system down or forcing taxpayers to fund a bailout.

Number two, reform would bring new transparency to many financial markets. As you know, part of what led to this crisis was firms like AIG and others who were making huge and risky bets, using derivatives and other complicated financial instruments in ways that defied accountability or even common sense. In fact, many practices were so opaque, so confusing, so complex that the people inside the firms didn't understand them, much less those who were charged with overseeing them. They weren't fully aware of the massive bets that were being placed. That's what led Warren Buffett to describe derivatives that were bought and sold with little oversight as "financial weapons of mass destruction." [*Laughter*] That's what he called them. And that's why reform will rein in excess and help ensure that these kinds of transactions take place in the light of day.

Now, there's been a great deal of concern about these changes. So I want to reiterate: There is a legitimate role for these financial instruments in our economy. They can help allay risk and spur investment. And there are a lot of companies that use these instruments to that legitimate end: They are managing exposure to fluctuating prices or currencies and fluctuating markets. For example, a business might hedge against rising oil prices by buying a financial product to secure stable fuel costs, so an airlines might have an interest in locking in a decent price. That's how markets are supposed to work. The problem is, these markets operated in the shadows of our economy, invisible to regulators, invisible to the public, so reckless practices were rampant. Risks accrued until they threatened our entire financial system.

And that's why these reforms are designed to respect legitimate activities but prevent reckless risk-taking. That's why we want to ensure that financial products like standardized derivatives are traded out in the open, in the full view of businesses, investors, and those charged with oversight.

And I was encouraged to see a Republican Senator join with Democrats this week in moving forward on this issue. That's a good sign. That's a good sign. For without action, we'll continue to see what amounts to highly leveraged, loosely monitored gambling in our financial system, putting taxpayers and the economy in jeopardy. And the only people who ought to fear the kind of oversight and transparency that we're proposing are those whose conduct will fail this scrutiny.

Third, this plan would enact the strongest consumer financial protections ever. And that's absolutely necessary because this financial crisis wasn't just the result of decisions made in the executive streets—suites on Wall Street, it was also the result of decisions made across kitchen tables across America, by folks who took on mortgages and credit cards and auto loans. And while it's true that many Americans took on financial obligations that they knew or should have known they could not have afforded, millions of others were, frankly, duped. They were misled by deceptive terms and conditions buried deep in the fine print.

And while a few companies made out like bandits by exploiting their customers, our entire economy was made more vulnerable. Millions of people have now lost their homes. Tens of millions more have lost value in their homes. Just about every sector of our economy has felt the pain, whether you're paving driveways in Arizona or selling houses in Ohio or you're doing home repairs in California or you're using your home equity to start a small business in Florida.

That's why we need to give consumers more protection and more power in our financial system. This is not about stifling competition, stifling innovation; it's just the opposite. With a dedicated agency setting ground rules and looking out for ordinary people in our financial system, we will empower consumers with clear and concise information when they're making financial decisions. So instead of competing to offer confusing products, companies will compete the old-fashioned way, by offering better products. And that will mean more choices for consumers, more opportunities for businesses, and more stability in our financial system. And unless your business model depends on bilking people, there is little to fear from these new rules.

Number four, the last key component of reform: These Wall Street reforms will give shareholders new power in the financial system.

They will get what we call a say on pay, a voice with respect to the salaries and bonuses awarded to top executives. And the SEC will have the authority to give shareholders more say in corporate elections so that investors and pension holders have a stronger role in determining who manages the company in which they've placed their savings.

Now, Americans don't begrudge anybody for success when that success is earned. But when we read in the past, and sometimes in the present, about enormous executive bonuses at firms, even as they're relying on assistance from taxpayers, or they're taking huge risks that threaten the system as a whole, or their company is doing badly, it offends our fundamental values.

Not only that, some of the salaries and bonuses that we've seen creates perverse incentives to take reckless risks that contributed to the crisis. It's what helped lead to a relentless focus on a company's next quarter to the detriment of its next year or its next decade. And it led to a situation in which folks with the most to lose, stock and pension holders, had the least to say in the process. And that has to change.

Let me close by saying this. I have laid out a set of Wall Street reforms. These are reforms that would put an end to taxpayer bailouts, that would bring complex financial dealings out of the shadows, that would protect consumers, and that would give shareholders more power in the financial system. But let's face it: We also need reform in Washington. And the debate over these changes is a perfect example.

I mean, we have seen battalions of financial industry lobbyists descending on Capitol Hill, firms spending millions to influence the outcome of this debate. We've seen misleading arguments and attacks that are designed not to improve the bill, but to weaken or to kill it. We've seen a bipartisan process buckle under the weight of these withering forces, even as we've produced a proposal that by all accounts is a commonsense, reasonable, nonideological approach to target the root problems that led to the turmoil in our financial sector and ultimately in our entire economy.

So we've seen business as usual in Washington, but I believe we can and must put this kind of cynical politics aside. We've got to put an end to it. That's why I'm here today. That's why I'm here today.

And to those of you who are in the financial sector, let me say this: We will not always see eye to eye. We will not always agree. But that doesn't mean that we've got to choose between two extremes. We do not have to choose between markets that are unfettered by even modest protections against crisis or markets that are stymied by onerous rules that suppress enterprise and innovation. That is a false choice. And we need no more proof than the crisis that we've just been through.

You see, there has always been a tension between the desire to allow markets to function without interference and the absolute necessity of rules to prevent markets from falling out of kilter. But managing that tension, one that we've debated since the founding of this Nation, is what has allowed our country to keep up with a changing world. For in taking up this debate, in figuring out how to apply well-worn principles with each new age, we ensure that we don't tip too far one way or the other, that our democracy remains as dynamic and our economy remains as dynamic as it has in the past. So yes, this debate can be contentious. It can be heated. But in the end, it serves only to make our country stronger. It has allowed us to adapt and to thrive.

And I read a report recently that I think fairly illustrates this point. It's from Time magazine. I'm going to quote: "Through the great banking houses of Manhattan last week ran wild-eyed alarm. Big bankers stared at one another in anger and astonishment. A bill just passed . . . would rivet upon their institutions what they considered a monstrous system . . . such a system, they felt, would not only rob them of their pride of profession but would reduce all U.S. banking to its lowest level." That appeared in Time magazine in June of 1933. [*Laughter*] The system that caused so much consternation, so much concern was the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation—[*laughter*]—also known as the FDIC, an institution

that has successfully secured the deposits of generations of Americans.

Look, in the end, our system only works, our markets are only free when there are basic safeguards that prevent abuse, that check excesses, that ensure that it is more profitable to play by the rules than to game the system. And that is what the reforms we've been proposing are designed to achieve—no more, no less. And because that is how we will ensure that our economy works for consumers, that it works for investors, and that it works for financial institutions—in other words, that it works for all of us—that's why we're working so hard to get this stuff passed.

This is the central lesson not only of this crisis, but of our history. It's what I said when I spoke here 2 years ago, because ultimately, there is no dividing line between Main Street and Wall Street. We will rise or we will fall together, as one Nation. And that is why I urge all of you to join me. I urge all of you to join me, to join those who are seeking to pass these commonsense reforms. And for those of you in the financial industry, I urge you to join me not only because it is in the interest of your industry, but also because it's in the interest of your country.

Thank you so much. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Paul A. Volcker, Chairman, President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board; Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc.; and Sen. Charles E. Grassley. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on the 40th Anniversary of Earth Day
April 22, 2010

Hello, everybody! How are you? Now, this is a good-looking crowd. [*Laughter*] Thank you so much, everybody, for coming.

Today we celebrate 40 years of Earth Day. Now, obviously, Earth has been around longer than that. [*Laughter*] But we have been celebrating Earth Day for 40 years, which was a bright moment in our Nation's history and a milestone in the ongoing fight to protect our environment.

Many of you know the history. In 1970, a Senator from Wisconsin named Gaylord Nelson hired a young graduate student named Denis Hayes, who is with us today. Where's Denis? There he is. He still looks like a young graduate student. [*Laughter*] And so Denis helped to coordinate the first Earth Day. And together, they raised their voices and called on every American to take action on behalf of our environment.

And in the four decades since, millions of Americans have heeded that call and joined together to protect the planet. And we've made immense progress since that day, from the landmark legislation of the 1970s, the Clean Air and the Clean Water Act, to the conservation of America's precious landscapes.

I know that many of you have played an important role at one stage or another in these victories, and their impact can be felt today and will be felt tomorrow. And as a parent, I'm grateful for the good fight that so many of you have fought, because it means that I'm going to be able to pass on to Malia and Sasha and maybe some grandchildren down the line this incredible bounty not only of the United States of America, but the world as a whole.

And along the way, Earth Day has become much more than a date on the calendar. It's come to represent the simple truth that with each challenge comes the opportunity to make the world a better place.

So since taking office, we have seized that opportunity. With your help, we've made a historic investment in clean energy that will not only create the jobs of tomorrow, but will also lay the foundation for long-term economic growth. We've continued to invest in innovators and entrepreneurs who want to unleash the next wave of clean energy. We've strengthened our investment in our most precious resources: the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the parks and public spaces that we enjoy.

And together, we've also renewed our commitment to passing a comprehensive energy and climate bill that will safeguard our planet and spur innovation and help us to compete in the 21st century.

So looking out into the Rose Garden today, we see a lot of people who will help us achieve these goals: the business owners who know that protecting our environment is good for business, the Members of Congress who are helping to carry us along in the House and the Senate, the members of my "green" Cabinet who are helping to shape the policies that we're fighting for, and the environmental leaders who are on the ground fighting each and every day because they understand what's at stake.

So together, you represent what I believe is most inspiring about Earth Day, and that is the belief that each of us individually, from different backgrounds and different walks of life, have the capacity to make an enormous difference.

I think we all understand that the task ahead is daunting, that the work ahead will not be easy and it's not going to happen overnight. It's going to take your leadership. It's going to take all of your ideas. And it will take all of us coming together in the spirit of Earth Day, not only on Earth Day, but every day, to make the dream of a clean energy economy and a clean world a reality. I'm confident, though, that we can do it. And I want to thank all of you for your support, your counsel, your occasional grumbling—[*laughter*]—and your dedication, because without you, we couldn't accomplish everything that needs to be accomplished.

So thank you very much, everybody. Enjoy the Rose Garden. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:20 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Denis Hayes, president and chief executive officer, Bullitt Foundation.

Statement on the 40th Anniversary of Earth Day
April 22, 2010

In 1970, a Senator from Wisconsin named Gaylord Nelson raised his voice and called on every American to take action on behalf of the environment. In the four decades since, millions of Americans have heeded that call and joined together to protect the planet we share.

Since that first Earth Day 40 years ago, we have made immense progress, from the landmark legislation of the 1970s, the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts, to the conservation of America's precious landscapes.

And since taking office, my administration has worked to build on this progress. We have made a historic investment in clean energy that will not only create the jobs of tomorrow but will also lay the foundation for long-term economic growth. And we have also renewed our commitment to passing comprehensive energy and climate legislation that will safeguard our planet, spur innovation, and allow us to compete and win in the 21st-century economy.

Earth Day has always been about people from different backgrounds and different walks of life coming together on behalf of a cause bigger than ourselves. And with that spirit of community, we must continue the hard work to make the dream of a clean energy economy a reality and pass this world on to our children cleaner and safer than we found it.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this statement.

Remarks at a Naturalization Ceremony for Active Duty Servicemembers
April 23, 2010

The President. Good morning, everybody. Thank you, Secretary Napolitano, for being here to administer the oath, for making it official. Thank you also for leading our efforts to achieve comprehensive immigration reform so that America keeps faith with our heritage as both a nation of immigrants and a nation of laws.

To Director Mayorkas and all the dedicated folks at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, thank you for your help to these men and women and so many of our troops to realize their dreams of citizenship.

We are joined by Congresswoman Susan Davis, Deputy Secretary of Defense Bill Lynn, and the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Jim "Hoss" Cartwright.

Most of all, to America's newest citizens: It is a great honor to serve as your Commander in Chief, and it is my greatest pleasure to be among the first to greet you as a fellow American. To you and your families, welcome to the White House.

Today is your day, a celebration of 24 inspiring men and women and the remarkable journeys that have brought you together on this beautiful spring morning to our Nation's Capital. The paths that led you here began in more than a dozen countries, from Peru to Poland, from Kenya to the Philippines.

Some of you came to America as children, holding tight to your parents' hands as you arrived in a new world. Some of you came as adults, leaving everything you knew behind in pursuit of a new life. And while your stories are your own, today we celebrate the common spirit that lives within each of you, a spirit that has renewed and strengthened America for more than two centuries.

We celebrate the love of family, your moms and dads who were willing to say good-bye to their own families, their own countries, so they could have an opportunity to give you the opportunity you never had. Like generations of immigrants before them, they worked hard, they scrimped, and they saved. They deferred their own dreams so that you could realize yours. So today is a tribute to their sacrifices as well. And I would ask that you join me in honoring your moms and dads and the families that helped bring you to this day.

We celebrate the spirit of possibility, an ethic that says if you're willing to put your shoulder to the wheel and apply your God-given talents, if you believe in yourself and you play by the rules, then there is a place for you in the United States of America, no matter where you come from and no matter what you look like.

It's the spirit that brought a young woman from the People's Republic of China and inspired her to enlist in the United States Air Force, where she excels as a material management specialist. So today we congratulate our fellow citizen, Yu Yuan.

It's the spirit that brought a refugee from Ethiopia and led him to enlist in the U.S. Army because, he said, he wanted to give back to the country that "has given me the opportunity to be all that I can be." And today we congratulate Berhan Teferi.

We celebrate the true meaning of patriotism, the love of a country that's so strong that these men and women were willing to risk their lives to defend our country even before they could call it their own.

It's a patriotism of a daughter of Mexico who came to America in those first terrible days after 9/11, joined the U.S. Navy, and says, "I take pride in our flag and the history that forged this great Nation and the history we write day by day." So today we congratulate Perla Ramos.

And it's the patriotism of a young man from Papua New Guinea, who joined the United States Marine Corps and deployed to Iraq not once, not twice, but three times. Asked why he would choose to become an American citizen, he said simply, "I might as well. I love this country already." And so we congratulate Granger Michael.

The four of you can sit down. You represent not only the branch of the armed services that you are a part of, but also the other members who are your fellow citizens here today, and we thank you very much. We're grateful to you.

In short, today we celebrate the very essence of the country that we all love, an America where so many of our forbearers came from someplace else, a society that's been enriched by traditions and cultures from every corner of the world, a dynamic economy that's constantly renewed by the talents and energies of each new citizen, and a people who understand that citizenship is not just a collection of rights, but it's also a set of responsibilities.

Like so many others, these men and women met their responsibilities. They played by the rules. They have earned their citizenship. And so on a day like this, we are also reminded of how we must remain both a nation of immigrants and a nation of laws. This includes fixing America's broken immigration system.

Over the years, many have attempted to confront this challenge, but passions are great and disagreements run deep. Yet surely we can all agree that when 11 million people in our country are living here illegally, outside the system, that's unacceptable. The American people demand and deserve a solution. And they deserve commonsense, comprehensive immigration reform grounded in the principles of responsibility and accountability.

Government has a responsibility to enforce the law and secure our borders and set clear rules and priorities for future immigration. And under Secretary Napolitano's leadership at the Department of Homeland Security, that's exactly what we're doing. We've strengthened security at our borders, ports, and airports, and we will continue to do so because America's borders must be secure. That's part of what these young people here today stand for.

Businesses have a responsibility to obey the law and not undermine American workers, especially when so many Americans are out of work. Many businesses work to comply with the law every day. But for those that don't, those that ignore the law and exploit and abuse vulnerable workers and try to gain an unfair advantage over all the businesses that do follow the law, we will hold them accountable.

And people who are in America illegally have a responsibility to pay their back taxes and admit responsibility for breaking the law, pay a penalty, learn English, pass criminal background checks, and get right with the law—or face removal—before they can get in line and eventually earn their citizenship. So responsibility, accountability, commonsense, comprehensive immigration reform.

I thank Secretary Napolitano for helping to lead our efforts both on and off Capitol Hill. And I thank Senators Schumer and Graham for working with us to forge a bipartisan consensus on a framework for moving forward, and I welcome the commitment of House and Senate Democratic leaders to take action.

I'll continue to consult with Democrats and Republicans in Congress, and I would note that 11 current Republican Senators voted to pass immigration reform 4 years ago. So I'm hopeful that they will join with Democrats in doing so again so we can make the progress the American people deserve.

Indeed, our failure to act responsibly at the Federal level will only open the door to irresponsibility by others. And that includes, for example, the recent efforts in Arizona, which threaten to undermine basic notions of fairness that we cherish as Americans, as well as the trust between police and their communities that is so crucial to keeping us safe.

In fact, I've instructed members of my administration to closely monitor the situation and examine the civil rights and other implications of this legislation. But if we continue to fail to act at a Federal level, we will continue to see misguided efforts opening up around the country.

As a nation, as a people, we can choose a different future, a future that keeps faith with our history, with our heritage, and with the hope that America has always inspired in the hearts of people all over the world. For just as each of these 24 new citizens once cast their eyes upon our country from afar, so too somewhere in the world today is a young boy or a young girl wondering if they too might someday share in America's promise.

In the example of these new citizens and in the actions we take as a nation, let us offer our answer with confidence and optimism. Yes, there is a place called America that still welcomes those "yearning to breathe free," a

country where if you work hard and meet your responsibilities, you can pursue your dreams, a society where out of many, we are one, "one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

That's the promise of America. That is the spirit that all of you are renewing here today. We are incredibly proud of you. God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America.

Now, we have one other piece of business. Would Sergeant Ledum Ndaanee please come forward. There he is. How are you, sir?

Sergeant Ledum D. Ndaanee. Hello, sir.

The President. Good to see you.

Sgt. Ndaanee. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Growing up in Nigeria, Ledum probably never imagined he'd be standing on this stage today.

Sgt. Ndaanee. That's right, sir.

The President. Neither did I. [*Laughter*] But thanks to the generosity of churches in Virginia, he and his parents found a home in the United States. And Ledum, who says, "I always wanted to be in the military," found his calling in the United States Marine Corps.

He deployed to Iraq and was serving his second tour when his unit was struck by an improvised explosive device. In the weeks and months that followed, he battled to recover from traumatic brain injury. At a VA medical center, with his parents at his side, he was presented a Purple Heart. And a few moments later, he was sworn in as an American citizen.

This marine was not only determined to recover, he was determined to help others. He has been a leader and mentor to his fellow wounded warriors. In fact, I hear he's quite an athlete.

Sgt. Ndaanee. Yes, sir.

The President. He agrees. [*Laughter*] He will compete next month in the first Warrior Games at the U.S. Olympic training center in Colorado.

So for his distinguished service to country and for inspiring us all with his example of what citizenship truly means, I am proud to join the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services in presenting this recognition, the Outstanding American by Choice award, to Sergeant Ledum Ndaanee. Do we have the award?

[*At this point, the President presented the award.*]

Congratulations. Be proud of that. Thank you. With that, I'd ask Sergeant Ndaanee to conclude our ceremony by leading us all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

[*Sgt. Ndaanee led a recital of the Pledge of Allegiance.*]

The President. Excellent.

Sgt. Ndaanee. Thank you. [*Laughter*]

The President. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

The President's Weekly Address
April 24, 2010

It was little more than 1 year ago that our country faced a potentially devastating crisis in our auto industry. Over the course of 2008, the industry shed 400,000 jobs. In the midst of a financial crisis and deep recession, both General Motors and Chrysler, two companies that for generations were a symbol of America's manufacturing might, were on the brink of collapse. The rapid dissolution of these companies, followed by the certain failure of many auto parts makers and car dealers and other smaller businesses, would have dealt a crippling blow to our already suffering economy. The best estimates are that more than 1 million American workers could have lost their jobs.

The previous administration extended temporary loans to both companies. Even so, when I took office, the situation remained dire. We had to determine whether or not we could justify additional taxpayer assistance. After all, many

of the problems in the auto industry were a direct result of poor management decisions over decades. So it wasn't an easy call. But we decided that while providing additional assistance was a risk, the far greater risk to families and communities across our country was to do nothing. We agreed to additional help, but only if the companies and their stakeholders were willing to break with the past. They had to fundamentally reorganize, with new management that would reexamine the decisions that led to this mess and chart a path toward viability. I knew this wasn't a popular decision. But it was the right one.

So GM and Chrysler went through painful restructurings, ones that required enormous sacrifices on the part of all involved. Many believed this was a fool's errand. Many feared we would be throwing good money after bad, that taxpayers would lose most of their investment, and that these companies would soon fail regardless. But 1 year later, the outlook is very different. In fact, the industry is recovering at a pace few thought possible.

Just this week, we received some encouraging news. Since General Motors emerged from bankruptcy, the auto industry has actually added 45,000 jobs, the strongest growth in a decade. And Chrysler announced an operating profit in the first 3 months of this year. This is the first time Chrysler has reported a profit since the beginning of the economic crisis. What's more, GM announced that it paid back its loans to taxpayers with interest, fully 5 years ahead of schedule. It won't be too long before the stock the Treasury is holding in GM can be sold, helping to reimburse the American people for their investment.

In addition, Chrysler Financial has already fully repaid with interest the loans it received to support auto financing. And we're closing the books on the temporary program that helped parts suppliers weather this storm, returning this investment to the Treasury in full, with interest as well. Finally, we're bringing to an end many of the emergency programs designed to stabilize the financial sector and restart lending so folks could finance cars and trucks, as well as homes and small businesses.

On Friday, in fact, the Treasury Department informed Congress that this financial rescue, which was absolutely necessary to prevent an even worse economic disaster, will end up costing taxpayers a fraction of what was originally feared. This is a direct result of the careful management of the investments made by the American people so that we could recoup as many tax dollars as possible and as quickly as possible.

These steps, as well as others we've taken, have meant that millions of people are working today who might otherwise have lost their jobs. But these steps were never meant to be permanent. As I've said many times, I did not run for President to get into the auto business or the banking business. As essential as it was that we got in, I'm glad to see that we're getting out.

At the same time, even as we've come a long way, we still have a ways to go. The auto industry is more stable today. And the economy is on a better footing. But people are still hurting. I hear from them just about every day in letters I read and in the towns and cities that I visit. No matter what the economic statistics say, I won't be satisfied until folks who need work can find good jobs. After a recession that stole 8 million jobs, this is going to take some time. And this will require that we continue to tackle the underlying problems that caused this turmoil in the first place. In short, it's essential that we learn the lessons of this crisis, or we risk repeating it.

Now, part of what led to the crisis in our auto industry and one of the main causes of the economic downturn were problems in our financial sector. In the absence of commonsense rules, Wall Street firms took enormous, irresponsible risks that imperiled our financial system and hurt just about every sector of our economy. Some people simply forgot that behind every dollar traded or leveraged, there is a family looking to buy a house, pay for an education, open a business, or save for retirement.

That's why I went to New York City this week and addressed an audience that included leaders in the financial industry. And once again I called for reforms to hold Wall Street

accountable and to protect consumers. These reforms would put an end once and for all to taxpayer bailouts. They would bring greater transparency to complex financial dealings. And they will empower ordinary consumers and shareholders in our financial system. Folks will get clearer and more concise information when they make financial decisions, instead of having to worry about deceptive fine print. And shareholders and pension holders will have a stronger voice in the boardrooms of companies in which they invest their savings.

That's how we'll restore trust and confidence in our markets. That's how we'll help to put an end to the cycle of boom and bust that we've seen. And that's how, after 2 very difficult years, we will not only revive the economy, but help to rebuild it stronger than ever before.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 10:50 a.m. on April 23 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on April 24. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 23, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 24. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on Armenian Remembrance Day
April 24, 2010

On this solemn day of remembrance, we pause to recall that 95 years ago, one of the worst atrocities of the 20th century began. In that dark moment of history, 1.5 million Armenians were massacred or marched to their death in the final days of the Ottoman Empire.

Today is a day to reflect upon and draw lessons from these terrible events. I have consistently stated my own view of what occurred in 1915, and my view of that history has not changed. It is in all of our interest to see the achievement a full, frank, and just acknowledgment of the facts. The *Meds Yeghern* is a devastating chapter in the history of the Armenian people, and we must keep its memory alive in honor of those who were murdered and so that we do not repeat the grave mistakes of the past. I salute the Turks who saved Armenians in 1915 and am encouraged by the dialog among Turks and Armenians, and within Turkey itself, regarding this painful history. Together, the Turkish and Armenian people will be stronger as they acknowledge their common history and recognize their common humanity.

Even as we confront the inhumanity of 1915, we also are inspired by the remarkable spirit of the Armenian people. While nothing can bring back those who were killed in the *Meds Yeghern*, the contributions that Armenians have made around the world over the last 95 years stand as a testament to the strength, tenacity, and courage of the Armenian people. The indomitable spirit of the Armenian people is a lasting triumph over those who set out to destroy them. Many Armenians came to the United States as survivors of the horrors of 1915. Over the generations, Americans of Armenian descent have richened our communities, spurred our economy, and strengthened our democracy. The strong traditions and culture of Armenians also became the foundation of a new republic which has become a part of the community of nations, partnering with the world community to build a better future.

Today we pause with them and with Armenians everywhere to remember the awful events of 1915 with deep admiration for their contributions, which transcend this dark past and give us hope for the future.

Remarks at a Memorial Service for the Victims of the Upper Big Branch Mine Accident in Beckley, West Virginia

April 25, 2010

Thank you. Please be seated. To all the families who loved so deeply the miners we've lost, to all who called them friends, worked alongside them in the mines, or knew them as neighbors in Montcoal and Naoma or Whitesville, in the Coal River Valley and across West Virginia, let me begin by saying that we have been mourning with you throughout these difficult days. Our hearts have been aching with you. We keep our thoughts with the survivors who are recovering and resting at the hospital and at the homes. We are thankful for the rescue teams. But our hearts ache alongside you.

We're here to memorialize 29 Americans: Carl Acord, Jason Atkins, Christopher Bell, Gregory Steven Brock, Kenneth Allan Chapman, Robert Clark, Charles Timothy Davis, Cory Davis, Michael Lee Elswick, William I. Griffith, Steven Harrah, Edward Dean Jones, Richard K. Lane, William Roosevelt Lynch, Nicholas Darrell McCroskey, Joe Marcum, Ronald Lee Maynor, James E. Mooney, Adam Keith Morgan, Rex L. Mullins, Joshua S. Napper, Howard D. Payne, Dillard Earl Persinger, Joel R. Price, Deward Scott, Gary Quarles, Grover Dale Skeens, Benny Willingham, and Ricky Workman.

Nothing I or the Vice President or the Governor, none of the speakers here today, nothing we say can fill the hole they leave in your hearts or the absence that they leave in your lives. If any comfort can be found, it can, perhaps, be found by seeking the face of God, who quiets our troubled minds, a God who mends our broken hearts, a God who eases our mourning souls.

Even as we mourn 29 lives lost, we also remember 29 lives lived. Up at 4:30, 5 o'clock in the morning at the latest, they began their day as they worked, in darkness. In coveralls and hard-toe boots, a hardhat over their heads, they would sit quietly for their hour-long journey, 5 miles into a mountain, the only light the lamp on their caps or the glow from the mantrip they rode in.

Day after day, they would burrow into the coal, the fruits of their labor what so often we take for granted: the electricity that lights up a convention center, that lights up our church or our home, our school, our office; the energy that powers our country; the energy that powers the world.

And most days they'd emerge from the dark mine squinting at the light. Most days they'd emerge sweaty and dirty and dusted from coal. Most days they'd come home. But not that day.

These men—these husbands, fathers, grandfathers, brothers, sons, uncles, nephews—they did not take on their job unaware of the perils. Some of them had already been injured; some of them had seen a friend get hurt. So they understood there were risks. And their families did too. They knew their kids would say a prayer at night before they left. They knew their wives would wait for a call when their shift ended saying everything was okay. They knew their parents felt a pang of fear every time a breaking news alert came on or the radio cut in.

But they left for the mines anyway, some having waited all their lives to be miners, having longed to follow in the footsteps of their fathers and their grandfathers. And yet none of them did it for themselves alone.

All that hard work, all that hardship, all the time spent underground, it was all for the families. It was all for you, for a car in the driveway, a roof overhead, for a chance to give their kids opportunities that they would never know and enjoy retirement with their spouses. It was all in the hopes of something better. And so these miners lived as they died, in pursuit of the American Dream.

There in the mines for their families, they became a family themselves, sharing birthdays, relaxing together, watching Mountaineers football or basketball together, spending days off together hunting or fishing. "They may not have always loved what they did," said a sister, "but they loved doing it together."

They loved doing it as a family. They loved doing it as a community.

That's a spirit that's reflected in a song that almost every American knows. But it's a song most people, I think, would be surprised was actually written by a coal miner's son about this town, Beckley, about the people of West Virginia. It's the song "Lean on Me," an anthem of friendship, but also an anthem of community, of coming together.

And that community was revealed for all to see in the minutes and hours and days after the tragedy: rescuers, risking their own safety, scouring narrow tunnels saturated with methane and carbon monoxide, hoping against hope they might find a survivor; friends keeping porch lights on in a nightly vigil, hanging up homemade signs that read, "Pray for our miners and their families"; neighbors consoling each other and supporting each other and leaning on one another.

And I've seen it, the strength of that community. In the days that followed the disaster, e-mails and letters poured into the White House. Postmarked from different places across the country, they often began the same way: "I am proud to be from a family of miners." "I am the son of a coal miner." "I am proud to be a coal miner's daughter." They were always proud, and they asked me to keep our miners in my thoughts, in my prayers. Never forget, they say, miners keep America's lights on. And then in these letters, they make a simple plea: Don't let this happen again. Don't let this happen again.

How can we fail them? How can a nation that relies on its miners not do everything in its power to protect them? How can we let anyone in this country put their lives at risk by simply showing up to work, by simply pursuing the American Dream?

We cannot bring back the 29 men we lost. They are with the Lord now. Our task, here on Earth, is to save lives from being lost in another such tragedy, to do what we must do, individually and collectively, to assure safe conditions underground, to treat our miners like they treat each other, like a family. Because we are all family, and we are all Americans, and we have to lean on one another and look out for one another and love one another and pray for one another.

There's a Psalm that comes to mind today, a Psalm that comes to mind, a Psalm we often turn to in times of heartache: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

God bless our miners. God bless their families. God bless West Virginia. And God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:20 p.m. in the Beckley-Raleigh County Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Joseph Manchin III of West Virginia; and musician Bill Withers. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden.

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama and President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia Commemorating the 65th Anniversary of the Meeting of Soviet and American Troops at the Elbe River

April 25, 2010

April 25, 2010 marks the 65th anniversary of the legendary meeting of Soviet and American troops at the Elbe River, which became a striking symbol of the brotherhood-in-arms between our nations during World War II.

We pay tribute to the courage of those who fought together to liberate Europe from fascism. Their heroic feat will forever remain in the grateful memory of mankind.

The atmosphere of mutual trust and shared commitment to victory, which accompanied the historic handshake at the Elbe, is especially called for today when Russia and the United States are building a partnership for the sake of

a stable and prosperous world. We are convinced that, acting in the "spirit of the Elbe" on an equitable and constructive basis, we can successfully tackle any tasks facing our nations and effectively deal with the challenges of the new millennium.

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

Remarks Honoring the 2009 World Series Champion New York Yankees
April 26, 2010

Hello, everybody. Everybody have a seat, please.

[*At this point, the President exchanged greetings with Yankees manager Joseph E. Girardi. He then continued his remarks as follows.*]

Hello, everybody, and welcome to the White House. And congratulations on being World Series champions.

As you can see, we've got a few Yankees fans here in the White House—[*laughter*]—who are pretty excited about your visit. I want to actually start by recognizing Secretary of Treasury Tim Geithner, who is here, and Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood. Now, I understand Ray and Joe went to the same high school a few years apart. [*Laughter*] But they grew up, obviously, big Yankees fans.

I want to congratulate the Steinbrenner family, Brian Cashman, and all the folks who helped to make this team what it is. And I want to thank all of the members of the New York congressional delegation. And I notice a couple of Connecticut and North Dakota guys showing up here too—[*laughter*]—all of whom take credit for the Yankees' success. [*Laughter*]

Now, it's been 9 years since your last title, which must have felt like an eternity for Yankees fans. I think other teams would be just fine with a spell like that—[*laughter*]—the Cubs, for example. [*Laughter*] But this is a team that goes down to spring training every year expecting to win it all, and more often than not, you guys get pretty close. Of course, if I had Rivera, I'd get pretty close too. [*Laughter*] My White Sox would get close every year. That attitude, that success has always made the Yankees easy to love and, let's face it, easy to hate as well. [*Laughter*] For a White Sox fan like me, it's painful to watch Mariano's cutter when it's against my team or to see the Yankees wrap up the pennant while the Sox are struggling on the South Side. Although, I do remember 2005, people, so—[*laughter*]—don't get too comfortable. [*Laughter*]

But for the millions of Yankees fans in New York and around the world who bleed blue, nothing beats that Yankee tradition: 27 World Series titles; 48 Hall of Famers—a couple, I expect, standing behind me right now. From Ruth to Gehrig, Mantle to DiMaggio, it's hard to imagine baseball without the long line of legends who've worn the pinstripes. Last season, this team continued that legacy, winning 103 games and leaving no doubt who was the best team in baseball.

But what people tend to forget, especially after watching their teams lose, is that being a Yankee is as much about character as it is about performance, as much about who you are as what you do. Being successful in New York doesn't come easy, and it's not for everybody. It takes a certain kind of player to thrive in the pressure cooker of Yankee Stadium, somebody who's poised and professional and knows what it takes to wear the pinstripes. It takes somebody who appreciates how lucky he is and who feels responsibility for those who are less fortunate.

So it's somebody like Mark Teixeira. Before he was a three-time Golden Glove winner, Mark was a 21-year-old kid fresh out of Georgia Tech. Shortly after signing his first Major League contract, Mark visited his old high school and asked how much it would cost to set up a scholarship in the name of a friend who'd been killed in a car accident. And when he was told it would cost $75,000, he wrote a check on the spot. And he's been funding that scholarship ever since, helping to make the

dream of college a reality for students in his hometown.

Someone like Jorge Posada. The first time I met Jorge was with his wife—where'd Jorge go? Right here—at a fundraiser on behalf of folks who needed help in New York City. Five-time All Star, one of the emotional leaders of this team, but he's also the father of a son born with a rare birth defect that has required numerous surgeries and expensive treatments. And Jorge and his wife have made it their mission to reach out to families who aren't as fortunate as they are, offering resources, providing a support network for parents, helping children who suffer from the disease live healthy and happier lives. And so we're very proud of the kind of work that Jorge has done.

And of course, then there's Jeter. Where's Jeter? There he is right there. Sportsman of the Year, according to the Sports Illustrated, and you can see why—passed Lou Gehrig to become the alltime Yankee hit leader. But Derek would rather tell you a story about being in spring training with another Yankee legend, Don Mattingly. I love this story. Walking off an empty field together one day, Mattingly suggested they run to the clubhouse, telling Derek, "You never know who's watching." And Derek took that lesson to heart, and 15 years later, he still runs everywhere like he's trying out for the track team, always setting an example, always hustling, which is why, I think, everybody says that he epitomizes the best of the Yankee tradition, so—[*applause*].

And then somebody like Joe, a proud son of Illinois, I want to note. [*Laughter*] As the youngest manager in Yankees history to win a World Series, Joe is still in better shape than some of the players. I just want to—[*laughter*]—he looks good. But what makes Joe proudest is HOPE Week, a program where the Yankees help make a difference in the lives of folks in need. Last year, Joe put out a signup sheet for anyone who wanted to participate. And when he checked the next day, every player, manager, and coach had written their name down. The team ended up winning all five games that week, a fact that Joe doesn't think was a coincidence. And this summer, they'll be doing it all over again.

That same spirit was on display today, when the team visited members of our Armed Forces recovering at Walter Reed. They spent time with soldiers and their families, bringing hope and joy to folks who really need it at a time of great difficulty. And so I just want to thank you personally for taking the time to do that.

In the end, that's what makes the Yankees special. It's not simply the names on the roster or the size of their trophy case, it's the people underneath the pinstripes that set this team apart. It's the players and coaches who shoulder a legacy unlike any other, but who share a belief that anybody blessed with first-class talent also has an obligation to be a first-class person.

That's what being a Yankee is all about. That's why I want to congratulate this team, for winning the World Series and for showing every young person what it means to be a true professional.

Congratulations, everybody. Great job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:15 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to George M. Steinbrenner III, principal owner and chairperson, Joan Steinbrenner, vice chairperson, Harold Z. Steinbrenner, managing general partner and cochairperson, Henry G. Steinbrenner, general partner and cochairperson, Jennifer Steinbrenner Swindal and Jessica Steinbrenner, general partners and vice chairpersons, Brian Cashman, senior vice president and general manager, Mariano Rivera, pitcher, Mark C. Teixeira and Derek S. Jeter, infielders, and Jorge Rafael De Posada, catcher, and Don Mattingly, former infielder and coach, New York Yankees; and Laura Posada, wife, and Jorge Luis Posada, son, of Jorge Posada.

Statement on Senate Action on Financial Regulatory Reform and Consumer Protection Legislation
April 26, 2010

I am deeply disappointed that Senate Republicans voted in a block against allowing a public debate on Wall Street reform to begin. Some of these Senators may believe that this obstruction is a good political strategy, and others may see delay as an opportunity to take this debate behind closed doors where financial industry lobbyists can water down reform or kill it altogether, but the American people can't afford that. A lack of consumer protections and a lack of accountability on Wall Street nearly brought our economy to its knees and helped cause the pain that has left millions of Americans without jobs and without homes. The reform that both parties have been working on for a year would prevent a crisis like this from happening again, and I urge the Senate to get back to work and put the interests of the country ahead of party.

Remarks at the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship
April 26, 2010

Thank you very much. Everybody, please have a seat. Good evening, everyone, and welcome to Washington.

In my life and as President, I have had the great pleasure of visiting many of your countries, and I've always been grateful for the warmth and the hospitality that you and your fellow citizens have shown me. And tonight I appreciate the opportunity to return the hospitality.

For many of you, I know this is the first time visiting our country. So let me say on behalf of the American people, welcome to the United States of America.

It is an extraordinary privilege to welcome you to this Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship. This has been a coordinated effort across my administration, and I want to thank all the hard-working folks and leaders at all the departments and agencies who made it possible and who are here tonight.

That includes our United States Trade Representative, Ambassador Ron Kirk. Where's Ron? There he is. I especially want to thank the two departments and leaders who took the lead on this summit, Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. So please give them a big round of applause.

We're joined by Members of Congress who work every day to help their constituents realize the American Dream and whose life stories reflect the diversity and equal opportunity that we cherish as Americans: Nydia Velazquez, who is also, by the way, the Chairwoman of our Small Business Committee in the House of Representatives; Keith Ellison is here; and Andre Carson is here.

Most of all, I want to thank all of you for being part of this historic event. You've traveled from across the United States and nearly 60 countries, from Latin America to Africa, Europe to Central Asia, from the Middle East to Southeast Asia. And you bring with you the rich tapestry of the world's great traditions and great cultures. You carry within you the beauty of different colors and creeds, races and religions. You're visionaries who pioneered new industries and young entrepreneurs looking to build a business or a community.

But we've come together today because of what we share, a belief that we are all bound together by certain common aspirations: to live with dignity, to get an education, to live healthy lives, maybe to start a business without having to pay a bribe to anybody, to speak freely and have a say in how we are governed, to live in peace and security, and to give our children a better future.

But we're also here because we know that over the years, despite all we have in common, the United States and Muslim communities

around the world too often fell victim to mutual mistrust. And that's why I went to Cairo nearly 1 year ago and called for a new beginning between the United States and Muslim communities, a new beginning based on mutual interest and mutual respect. I knew that this vision would not be fulfilled in a single year or even several years, but I knew we had to begin and that all of us have responsibilities to fulfill.

As President, I've worked to ensure that America once again meets its responsibilities, especially when it comes to the security and political issues that have often been a source of tension. The United States is responsibly ending the war in Iraq, and we will partner with Iraqi people for their long-term prosperity and security. In Afghanistan, in Pakistan, and beyond, we're forging new partnerships to isolate violent extremists, but also to combat corruption and foster the development that improves lives and communities.

I say it again tonight: Despite the inevitable difficulties, so long as I am President, the United States will never waver in our pursuit of a two-state solution that ensures the rights and security of both Israelis and Palestinians. And around the world, the United States of America will continue to stand with those who seek justice and progress and the human rights and dignity of all people.

But even as I committed the United States to addressing these security and political concerns, I also made it clear in Cairo that we needed something else: a sustained effort to listen to each other and to learn from each other, to respect one another. And I pledged to forge a new partnership not simply between governments, but also between people on the issues that matter most in their daily lives, in your lives.

Now, many questioned whether this was possible. Yet over the past year, the United States has been reaching out and listening. We've joined interfaith dialogues and held town halls, roundtables, and listening sessions with thousands of people around the world, including many of you. And like so many people, you've extended your hand in return, each in your own way, as entrepreneurs and educators, as leaders of faith and of science.

I have to say, perhaps the most innovative response was from Dr. Naif Al-Mutawa of Kuwait, who joins us here tonight. Where is Dr. Mutawa? Right here. His comic books have captured the imagination of so many young people with superheroes who embody the teachings and tolerance of Islam. After my speech in Cairo, he had a similar idea. So in his comic books, Superman and Batman reached out to their Muslim counterparts. [*Laughter*] And I hear they're making progress too. [*Laughter*] Absolutely.

By listening to each other, we've been able to partner with each other. We've expanded educational exchanges because knowledge is the currency of the 21st century. Our distinguished science envoys have been visiting several of your countries, exploring ways to increase collaboration on science and technology.

We're advancing global health, including our partnership with the Organisation of the Islamic Conference to eradicate polio. This is just one part of our broader engagement with the OIC, led by my Special Envoy, Rashad Hussain, who joins us here tonight. Where's Rashad?

And we're partnering to expand economic prosperity. At a government level, I'd note that putting the G–20 in the lead on global economic decisionmaking has brought more voices to the table, including Turkey, Saudi Arabia, India, and Indonesia. And here today, we're fulfilling my commitment in Cairo to deepen ties between business leaders, foundations, and entrepreneurs in the United States and Muslim communities around the world.

Now, I know some have asked, given all the security and political and social challenges we face, why a summit on entrepreneurship? The answer is simple.

Entrepreneurship because you told us that this was an area where we can learn from each other, where America can share our experience as a society that empowers the inventor and the innovator, where men and women can take a chance on a dream, taking an idea that starts around a kitchen table or in a garage and turning it into a new business and even new industries that can change the world.

Entrepreneurship because throughout history, the market has been the most powerful force

the world has ever known for creating opportunity and lifting people up out of poverty.

Entrepreneurship because it's in our mutual economic interest. Trade between the United States and Muslim-majority countries has grown. But all this trade combined is still only about the same as our trade with one country, Mexico. So there's so much more we can do together, in partnership, to foster opportunity and prosperity in all our countries.

And social entrepreneurship, because, as I learned as a community organizer in Chicago, real change comes from the bottom up, from the grassroots, starting with the dreams and passions of single individuals serving their communities.

And that's why we're here. And we have Jerry Yang, who transformed how we communicate, with Yahoo—is Jerry here? Where is he? He'll be here tomorrow—as well as entrepreneurs who have opened cybercafes and new forums on the Internet for discussion and development. Together, you can unleash the technologies that will help shape the 21st century.

We have successes like Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim, who I met earlier, who built a telecommunications empire that empowered people across Africa. And we have aspiring entrepreneurs who are looking to grow their businesses and hire new workers. Together, you can address the challenges of accessing capital.

We have trailblazers like Sheikha Hanadi of Qatar, along with Wa'd al Taweel, who I met earlier, a 20-year-old student from the West Bank who wants to build recreation centers for Palestinian youth. So together, they represent the incredible talents of women entrepreneurs and remind us that countries that educate and empower women are countries that are far more likely to prosper. I believe that.

We have pioneers like Chris Hughes, who created Facebook, as well as an online community that brought so many young people into my campaign for President, mybarackobama.com. [*Laughter*] We have people like Soraya Salti of Jordan, who are empowering the young men and women who will be leaders of tomorrow. And together, they represent the great potential and expectations of young people around the world.

And we've got social entrepreneurs like Tri Mumpuni, who's helped rural communities in Indonesia harness the electricity and revenues of hydropower, and Andeisha Farid, an extraordinary woman from Afghanistan, who's taken great risks to educate the next generation, one girl at a time. And together, they point the way to a future where progress is shared and prosperity is sustainable.

And I also happened to notice Dr. Yunus—it's wonderful to see you again. I think so many people know the history of Grameen Bank and all the great work that's been done to help finance entrepreneurship among the poorest of the poor, first throughout South Asia, and now around the world.

So this is the incredible potential that you represent, the future we can seize together. So tonight I'm proud to announce a series of new partnerships and initiatives that will do just that.

The United States is launching several new exchange programs. We will bring business and social entrepreneurs from Muslim-majority countries to the United States and send their American counterparts to learn from your countries, so women in technology fields will have the opportunity to come to the United States for internships and professional development. And since innovation is central to entrepreneurship, we're creating new exchanges for science teachers.

We're forging new partnerships in which high-tech leaders from Silicon Valley will share their expertise in venture capital, mentorship, and technology incubators with partners in the Middle East and in Turkey and in Southeast Asia.

And tonight I can report that the Global Technology and Innovation Fund that I announced in Cairo will potentially mobilize more than $2 billion in investment. And this is private capital, and it will unlock new opportunities for people across our countries in sectors like telecommunications, health care, education, and infrastructure.

And finally, I'm proud that we're creating here at this summit not only these programs

that I've just mentioned, but it's not going to stop here. Together, we've sparked a new era of entrepreneurship, with events all over Washington this week and upcoming regional conferences around the world.

Tonight I am pleased to announce that Prime Minister Erdogan has agreed to host the next entrepreneurship summit next year in Turkey. And so I thank the Prime Minister and the people and private sector leaders of Turkey for helping to sustain the momentum that we will unleash this week.

So as I said, there are those who questioned whether we could forge these new beginnings. And given the magnitude of the challenges we face in the world—and let's face it, a lot of the bad news that comes through the television each and every day—sometimes it can be tempting to believe that the good will and good works of ordinary people are simply insufficient to the task at hand. But to any who still doubt whether partnerships between people can remake our world, I say, look at the men and women who are here today.

Look at the professor who came up with an idea—microfinance—that empowered the rural poor across his country, especially women and children. That's the powerful example of Dr. Yunus.

Look what happened when Muhammad shared his idea with a woman from Pakistan, who has since lifted hundreds of thousands of families and children out of poverty through a foundation whose name literally means "miracle." That's the example of Roshaneh Zafar.

Look what happened when that idea spread across the world, including to people like my own mother, who worked with the rural poor from Pakistan to Indonesia. That simple idea began with a single person, has now transformed the lives of millions. That's the spirit of entrepreneurship.

So yes, the new beginning we seek is not only possible, it has already begun. It exists within each of you and millions around the world who believe, like we do, that the future belongs not to those who would divide us, but to those who come together; not to those who would destroy, but those who would build; not those trapped in the past, but those who, like us, believe with confidence and conviction in a future of justice and progress and the dignity of all human beings, regardless of their race, regardless of their religion.

That's the enormous potential that we're hoping to unlock during this conference and hoping to continue not only this week, but in the months and years ahead. So I'm grateful that all of you are participating. May God bless you all, and may God's peace be upon you. Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:05 p.m. at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to Naif Al-Mutawa, founder, chairman, and chief executive officer, Teshkeel Media Group, and creator of the comic book series "The 99"; Jerry Yang, cofounder and member of the board of directors, Yahoo! Inc.; Mohamed "Mo" Ibrahim, founder, Celtel International; Sheikha Hanadi Nasser Bin Khaled Al Thani, founder and chairperson, Amwal; Wa'd al Taweel, founder, Teen Touch; Soraya Salti, senior vice president of Middle East and North Africa, Junior Achievement Worldwide, INJAZ al-Arab; Tri Mumpuni, founder, People Centered Economic and Business Institute; Andeisha Farid, founder and director, Afghan Child Education and Care Organization; Muhammad Yunus, founder and managing director, Grameen Bank; Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey; and Roshaneh Zafar, founder and managing director, Kashf Foundation.

Remarks on the First Meeting of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform

April 27, 2010

Good morning, everybody.

As a nation, we continue to experience the consequence of three distinct, but closely related challenges. One is a financial crisis, born of reckless speculation that threatened to choke off lending to families and to businesses. And this crisis, in turn, led to the deepest recession we've known in generations, costing millions of Americans their jobs and their homes, closing thousands of businesses, and devastating Main Streets across the country. And over the past 2 years, this downturn has aggravated an already severe fiscal crisis, brought on by decades of bad habits in Washington.

As a result, the day I walked into this door—the Oval Office—the deficit stood at $1.3 trillion, with projected deficits of $8 trillion over the next 10 years. Partly, this was caused by the recession, which meant the Government was taking in less, while demanding—while demand for assistance for those who had lost their jobs was far greater. Another contributor to our deficit has been the rising costs of health care. Each year, more tax dollars are devoted to Medicare and to Medicaid.

But what also made these large deficits possible was that for years, folks in Washington deferred politically difficult decisions and avoided telling hard truths about the nature of the problem. The fact is, it's always easier, when you're in public life, to share the good news, to tell people what they want to hear instead of what they need to know. And as the gentlemen behind me, Alan Simpson and Erskine Bowles, can attest, this has been the norm around Washington for a very long time when it comes to our finances.

Now, over the past year, we've had to take emergency measures to prevent the recession from becoming another depression. And at a time when millions of people are out of work, we'll continue to do what it takes to spur job creation, while investing in a new foundation for lasting economic growth. But the emergency measures have added about $1 trillion to the deficit over the next 10 years. As a result, even as we take these necessary steps in the short term, we have an obligation to future generations to address our long-term, structural deficits, which threaten to hobble our economy and leave our children and grandchildren with a mountain of debt.

And that's why I asked Congress to restore the pay-as-you-go rule. This rule says that Congress can't spend a dollar on a new tax cut or entitlement program unless it saves a dollar elsewhere. It's what helped lead to the balanced budgets of the 1990s. In fact, it was only by abandoning pay-as-you-go that record surpluses turned into record deficits during the course of a decade.

Next, we've been scouring the budget line by line, identifying more than $20 billion in savings this year alone. We've cut or eliminated scores of outmoded or ineffective programs and begun to reform our bloated contracting system. We've also successfully challenged the custom in Congress of courting favored contractors by approving weapons systems the Pentagon itself said that it doesn't want or need. Because in these hard times, we have to save where we can afford so that we can pay for what we need, the same way families do.

Finally, I've proposed a freeze in Government spending for 3 years. This won't affect benefits through Medicare, Medicaid, or Social Security. And it will not affect national security, including benefits for veterans. But it will affect all other discretionary spending. My budget ends loopholes and tax giveaways for oil and gas companies and for the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans, because we just can't afford them. And I kept my promise to pass a health reform bill without adding a dime to the deficit. In fact, by attacking waste and fraud and promoting better care, reform is expected to bring down our deficits by more than $1 trillion over the next two decades.

But all these steps, while significant, are simply not enough. For even as we rein in

waste and ask that Congress account for every dollar it spends, this alone will not make up for the years in which those in Washington refused to make hard choices and live within their means. And it will not make up for the chronic failure to level with the American people about the cost of the services that they value.

This is going to require people of both parties to come together and take a hard look at the growing gap between what the Government spends and what the Government raises in revenue. And it will require that we put politics aside, that we think more about the next generation than the next election. There is simply no other way to do it.

That's why I appointed the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, based on a proposal originally presented by a bipartisan group of Senators. And today, the Commission will have its first official meeting. I am grateful to all of its members—Democrats and Republicans, folks in Government and folks from the private sector—for participating.

I especially want to thank Erskine Bowles and Alan Simpson for chairing the Commission. These two men may have different political affiliations, but they share a strength of character, an ability to work across party lines, and a willingness to tell the hard truths even when it's hard. These qualities will be essential, as will the courage they've already shown by taking on this assignment.

Now, I've said that it's important that we not restrict the review or the recommendations that this Commission comes up with in any way. Everything has to be on the table. And I just met briefly with the Commission and said the same thing to them. Of course, this means that all of you, our friends in the media, will ask me and others, once a week or once a day, about what we're willing to rule out or rule in when it comes to the recommendations of the Commission. That's an old Washington game, and it's one that has made it all but impossible in the past for people to sit down and have an honest discussion about putting our country on a more secure fiscal footing.

So I want to deliver this message today: We're not playing that game. I'm not going to say what's in; I'm not going to say what's out. I want this Commission to be free to do its work.

In theory, there are few issues on which there is more vigorous bipartisan agreement than fiscal responsibility. But in practice, this responsibility for the future is often overwhelmed by the politics of the moment. It falls prey to special interest pressures, to the pull of local concerns, and to the reality familiar to every single American: It's a lot easier to spend a dollar than to save one. That's what, at root, led to these exploding deficits. And that is what will lead to a day of reckoning. But I believe, with the help of these gentlemen and this Commission, we can begin to meet this challenge in a serious and thoughtful way. And I believe we must, for the future of our country.

So, Alan, Erskine, thank you for your participation. I want to thank all the members of the Fiscal Commission. We've got a serious group in there of Democrats and Republicans, private sector and public sector, people who are sincere about this effort. And I told them that we are serious about it as well.

I think I've shown over the last year that I'm willing to do things even when they're not popular. A lot of the decisions, in terms of getting our budget under control, may not be popular, but I think the reason that Alan and Erskine agreed to take on this assignment is that they were convinced I was serious about it. And I'm going to be standing with them as they come up with the recommendations.

So thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:50 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at Siemens Energy, Inc., in Fort Madison, Iowa
April 27, 2010

The President. Hello, everybody. Oh, it's good to be back in Iowa, good to be in Fort Madison. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat.

I want to just acknowledge some of our special guests: first of all, my Secretary of Agriculture—you may still know him as Governor Vilsack; I know him as Secretary Vilsack—give Tom Vilsack a big round of applause; your current Governor, who is doing an outstanding job, Chet Culver; the mayor of Fort Madison, Steve Ireland. Steve, it's good to see you again.

The president and CEO of Siemens, Peter Loescher, is here; and our plant manager, Robert Gjuraj, who just gave me a terrific tour—so thank you, Robert. Where's Robert? There he is right there.

I have just been on an incredibly impressive tour of this facility and saw how these giant blades are created. And they look even cooler up close—unbelievably impressive technologies. And it was remarkable just to see how these things are made, but it's even more remarkable when you consider that just a few short years ago, this facility was dark, it was quiet, nothing was going on. And today it's alive and humming with more than 600 employees, almost two-thirds of whom found themselves unemployed before they were here. And this plant—[*applause*]—Robert was telling me—I may get my facts wrong here, but even 2 years ago, you had only 200 employees. Now we've got 600 employees 2 years later. And this plant supports more than 350 other jobs throughout Lee County, so—[*applause*].

So you're manufacturing blades for some of the most advanced wind turbines in the world. Each one is as tall as Air Force One is long; each is capable of generating enough power for hundreds of homes, just by harnessing the wind. So what's going on here, what each of the employees of Siemens are involved with, is helping stake America's claim on a clean energy future. And you're staking Fort Madison's claim on America's future.

And that's why I come to Iowa here today. Somebody—one of the reporters said, "Why Iowa?" I said, well, I love Iowa, first of all—wouldn't have been President if it wasn't for Iowa. It's close to Illinois. [*Laughter*] But also, I wanted to come here because to talk with folks like you about the economic hardship and the pain that this town has gone through and so many people are still feeling is important, but it's also to talk about the economic potential.

Lately, we've been able to report some welcome news after a hard 2 years. Our economy is finally growing again. Our markets are climbing. Our businesses are beginning to create jobs again.

Now, in too many places, though, the recovery isn't reaching everybody just yet. Times are still tough in towns like Fort Madison. And times are still tough for middle class Americans, who have been swimming against the current for years before this economic tidal wave hit. So even as we took steps to rescue our economy and recover from this crisis, we also wanted to take steps to rebuild our economy on a new foundation, a firmer foundation for long-term growth and prosperity, to create conditions so that folks who work hard can finally get ahead.

And that means making our schools more competitive. It means making our colleges more affordable. Yes, it means making health insurance affordable and giving families and businesses more choice and more competition and more protection from the worst abuses of the insurance industry. And it means commonsense reforms that prevent irresponsibility of a few on Wall Street from threatening the dreams of millions on Main Street.

But the reason we're here is because it also means igniting a new, clean energy economy that generates good jobs right here in the United States.

Now, we've talked about this for decades. We talked about how our dependence on fossil fuels threatened our economy. But after all the talk, a lot of times our will to act rose and fell

depending on what the price of a gallon of gas was at the pump. During the summer, when prices went up, everybody was all for clean energy. And when prices went back down, suddenly everybody forgot about it.

So we talked about this problem for a long time, how it threatened future generations. We talked about issues of how the climate's changing. We talked about how it threatened our national security because we're dependent on other countries for what makes our country run, dependence that grew deeper with every passing year.

And meanwhile, while we talked, other nations acted. From Spain to China, other nations recognized that the country that leads the clean energy economy will be the country that leads the 21st-century global economy. They were making serious investments to win that race and the jobs that come with it.

And some of you may have heard me say this before: I don't accept second place for the United States of America. And that's why our energy security has been a top priority for my administration since the day I took office.

We began early last year by making the largest investment in clean energy in our Nation's history. It's an investment expected to create or save more than 700,000 jobs across America by the end of 2012—jobs manufacturing next-generation batteries for next-generation vehicles, jobs upgrading to a smarter, stronger power grid, jobs doubling America's capacity to generate renewable electricity from sources like the Sun and the wind, just like you do here.

And that investment was all part of the Recovery Act. This facility took advantage of that act's Advanced Energy Manufacturing Tax Credit, and we were just talking—Robert and I were talking about the fact that part of what's allowed us to have these new platforms and these new molds is this tax credit. It allowed you to add equipment and boost output and hire new workers right here in Fort Madison.

So in the midst of the economic turmoil, the Recovery Act helped make it possible for America to install nearly 10 gigawatts of new wind generating capacity last year alone, and that's enough to power more than 2.4 million American homes. So when people ask you what was the Recovery Act about, what was the stimulus about, it was about this, this plant.

And each new wind farm has the potential to create hundreds of construction jobs and dozens of permanent local jobs in communities just like Fort Madison. Robert, we were talking about the fact that—who's catering the food here at the factory? That's suddenly a whole bunch of business for the local grocers; the folks who are installing the electricity here, additional work. So there's a ripple effect that occurs.

And one study suggests that if we pursue our full potential for wind energy and everything else goes right, wind could generate as much as 20 percent of America's electricity 20 years from now.

Audience member. Yeah!

The President. That's right, 20 percent. And Secretary Vilsack was telling me that Iowa is at the cutting-edge. Iowa's already hit that mark, hasn't it? Because of Governor Culver and his predecessor, Tom Vilsack, it may be a reality right here in Iowa. This State already generates a higher percentage of its electricity from wind than any other State, and that number is only growing. That number is only growing.

And as extraordinary as this facility is, here's the thing: Wind power isn't a silver bullet; it's not going to solve all our energy challenges. There's no single energy source. The key is to understand that this is a key component, a key part of a comprehensive strategy to move us from an economy that just runs on fossil fuels to one that relies on more homegrown fuels and clean energy. I believe that we can come together around this issue and pass comprehensive energy and climate legislation that will ignite new industries, spark new jobs in towns just like Fort Madison, make America more energy independent. Our security, our economy, the future of our planet all depend on it.

This is what's possible in a clean energy economy. And while it may not feel like it every day when you punch in, to all the folks who work here at Siemens, I want you to understand, you're making it possible. You are blazing a trail. You're showing America our future. And someday, our children and our children's children will look back at this factory, this moment, and they will be proud at a generation that

chose, in a time of crisis, to place its bet on the future and to reopen factories and restart assembly lines and retrain workers, a generation that chose once again to step forward and meet the challenges of our time.

That's what this represents. That's what you represent. And we could not be prouder. So thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Peter Loescher, president and chief executive officer, Siemens AG.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Ottumwa, Iowa

April 27, 2010

The President. Hello, everybody. Hello, Ottumwa. Good to see you, good to see you. Thank you so much, everybody. Thank you. Everybody—thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Everybody have a seat. It is good to be back in Ottumwa. I missed you guys.

Audience members. We missed you!

The President. The—there are a couple of special folks that I want to make sure that I acknowledge. First of all, used to be your Governor, now your Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack is in the house; your attorney general, Tom Miller, is in the house; the mayor of Ottumwa, Dale Uehling; and college president, our host, Jim Lindenmayer.

Jim was bragging about the ball team here. All right, we can go out there and shoot a little bit. [*Laughter*] They seem very confident.

Well, it is wonderful to see all of you. And thanks for the wonderful welcome. Before I begin, I just want to briefly mention the continued resilience of folks up in the Cedar Rapids area in the wake of the flood that devastated the region a few years back. It has taken a long time to clean up after that. But I promised that my administration would be a committed partner in their recovery. That's why yesterday we announced $38 million in grants for their rebuilding and recovery efforts. And we'll continue to stand with the people of Iowa going forward.

Now, it is a——

Audience member. We love you, President Obama!

The President. I love you too. I—it's great to see you. Thank you. It is just good to be back in Iowa. If it weren't for Iowa, I wouldn't be President. I believe that. It is great to be back in Ottumwa. We had some great times. Although, I got to admit that the last time I was here, I didn't arrive using a helicopter. [*Laughter*] We were in a little van. [*Laughter*] And my legs were all cramped up. [*Laughter*]

But it's a great honor to be your President. Now, having said that, one of the toughest parts about it is you don't get out as much as you used to. You're in what they call the bubble. Now, don't get me wrong, it is a very nice bubble. [*Laughter*] The White House is a great place to work. I live above the store—[*laughter*[—so it's a easy commute. I see my girls off to school every morning. I can always go—no matter how late I'm working, I can have dinner with my girls at night. And that's a great thing. But it does mean I just can't walk around and visit folks and run into them at the grocery store as easily as I used to. And so you lose something.

And as you remember, it wasn't that long ago when I was driving around in a van or a bus and introducing myself to people and shaking hands and—only to hear them say as I walked away: "Who was that guy again? What"—[*laughter*]—"how do you say his name?" [*Laughter*] So it's nice to be back in Iowa, but also just nice to be back among the American people.

Earlier today I visited the Siemens Wind Power project in Fort Madison—some of you may have seen this—and I chatted with workers, and we checked out the work that they're doing to stake America's claim on a clean ener-

gy future and Iowa's claim on America's future.

And if anybody's seen these blades for these wind turbines that Iowa is a leader in, they're being manufactured at a state-of-the-art factory that only a few years ago was completely shut down. And now they've got 600 people working there, and they're looking to expand even further. And it gives you a sense of what can happen when you've got a combination of a terrific State government—because Tom Vilsack was the one who originally brought them in—you've got a Federal Government that's giving tax credits and tax incentives for wind energy and clean energy, and then you've got a community full of folks that are just ready to work and willing to do what it takes. And that is exactly the kind of future that we want to promote.

I stopped by a small food producer in Mount Pleasant. A young woman, she couldn't have been more than 25, and she is starting her own—her parents had a farm; it didn't look like they were farming it actively. She came back home, and now she's planting fruits and vegetables. And she's got a small loan, and she's started participating in the farmer's market, and now she's been hooking up with the local department store, and pretty soon she's going to be with the schools. And so we're getting fresh produce to market. She is starting to make money. And you're seeing that kind of entrepreneurship all across the State and all across the country.

And these visits are reminders that when you get out into the heartland and you talk to folks, there's a lot to learn from rural America, because it's towns like this that give America its heartbeat. It's towns like this where working men and women built the American Dream with their bare hands: farmers who get up before dawn, shopkeepers who hang the "Open" sign every morning, entrepreneurs who get that idea and turn that idea into a reality. And that's a dream that's shared by every American, a chance to make a good living, to raise a healthy, secure family, and then to leave our children with even more opportunity than we had.

But look, the fact is, we have gone through a tough time. And I know we've gone through a tough time here in Ottumwa. Even though our economy is growing again, even though our markets have rebounded, our businesses are beginning to create jobs again and hire again, that's all good news, but everybody here knows there's a lot of recovery that we still have to do.

And I hear the stories in the letters that I get every night. Some of you know I take 10 letters out of the 40,000 or so that we get and I read them every night. And recently I received a particularly moving young—letter from a young woman in a town that's smaller than Ottumwa. And she said, and I'm going to read this, "Our family has been able to make it through past financial hardship by sticking together and waiting patiently for things to get better, but I'm really starting to worry." That's what she said. "I don't know how much longer I can deal with the guilt of putting additional financial strain on my family by trying to be the first of us to attend and graduate college." And she closed by writing, "It's not your job to respond to me or even to read my letter."

But I had to write her back and said, "Actually, that is my job"—[*laughter*]—because her story is just like the story of a lot of folks out here. That's why I asked you for the job in the first place, Iowa, because I was hearing too many stories like that. Think about that: young woman feeling guilty about going to college; she's thinking, maybe I need to drop out and work because my family's going through such strain.

That's not the way it's supposed to be. She's supposed to take pride in going to college because she knows that it will give her the opportunity to create a great life for herself, but also maybe to help folks who are less fortunate, a little bit less lucky, be able to reach back and bring them along. That's the dream that generations of Americans have worked for. And even before this last crisis, it felt like it was slipping away a little bit.

Folks like you are living up to your responsibilities, and then you've got people in Washington and Wall Street who aren't living up to theirs. And the reason that so many of you joined our campaign was you believed that we had it within our reach to change the way things were working, to stand up to the special interests, to make sure that the agenda in Washing-

ton was yours, and to keep the American Dream alive for our time and for all time.

So—but before I take your questions, I just want to speak very plainly about what we've been doing to keep faith with that promise.

Now, when I took office, the first thing we had to do was mount an aggressive response to the worst economic crisis we'd seen since the Great Depression because we didn't want a second great depression. And let's face it, some of the steps we took were unpopular. I didn't like them. Nobody wanted to have to fix the financial system. That wasn't part of what I ran on. I ran on making sure we regulated the financial system, but I didn't run on having to make sure it didn't collapse. But I also knew that some of the things we did were the right thing to do in order to make sure that the situation didn't get worse.

And by the way, one of those steps was called the Recovery Act. And I want everybody to understand, here's what it did. First of all, one-third of it was tax cuts. We cut taxes for small businesses. So one-third—when you hear of the Recovery Act, I want you to understand, a third of that went to tax cuts for small businesses, for first-time home buyers—some of you have been first-time home buyers and gotten that $8,000 credit—for students and parents who were paying for college. And we cut taxes for 95 percent of working Americans—1.1 million working families here in Iowa—because that's what I told you I'd do during the campaign.

So in all, we passed 25 different tax cuts last year to help folks make ends meet in the tough economy. And by the way, that put more demand into the economy, which meant people had some money in their pockets to spend on basic necessities, which kept more businesses open and prevented us from slipping into a depression. So I just want to be clear, when you hear folks hollering about their taxes, I'm sympathetic, but we've cut taxes—25 of them.

All right, so that's a third of the Recovery Act. Another third went to helping folks get back on their feet by extending unemployment benefits and making COBRA cheaper. And—I mean, I can't tell you how many people I talk to—it's tough enough losing your job. It's a lot tougher if you lose your job and your COBRA payments—the payments to keep your health care from when you were on the job—are more than you can ever afford, so then you lose your health care at the same time as you're losing your job. And the COBRA basically subsidized 65 percent of those costs. And it meant a lot of people, even when they lost their job, were able to keep their health care and, through unemployment benefits, keep the lights on until they were able to get back on their feet.

We also kept teachers and police officers on the job, including right here in Iowa. If you talk to any Governor, they will tell you that they would have had to make huge layoffs if we hadn't provided help.

All right, so that's two-thirds of it. Now, here's the last third. It was towards putting people back to work doing the work that America needs. That wind blade plant that we just went to, they benefited from clean energy tax credits that we gave them. They would not have been able to expand and hire those additional 200 people if we hadn't provided those tax credits. All across America, we invested in rebuilding roads and bridges and hospitals and firehouses, laying broadband lines, creating and harnessing the clean energy of tomorrow.

So it was that Recovery Act that helped that wind turbine plant boost output. Not far from here, the Recovery Act is funding the Ottumwa Job Corps Center, offering a brighter future for hundreds of students a year.

Now, sometimes, you've got people who were critics of what we did, but they'll show up at the ribbon cutting. [*Laughter*] Now—so I just want to make clear here what we did, because people try to score political points by attacking the Recovery Act. That's what they're attacking, that wind turbine plant or that wind blade plant, the Job Corps Center, keeping teachers on the job, the most progressive tax cut in our history, relief for laid-off workers, investment in your community; 2.5 million Americans went to work today who otherwise wouldn't have gone to work.

And we're going to keep on working by every means necessary to accelerate job creation because, look, job is—a job is more than a pay-

check. Anybody who's been out of work—and by the way, I've been out of work—knows that feeling you get when you're out of work. It's not just because you're worried about paying the bills; it's because a job is about meeting one's responsibilities and taking care of one's family. It's about the satisfaction at the end of a hard day's work, the sense of purpose and pride every American deserves. That's what we need to restore.

So that's been our priority in the short term, to get our economy running, getting businesses hiring again. And we're making some progress, not as fast as I'd like, but the trends are good.

Here's the thing, though, folks: The challenge did not just begin a year and a half ago with this crisis. It certainly didn't start here in Ottumwa just a year and a half ago. We've been seeing manufacturing leaving. We've been seeing folks who are struggling to get by, middle class folks who've been swimming against the current for better part of a decade because they were hit with an economic tidal wave.

For decades, our schools have been failing too many of our kids. For decades, our dependence on foreign oil threatened our economic and national security. For decades, families have been struggling with out-of-control health care premiums. For decades, our deficits—well, actually just a decade—[*laughter*]—our deficits were unacceptably large year after year, because 10 years ago, we actually had a surplus.

Year after year, Washington focuses on the next election instead of the next generation. And I'm here to tell you, Ottumwa, we cannot afford that kind of politics. We cannot go back to that kind of economy. We've got to rebuild a new foundation for our future.

We need to extend opportunity to every corner of Main Street so that young folks who are here in Ottumwa don't feel like they've got to go someplace else to have a decent life. We need to make sure that we put some wind at the backs of working men and women and create conditions where if they work hard, they can get ahead.

So that's what we're working to do. And that's why we're making the biggest investment in clean energy in our history, creating good middle class jobs in middle America, jobs that harness the wind and the Sun and biofuels and won't be sent offshore. That's why we're working with States to raise standards in our schools so our young people can compete in the 21st-century economy. And that's why I'm very proud of all the young people who are here at this community college, who are doing great work.

By the way, that's why we took on the special interests. We finally reformed the student loan system so it works for students and not bankers—saved us tens of billions of dollars in wasteful spending, and we're reinvesting that money where it should have gone in the first place, and that's to your education. We're making college more affordable, and we're upgrading America's most underappreciated asset, and that's community colleges just like this one. And we're proud to do it.

And yes, Ottumwa, that is why we finally passed health reform in America. Reform—[*applause*]—you know, I—I'm proud of it. I'm proud of it.

I want you to know, right before I came here, we were in Mount Pleasant, Vilsack's old stomping grounds, and we went to Jerry's, right? And I had some pie. [*Laughter*] It was very good. [*Laughter*] And so we talked to some of the patrons there. And on the way out, a young woman named Janice came up to me, and she wanted an autograph, and I said I'd be happy to sign something. And we started talking about her circumstances. And she's a homemaker. Her husband is self-employed—a mechanic, I think she said it was. And she was trying to figure—she was so eager to get health care going. She said, "I know it takes a few years to get this thing started up, but we need help now because our premiums just went up to $700 per month." And that's who reform was for.

So here's what's going to happen this year. Seniors are going to help—get help paying for their prescription drugs—this year. Millions of small-business owners, including farmers, will be eligible for tax credits to help insure their employees—this year. Parents of children with preexisting conditions will finally be able to purchase the coverage that they need—this year.

Insurance companies won't be able to drop you when you get sick—this year. By the way, if you're a young person here, you'll be able to stay on your parent's policy till you're 26, starting this year.

And in a couple years, as—after we've set the whole thing up, millions of families and small-business owners, they're going to have more choice, more competition, and they're going to finally be able to purchase quality, affordable care and get a better deal because they're going to be part of a big pool. The reason that it's cheap for Federal employees, for example, to get good health insurance is because there are millions of Federal employees, so they've got a lot of bargaining power. It forces insurance companies to lower their rates and give them a better deal.

Now individuals and small businesses are going to able to buy into that same kind of pool. And by the way, Members of Congress are going to be members of it too, so you know it's a good deal, because they wouldn't have voted for it if they thought it was going to be a bad deal.

One last point about health care reform: This represents the biggest deficit reduction plan since the 1990s. Now, there's been a lot of talk about deficits lately, and rightly so. These numbers keep me up at night. But it is ironic that some of the folks who are loudest talking about it are the ones who took a surplus 10 years ago and left a $1.3 trillion deficit on my desk when I took office.

Now, I don't know where they were over the last 10 years, why they weren't protesting and all that. [*Laughter*] But that's fine. I'm the President; the buck stops with me. And we did have to add short term to the deficit to deal with the economic crisis. All that unemployment benefits, those COBRA extensions, et cetera, that cost money. But we've also taken real concrete steps to address the long-term deficits that loom over our future.

Last point I want to make: We are engaged in a debate right now on the need for Wall Street reform, reform that protects consumers, holds firms accountable, puts an end to taxpayer bailouts once and for all. It's precisely because we didn't have commonsense rules on Wall Street that some of these firms could take these huge risks, irresponsible risks that hurt every sector of the economy.

As far away as Ottumwa, you were impacted by what they were doing. People on Wall Street, some of them forgot that every—behind every dollar traded or leveraged or some derivative created, here on Main Street people are just looking to buy a house or pay for college or open up a business or save for retirement. And you can't take irresponsible risks like that. So that's why we need reform.

Now, today, for the second time in 24 hours, Senate Republicans unanimously blocked efforts to even begin debating reform. I'm not even asking them to vote for the bill. I just want to let them debate it. And you know—you've learned these Senate rules are complicated. So they won't even let it get on the floor to be debated. It's one thing to oppose reform, but to oppose just even talking about reform in front of the American people and having a legitimate debate, that's not right.

The American people deserve an honest debate on this bill. It's been 2 years since the financial crisis became clear. I've been talking about it since 2007; before the crisis, I said we needed better rules on Wall Street. And you should not have to wait one more day for some of the strongest consumer protections ever.

And I'm not going to let this effort fall victim to industry lobbyists who want to weaken it and water it down and kill it and snuff it out and stomp on it and whatever else they want to do to it. We can't let another crisis like this happen again. And we can't have such a short memory that we let them convince us that we don't need to change the status quo on Wall Street.

Now, Ottumwa, Washington likes to act like this is all a political game. So that's why I want people to spend more time in Ottumwa, because if folks spent more time out here, they'd see that inaction, obstruction costs people. They'd see that you don't care which party comes out on top politically in any of this stuff. You just want us to live up to our responsibilities like you do. You're not interested in whether it's a Republican plan or a Democrat-

ic plan or it's—[*applause*]—that's what our administration's been trying to do.

Now, we haven't been perfect, that's for sure. Michelle could have warned you, I'm not perfect. [*Laughter*] But I want—what I want you to know is that every single thing we are trying to accomplish, every policy we put in place, every day that I go to work, it's about restoring a sense of security for the middle class and renewing the American Dream for folks like you, because you're the ones who inspired me to run. Whether you support me or not, it's towns like this and families like yours that I spend my time thinking about.

It's that young lady in that letter that I'm working for. You put your trust in me. I don't intend to let you down. And if we can summon resolve together and work together, I know we're going to come through these difficult times and we are going to emerge stronger and more secure and more ready than ever to write that next great chapter in American history.

So thank you very much, Ottumwa. Let me take some questions from you. Thank you. Thank you.

[*At this point, the President addressed a member of the audience.*]

The President. You got a little baby.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. I will, I will.

All right, everybody have a seat. I'm going to take some questions. Then I'm going to hold that cute, little baby right there. [*Laughter*] She is just a little precious pea. [*Laughter*]

All right, there are no rules to this, other than just raise your hand. I'll try to call on as many as I can. We're going to go girl, boy, girl, boy so that it's fair. [*Laughter*] And hopefully—and there are young people in the audience with microphones. So wait until the microphone gets to you so that everybody can hear your question. And if you don't mind introducing yourself, that would be helpful as well. All right?

Okay, there's a gentleman right there at the corner, so that seems pretty convenient—right there. Yes, sir.

Manufacturing Jobs/Trade/Small Business Credit

Q. Yes, sir. Thank you so much for all your efforts on health care, and I wish you every success on the reforms we need——

The President. Thank you. Thank you.

Q. ——in Wall Street. I'm a Californian—I live in California and——

The President. What are you doing here in Ottumwa?

Q. Well, there's a special lady that has my heart, called Veronica Butler, here, so I have to come back.

The President. Oh, I see. Okay. All right, okay. I got you.

Q. I'm in—I run a small business, and we sell equipment—manufacturing equipment, and then we do leasing on that equipment. And I'm real concerned over, we seem like we continue to lose manufacturing jobs overseas. And it's a drain on that. And then we also have in our—we try to arrange for financing. Our shops that are—our small machine shops that are just everyday working guys that are really trying to make a living are now in a situation that their credit is challenged, so——

The President. These are your suppliers?

Q. Some of the suppliers and some of the customers I'm trying to provide equipment to.

The President. I see. I got you, okay.

Q. They can't go to—due to the—they've pulled on their own personal wealth to try to keep their businesses open. They've lost people that they can't hire back. They need to hire people. They're going to banks, and some of them have been in business less than 3 years, and it's just impossible for them now to arrange and buy equipment. So we need help, boss. [*Laughter*]

The President. The—well, let me respond to both questions. Look, we've been losing manufacturing for a while. There is no doubt about that. I think it's important to recognize that a lot of attention is placed on manufacturing moving overseas, but actually, the majority of manufacturing jobs that have been lost had to do with automation and technology.

If you go to a steel mill today, it takes one person what it used to take 10 people to do. And that's true in a lot of industries. So some of

the reduction in the number of people working in manufacturing is similar to what happened in agriculture, right? Things just got very efficient.

In fact, one of the problems we're having right now in terms of having jobs rebound even after the economy has rebounded is the fact that a lot of businesses learn to become more efficient, and so they're thinking, well, we can make the same amount of product with fewer workers, which is a challenge for us.

That's why new industries are so important. We—America—we've been at our best by coming up with the next thing, the new idea, because we're never going to compete overseas when it comes to low wages. Even if Chinese wages go up, folks will move to Bangladesh. And if Bangladesh wages go up, they'll—I mean, Mexico now is actually losing jobs to China, and on down the line. So that's not where we want to compete. We want to compete in innovation, a highly educated workforce, creativity, high-end products.

Now, here's the good news, actually. We still have a very strong manufacturing base in this country, and that wind blade farm was an example of the kinds of new manufacturing that we can put in place. But we've got to invest in it. That's point number one.

Point number two is, we've got to make sure that our trade arrangements with other countries are fair, because, frankly, 20 years ago, 30 years ago, I think the attitude was, you know what, we can just open up our markets and they don't have to open theirs, and maybe they'll send us toys and a few other things, but it's no big deal. Well, those days are over. China has grown rapidly, and it can compete very effectively, which means that when I'm meeting with the Chinese President, I've got to make sure that their trade is reciprocating—their trade policies reciprocate what ours do.

That means that agricultural products from Iowa, they've got to have full access to the market. It means that they can't steal our intellectual property. It means that they can't have a bunch of barriers where getting through customs is so hard that finally, American companies give up. And this is one of the reasons why my administration has called for a doubling of U.S. exports.

I don't want to close off trade with other countries; I want to open those countries because that's a lot of where the growth is, and that's where we can sell our products and we've got a competitive advantage. But we've got to keep on pushing and be tough in our negotiations, and that's something that's going to be a top priority. So that's on the trade side.

On the financing side, one of the biggest problems we still have in our economy—we made sure that the financial system didn't collapse, but a lot of banks have still pulled back, and they've pulled back especially from small businesses. So everywhere I go, I talk to small-business owners who say, "You know, we're actually starting to get orders now, but I can't get a credit line from my bank."

And sadly, actually, the smaller banks in some ways—which service a lot of small businesses and service communities like Ottumwa—are in some ways just as bad off. They may not have taken any kind of Federal help, but they still are trying to deal with their balance sheets. They might have financed some malls or some mortgages that have gone south; they've got some bad loans on their books. They're not in—they feel like they're not in as good of a position to lend.

So what we've been trying to do is use the SBA, the Small Business Administration. We've doubled SBA loans to small businesses. We are now—we've told Congress what we'd like to do—it turns out all those big banks are actually now paying back the money that we gave them.

Audience member. Good!

The President. It is very good—with interest, by the way. They've already paid back the majority of it, but my attitude is, I want them paying back every dime. And that's why we've got a bank fee that we're going to impose on them until they've paid taxpayers back every dime of the money they got.

But one of our proposals is to have some of that money used to help get small-business loans out. And so this is going to be something that we're debating. If we can start loosening up credit for small businesses and helping

smaller and community banks with their lending portfolios, that will make a huge difference in terms of the pace of our economic growth. So this is really a top priority for our administration.

All right? Thank you for the question.

All right, it's a young lady's—it's a woman's turn. But I just want to make sure that you are not from California. [*Laughter*] I'm teasing. Right here, in the orange. Yes. Stand up and introduce yourself. Here, you got a mike right behind you.

Support for Unions/Education

Q. Hi, my name is—[*inaudible*]—union. We supported you when you ran. And what my question is, is how are you going to continue to support us, and how is the health care bill going to affect us?

The President. Well, first of all, I'm grateful for the support. And second of all, I've said this before publicly, and I'll say it again—I make no apologies for it: I am a prounion guy. I think that—[*applause*]—I think—you know, our unions helped build our middle class. We take for granted so much stuff: minimum wage laws, 40-hour work week, overtime, child labor laws. Those things wouldn't have happened if it hadn't been for unions fighting for those rights. So even if you're not a member of a union, you've got to be appreciative of what unions have done.

Now, a lot of things that we do don't get a lot of notice. We don't always get—generate headlines. But a lot of things that we're doing have to do with how is the Department of Labor operating to make sure that workplace safety rules are enforced, to make sure that if the Federal Government is helping to finance a program, that we've got a project labor agreement in place that assures that people are paid a decent wage and they're getting a fair deal; who am I appointing to the National Labor Relations Board so that when a union tries to organize, it doesn't take 5 years just—before you can even get a ruling, and then it turns out that the ruling somehow conveniently always is against the union. So there are a lot of things that we've been doing administratively to try to make sure that people just get the fair chance to organize.

Now, look, some people don't want unions, and that's great. If you feel that you can look after your own interests, I respect that. But what we—but one of the things that we stand for as Americans is the freedom to decide, I'm going to join with my brothers and sisters at that workplace to try to get a better deal, not through force, not through coercion, but just by us agreeing to bargain. And we just want to make sure that there's a level playing field in that process. That's something that I strongly believe in, and it's part of the American tradition.

And sometimes, people will say, "Well, unions are what's making us not competitive." Well, that's just not true. Unions are only, at this point in the private sector, probably less than 10 percent of the economy. So the notion that somehow that's what is creating competition with other countries that pay low wages, that's not the case. The fact of the matter is, is that what's going to help us become competitive is if we've got middle class workers making middle class wages with middle class benefits, who can then go out and shop and support a family and buy a new car and pay their mortgage, which will create more business opportunities and maintain America as the greatest market on Earth. And if we do that, then we're going to be successful.

Now, there are going to be times where—there are times where I've got some differences with the unions on some issues. But that's—those are arguments among friends. I do think, for example, that it's important for us to reform our education system. And my sister's a teacher. I love teachers unions; I've been supportive of them ever since I got into politics. But I do want to partner with teachers to make sure that we are improving constantly how our kids perform. And we've got to have accountability in terms of how we are making progress in school districts all across the country.

Because I want young people in America not—at this point, we can't just graduate from high school; that's not enough. We've got to go on to community colleges or go on to a 4-year education because those are the jobs that are going to exist in the 21st century. I don't want our young people having to compete simply on

the basis of their willingness to work in a factory, because it's going to be very hard for them to compete over the long term in other countries where the wages may be a lot lower unless they've got higher skills and they're bringing something different to the marketplace than some of these other workers.

All right? Thanks for the question.

Okay. It's a gentleman's turn. Let's see who we got. All right, one of those ballplayers back there was—are you—if you're asking whether I can beat you at H–O–R–S–E, the answer is yes. [*Laughter*]

Photo With the President

Q. All right. How you doing, Mr. President? My name is Dwan McMillan. My question is, my teammates and I, we want a picture with you before you leave. [*Laughter*] Can you make that happen, Mr. President?

The President. I think that's within my executive powers, so—[*applause*].

All right, it is a young woman's turn—right there, in the white shirt. Yes.

Immigration Reform/Arizona Illegal Immigration Enforcement Legislation

Q. Welcome, Mr. President. My name is Julie Morales, and I'm a student here at Indian Hills. I thank you for health care, but I know you have your plate full. I have a lot of undocumented friends, and immigration has been in the news for many, many years, and nothing has been done about it. And I was just wondering what your plan was for our undocumented workers, who has established our country?

The President. Well, here's my plan. And by the way, it's not my plan; I think it's going to have to be a plan where all Americans arrive at a commonsense consensus about responsibility when it comes to immigration.

Now, this is a controversial issue, but the truth is, if you talk to most Americans, they probably have a similar concept, and that is, most Americans recognize we're a nation of immigrants. Very few of you are Native Americans, which means most of you came here from someplace else or your families came here or your great-great-great-grandparents came here from somewhere else. So we are a nation of immigrants. We were founded on immigration. That's what that whole Plymouth Rock thing was about—immigration. So we're a nation of immigrants.

But we're also a nation of laws. And we expect people to follow the rules if they want to immigrate to this country. That's only fair, all right? So the challenge we have now is, how do we set up a system where, yes, we're welcoming new people to our country—which, by the way, makes us stronger. One of the things that is a huge advantage for America, compared to countries like Europe, is actually, we constantly are replenishing ourselves with hungry, driven people who are coming here, and they want to work, and they start a business, and our population is younger and more dynamic. And that's a good thing. So we want immigration, but how do we do it in a lawful way so that people who are waiting in line back in their home countries, doing it the right way, aren't being punished, and we've got some basic control of our borders? And the problem is, we don't have that right now. The system is broken.

So ever since I was campaigning here in Iowa, I've been saying the same thing. What I want is a system in which we secure our borders—and by the way, this administration has made significant progress securing our borders—we start cracking down on companies that are purposely hiring undocumented workers to undercut the wages of U.S. workers, because the truth is, as long as there are employers who want to exploit undocumented workers, pay them lower wages, no benefits, no overtime, et cetera, people are going to continue to come. I mean, we can try to build as many fences as we want at the border, but the fact is, if folks are making $2 a day back home and they can make $10 an hour here, they're going to come here, unless we make sure that employers are doing what's lawful. So we've got to take that seriously.

If we do those two things, though, we're still going to have 11, 12, 13 million undocumented workers in this country. And not all of them are going to go home. I mean, you can—this

law that just passed in Arizona, which I think is a poorly conceived law—you can try to make it really tough on people who look like they, quote, unquote, "might be illegal immigrants." One of the things that the law says is local officials are allowed to ask somebody who they have a suspicion might be a illegal immigrant for their papers. But you can imagine, if you are a Hispanic American in Arizona, your great-grandparents may have been there before Arizona was even a State, but now suddenly, if you don't have your papers and you took your kid out to get ice cream, you're going to be harassed. That's something that could potentially happen. That's not the right way to go.

And we can try to crack down, but the truth is, that 11 to 12 million folks, we're going to have to make them take responsibility for what they did. And the way to do that is to actually make them register, make them pay a fine, make them learn English, make them take responsibility for the fact that they broke the law. You make them get in the back of the line. But you also say, okay, if you do it the right way, then you have a chance to become an American citizen. And if we have that kind of comprehensive approach, then we can once again be a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants.

Now, I've been pushing for this. I want it to happen. The only way it's going to happen is if Democrats and Republicans come together and do this, because this is such a volatile issue. I will bring the majority of Democrats to the table in getting this done, but I've got to have some help from the other side. I've got to have some help from the other side because we're not going to solve this problem—it can be exploited for political purposes, and the only way to rise above the politics and actually solve the problem once and for all is to make sure that it's a bipartisan effort. And that's what we're pushing for. I hope that we can get it done sometime soon.

And I'm going to continue to advocate on behalf of finally fixing the system so that we don't have either the kind of bad laws that we've seen in Arizona, or alternatively, we've got half a million illegal folks coming into Arizona without any control. Neither of those things is sensible. And we can have a commonsense law, but we're going to have to work together across party lines to make it happen.

All right? Thank you.

It's a guy's turn. Let's see. Let's see. All right—well, all right, this gentleman right here. Do I need to give you my mike? All right, here. Are you going to give it back? [*Laughter*]

Federal Funding for State and Local Projects/ National Debt

Q. Hi, I'm Joe Helfenberger from Ottumwa. I work for the city of Ottumwa. We're under an EPA orders to have $160 million of sewer remediation for combined sewer separation. We're at the highest poverty level in Iowa. We're very much pro cleaning up the environment. We just need more time. We need some financial assistance; we need some assistance through the Federal Government. It used to fund sewers at 83 percent that—in the eighties, they got rid of that, so we need help.

The President. Well, let me say, one of the great things about being President is you've got these wonderful advisers. And one of my best advisers is Tom Vilsack, my Secretary of Agriculture, who has the benefit of being a Governor. And I've got a lot of Governors in my—former Governors in my Cabinet because Governors can't always play some of these political games they play in Washington. It's like being a mayor; it's like the rubber hits the road. It doesn't matter whether you're a Democrat or a Republican; at some point, garbage got to get picked up, sewer systems have to work, et cetera.

Now, Tom, very early on in our administration, we talked about how we could deal with water management, waste water management. And so in the Recovery Act, we actually funded billions of dollars of projects across the country because we know that it's hard for a lot of local communities to be able to get done what they want to do, but they just don't have the money to do.

Now, I don't know the specifics around what's happening in Ottumwa—$160 million sounds like a lot of money to me, and I'm sure it sounds like a lot of money to you. You're still looking kind of sad about the whole thing—[*laughter*]—like, where am I going to find this money?

So what I—I'll make a commitment to you to have my team investigate exactly what it is that needs to be cleaned up, and is there some way that we can put this on a better funding track. All right?

Let me make a broader point about this, though, because this will bear on how we think about our Federal budget in the future. Everybody dislikes Washington right now, and everybody wants to lower their taxes. Everybody hates waste in government. But at the same time, you know, government does some important things, like helping to make sure you've got clean drinking water and that your roads aren't full of potholes and that—[*laughter*]—well, it hasn't—I'm not saying it's always succeeding, now. [*Laughter*] I think I touched on a sore spot here—[*laughter*]—Mr. Mayor. The—making sure that we've got teachers in our classrooms that are getting decently paid; so—making sure that Social Security is going to be there for the next generation; making sure that Medicare is solvent so that our elderly are able to get proper care.

So I just want everybody to remember this, because we're going to have a very tough debate about how to bring down the deficits. We are going to have to bring down our deficits. We can't sustain it. And by the way, the steps I've taken—a 3-year freeze on discretionary spending, Pentagon reform where we're eliminating weapons systems that even the Pentagon doesn't want, scouring the budget to end programs that don't work—even with all the steps that those—that we're taking on that front, that will pay, by the way, for everything that we did during the Recovery Act. So everything that's happened on my watch, we will have paid for—we will have paid for.

But I inherited a structural deficit that is going to get worse in the years to come because our population is getting older, health care costs have been going up faster than inflation, more people are on Social Security, more people are on Medicare, and we've had two wars that we've been fighting. And if you combine all that, plus the interest on that debt, if we don't bring it under control, we really are going to be burdening the next generation in a way that's not acceptable.

So as this debate unfolds, I just want everybody to pay attention to what folks are saying, because a lot of times politicians will tell you, "I'm going to cut your taxes; I'm going to lower the deficit; I'm going to expand Medicare." They'll tell you—essentially, they'll tell you whatever it is they want you to hear. And you should ask every politician, when they say that they're going to balance the budget and deal with the deficit, what exactly are you going to cut? What spending are you willing to eliminate? Are you going to eliminate funding for sewers? Are you going to reduce the cost of Medicare?

Because there's no such thing as a free lunch. And I think a lot of times the way it's talked about in Washington, folks make it out as if, well, if we could just eliminate the waste and abuse in Washington, somehow that would fix the problem. Well, no, we're going to have some tough choices.

Let me give you one example. Everybody thinks that foreign aid—if we just kind of stopped foreign aid, that that would be a big help. Let me tell you, foreign aid is less than 1 percent of our budget—1 percent. Some people say, well, if we eliminated pork projects, earmarks, right? Now, some of these earmarks are kind of ridiculous, so we should eliminate them just because we don't have any money that we should be wasting. But let me tell you, earmarks are only about 1 percent of the budget.

So we can eliminate all foreign aid, all earmarks, and we'd still have a huge problem because most of our budget goes to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, defense spending. Those things account for about 70 percent of the budget. Everything else we do is only about 30 percent of the budget, everything from national forests to the Agriculture Department to student loans. All that stuff is only—is less than a third of our budget.

So this is going to be a tough bunch of choices that we've got to make here. And I just want everybody to be prepared so that when you hear the debate over the next couple of years about how we are going to reduce our deficit, understand, we're not going to do it overnight. It would be, in fact, irresponsible

for us to try to do it just in 1 year or a few years. We're going to have to do it over a stretch of several years, and we're going to have to make some tough choices. All right?

I've got time for two more questions. Yes, I noticed I didn't get a lot of clapping about the whole "we're going to have the hard choices" thing, because—[*applause*]—you know—but remember when I was running for office, I said, I will not just tell you what you want to hear, I will tell you what you need to hear. And you needed to hear that we're going to have some tough choices around our deficit.

All right, I've got two more questions. I'm going to call on this young lady right here. Yes, you. [*Laughter*]

President's Visit to Jerry's Family Restaurant in Mount Pleasant, IA

Q. My name is Tara Howard, and I'm in fifth grade and go to Cardinal Elementary.

The President. Well, it's good to see you.

Q. And my friend wanted me to ask you what kind of pie you had. And my Grandma Beaman says hi to Tom Vilsack. [*Laughter*]

The President. Okay, there you go. I had rhubarb pie. And it was some tasty pie. By the way, some of you heard that my cholesterol had gone up. It's because of pie. [*Laughter*] The White House—along with that Air Force One, they have really good pie at the White House. [*Laughter*] So that's one of the other perks that you have to—that you get with being President.

All right. I've got—it is a gentleman's turn. All right, this looks—I'm going to call on a student. This looks like a student right here—this guy right here. You—well, no, no, no, the guy beneath you. I'm sorry. I didn't see you. You looked older. [*Laughter*] I'm sorry, the guy in front of you—well, he sat down. There you go.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. No, remember I said, boy, girl, boy, girl. Go ahead.

Education

Q. President Obama, Joe Tafta. I'm an 11th grader at Ottumwa High School. I don't know if you know this or not, but Ottumwa High School has the highest dropout rate in the State of Iowa.

Q. I'm Bobby. We had this planned out: two-part question.

The President. Cool. [*Laughter*]

Q. My mom is a teacher at the high school too—just thought I'd bring that up. She's—well, we were just wondering, you talk a lot in the Recovery Act about how you will get—you will have student loans for kids that graduate high school to go to college.

The President. Right.

Q. But what about the kids that do not graduate high school?

The President. That's a great question. First of all, thank your mom for teaching because—where is she? Is she here? Oh, I'm sorry.

Q. Actually, she's in the OEA, and she won one ticket, and she's like, well, I saw you when you were here last, so she gave her ticket.

The President. Well, that's so nice. Look at mom.

Q. And when you were here last time, she helped interview you for the Courier—Mary Orman. I doubt you remember her, but——

The President. I do.

Q. Okay. All right.

The President. Tell Mary I said hello.

Q. All right.

The President. All right. [*Laughter*]

Q. Oh, and then, President Obama, she's wondering, if I get the chance, could we—me and Joe get a picture with you too? [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, I don't know about that. [*Laughter*]

Q. Aww! Thanks.

The President. But I'll answer your question. You're absolutely right that we can do a great job financing community colleges and student loans and college educations, but if we haven't dealt with K through 12, we're going to have problems. And the truth is, we're slipping behind. We used to have by far the best education system in the world, by a huge margin. And we don't now. I mean, we've got some of the—we have—we still have the best universities in the world, the best college system in the world, and we have some of the best schools in the world. But our overall education system is kind of in

the middle of the pack in terms of advanced countries, especially in science and math, which is a huge problem because science and math is the future. That's what's going to allow you to innovate.

So I've got this terrific Secretary of Education named Arne Duncan, and one of the things that Arne and I have been trying to do is to figure out how do we jump-start more educational excellence.

A couple of ways we've done it. First of all, the Recovery Act was also the largest investment in education by the Federal Government in history, above and beyond whatever annual funding folks get. And it helped to pay for new classrooms and new laboratories and teacher training programs and a whole host of things.

But what we have to do moving forward is, number one, really emphasize teaching. We've got to treat our teachers better. We've got to give them more professional development. We've got to pay them higher salaries. We've got to attract more young people to go into teaching. We've got to put a bigger emphasis on math and science teaching. So we've just got to give teachers a lot more support than they're getting right now.

Now, in exchange, teachers do have to be accountable. I don't want teachers to be judged just by how their kids do on a standardized test because if teachers get kids who come from poorer backgrounds, they may do worse on the test; it doesn't mean that's a bad teacher. But there have to be measures of how kids do year to year, even if it's not just testing, but other measures that make sure that we're seeing improvement in student performance over time.

So that's the bargain that we're trying to strike with teachers: more support for teachers, more professional development, better pay, better incentives; but also, we want to make sure that teachers help to shape an accountability system, so our kids we know are doing well. That's going to be the single most important thing we can do.

And we are going to—and we set up something called Race to the Top, which is a competitive fund where we say to local school districts and States, you know what, if you can come up with great ways to train teachers, great ways to hold the school system accountable, you're focusing on not just the best students, but also the low-performing students, if you do these things that we know work in terms of reform, then we're going to give you a little bit of extra money, a little bit of incentive. We're going to allow you to compete for excellence, not compete for mediocrity.

And so far, we've seen a couple of States win these Race to the Top awards, and it would be great if Ottumwa decided to apply. So you might want to talk to your Governor, Chet Culver, and see if we can get some extra money in the Ottumwa school district.

Last thing I'm going to say, and this is actually important not only about education, but about how we're going to succeed as a nation in this new century. We can have the best teachers in the world, we can fund the best programs in the world, we can give all the scholarships in the world, but if parents aren't parenting their kids and emphasizing the importance of learning and education, then it's not going to make any difference. That's the key.

So I want everybody here—as parents, as community members, as church members—to know that if we're supporting our kids and we are instilling the values of responsibility and hard work and excellence and second place isn't good enough, that's how America got built, that's how we're going to build up our education system, that's how we're going to improve our economy. Government can only do so much. We're going to be there to partner with you, but you're going to have to make it happen.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:28 p.m. at Indian Hills Community College. In his remarks, he referred to Morgan Hoenig, owner, Mogo-Organic; and President Hu Jintao of China. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

Memorandum on Delegation of Certain Functions Under Section 1232 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010
April 27, 2010

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense

Subject: Delegation of Certain Functions Under Section 1232 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 301 of title 3, United States Code, I hereby delegate to you the functions and authority conferred upon the President by section 1232 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 (Public Law 111–84), to make the specified report to the Congress.

You are authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 28, but was not received for publication in the *Federal Register*.

Remarks at POET Biorefining in Macon, Missouri
April 28, 2010

Hello, everybody. Hello, POET. Thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. It is wonderful to be here. It is wonderful to be in Missouri. It is wonderful to be this close to my house. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank POET for their great hospitality today. I want to make a few acknowledgements. We've got some special guests: first of all, your outstanding Governor of the great State of Missouri, Jay Nixon; the mayor of Macon, Doug Bagler [Dale Bagley]*; and one of my favorite people, who I believe is going to be doing outstanding things, has already done great work as secretary of state, and I think is going to be an outstanding—eventually—United States Senator as well, Robin Carnahan. Your attorney general, Chris Koster, is here. The Missouri Director of Agriculture, Dr. Jon Hagler, is here.

The CEO of POET, Jeff Broin, is here—there's Jeff; the president of POET-Macon, John Eggleston; and the general manager, who gave me an outstanding tour, Steve Burnett. Where did Steve go? There he is, back there.

Also in the house is the Secretary of Agriculture for the United States of America, former Governor of Iowa, Tom Vilsack.

Well, thank you so much for the warm welcome. It is good to be in Missouri. It is good to be with all of you here at POET.

Steve just gave Secretary Vilsack and myself a tour of this outstanding facility, and I know Steve is very proud of the anniversary that's going to be coming up. Ten years ago next month, this plant produced its first gallon of ethanol. And Steve was there, and others were there, and that's something to be very proud of. Today, you've got 45 employees who are producing 46 million gallons a year. So that means one of you is overachieving. [*Laughter*] Congratulations to all of you.

I came here today, and I visited Iowa yesterday, because there's a lot that towns here in the heartland, here in Middle America, can teach the rest of the country. There's certainly a lot that you can share with Washington, including some common sense. So I wanted to talk with you about your communities, what you're going through, what you're experiencing, not only the economic pain, which I think a lot of us have

* White House correction.

heard about and experienced, but also the economic opportunity, the economic possibilities.

Lately, we've seen some welcome news around the country. After 2 hard years, our economy is growing again, and our markets are climbing again, and our businesses are beginning to create jobs again. But when you come out to Macon and surrounding areas, whether it's in Iowa or Illinois or Missouri or Kansas or other parts of the heartland, you understand that the recovery hasn't reached everybody yet. Times are tough out here. In some places, times have been tough for a very long time.

In the 2 years that I spent running for President and visiting towns like Macon, a lot of folks talked about how the American Dream seemed like it was starting to slip away, it was getting harder and harder to reach. Families were having a tougher time getting ahead. Farmers were having a tough time getting by. Worse yet, many young people had been convinced that the only way that they could make a go of it was if they moved someplace else.

But success stories like POET, what you've achieved here, prove that that doesn't have to be the case. And I believe that your company and companies like yours can replicate this success all across the country.

Since I took office, we had to take a series of steps to rescue our economy from the immediate crisis. Now, we were going through the worst crisis since the Great Depression, and we had to make sure that we didn't slip into a second great depression. And some of those decisions we made weren't popular, but they were the right ones. And now the economy is stabilizing.

Here's the thing, though: I didn't run for President just to get back to where we were, I ran for President so that we could move forward and finally start dealing with some of the problems that we've had for a very long time. I want our economy to be on a new foundation for long-term growth and prosperity and to create the kinds of conditions so that folks can work hard to finally get ahead.

That means making our schools more competitive and our colleges and our community colleges more affordable to young people. That means health insurance reform that gives families and businesses more choice and more competition and better protection from some of the worst abuses of the insurance industry. It means commonsense reforms that prevent the irresponsibility of a few people on Wall Street wreaking havoc all across Main Street, all across America. And it means igniting a new clean energy economy that generates good jobs right here in the United States and starts freeing ourselves from dependence on foreign oil.

Now, for decades, we've talked about doing this. For decades, we've talked about how that dependence on oil from other countries threatens our economy. But usually our will to act kind of rises or falls depending on the price of gas at the pump. We've talked about how it threatens future generations, even as we witnessed some funny things going on in terms of our climate, and recognizing the environmental costs of relying on fossil fuels, but frankly, we always said, we'll get to it tomorrow. We talked about how it threatened our security, but we've grown actually more dependent on foreign oil every single year since Richard Nixon started talking about this danger of dependency on foreign oil.

And as we talked about it, other nations were acting: China, Spain, countries that recognized that the country that leads the clean energy economy will be the country that leads the 21st-century economy. And they've made serious investments to win that race and the jobs that come with it.

Well, I've said before, I don't accept second place for the United States of America. I want us to be first in wind power, first in solar power, and I want us to be first when it comes to biodiesel and the technologies that are being developed in places like POET.

And that's why my energy security plan has been one of the top priorities of my administration since the day I took office. We began early last year by making the largest investment in clean energy in our Nation's history. It's an investment that we expect will create or save up to 700,000 jobs across America by the end of 2012, jobs manufacturing next-generation batteries for next-generation vehicles, jobs upgrading a smarter, stronger power grid,

jobs doubling the capacity to generate renewable energy from sources like sun and wind and biofuels, just like you do here.

And that investment was part of the Recovery Act. It included $800 million in funding for ethanol fueling infrastructure, biorefinery construction, advanced biofuels research to help us reach the goal that I've set, which is to more than triple America's biofuels production in the next 12 years. That is a goal that we can achieve, and it's being worked on right here at POET. And we're very proud of that.

I've also created a biofuels working group led by Secretary Vilsack, our Energy Secretary, Steven Chu, and our EPA Administrator, Lisa Jackson. And they're working to promote this generation of biofuels and help you deliver on the next generation of biofuels.

And I was talking to your CEO about the incredible progress that's already being made around cellulosic ethanol and how potentially we can have facilities that are producing cellulosic right here, right next to the existing plant, and create overall energy efficiencies that we just have not seen before and effectively compete with biofuels from anyplace in the world, using brand new technologies, in part that are being developed right here.

So I may be the President these days, but I want to remind everybody, I was the Senator from Illinois. I didn't just discover the merits of biofuels like ethanol when I first hopped on the campaign bus. I was telling Steve, this was not the first ethanol plant I've visited. And I believe in the potential of what you're doing right here to contribute to our clean energy future, but also to our rural economies.

By the way, so does our military. Some of you may have seen just last week, the Navy tested a fighter jet, which was named the Green Hornet. It is the first plane ever to fly faster than the speed of sound while running on a mix of half biofuel. I actually saw the plane myself when I visited Andrews Air Force Base, and I have to say, it's pretty cool.

So there shouldn't be any doubt that renewable, homegrown fuels are a key part of our strategy for a clean energy future, a future of new industries, new jobs in towns like Macon, and new independence.

Here at POET, I believe that you're doing more than just helping stake America's claim on our future, you're staking Macon's claim on America's future. And I'm committed to making sure that communities like this one have a bright future of opportunity going forward. And I pledge to work with you and the great folks at the State level, like Governor Nixon, our Secretary of Agriculture, all of us are going to be collaborating day in, day out to make sure that you're successful and that we continue to build on the outstanding work.

Ten years from now, I want us to look back and say that the first 10 years were nothing, that the next 10 years were even better. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:06 p.m.

Remarks in Quincy, Illinois
April 28, 2010

The President. Hello, everybody. It's good to be home. It is good to be back in Quincy. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. It is good to be back in Quincy.

We've got some special guests here I want to acknowledge: the outstanding Governor of the great State of Illinois, Patrick Quinn, is here—thanks, Patrick; your fine mayor, John Spring, give him a call—a big round of applause; Attorney General Lisa Madigan; treasurer and soon-to-be Senator, Alexi Giannoulias; secretary of state and tumbler supreme, Jesse White.

So I miss you guys. You know, now, being President is nice. [*Laughter*] You know, you got—you live above the store, so it's a really short commute. [*Laughter*] There's a nice plane. But one of the toughest things about being President is I don't get a chance to come home as much I'd like and visit with all of you like I used to. I see a lot of familiar faces in the crowd here.

Now, part of the problem is, is that when I travel now it kind of causes a ruckus. [*Laughter*] I do remember, though, the last time I was here—I think it was in this building—that we were filling up sandbags, weren't we? And I still remember that day because it was the picture of what America is about. You had people from all different walks of life, the whole community coming together. Everybody was working hard, everybody knew that there was a challenge coming from the potential flooding, but everybody was in good spirits because they figured, if we're all working together then there's no reason why we can't handle this. We've handled things before. And that's the American spirit on display, and that's the spirit of Quincy and the spirit of Illinois.

So it's just good to be reminded of that and to come back and spend some time with you all. And we spent a couple of days in Iowa and Missouri and now back here. [*Applause*] Yay, Missouri. How about Iowa? Have we got some Iowans here? [*Applause*] We got a few Iowans, but we are in Illinois. [*Applause*]

But over the last couple of days, we've talked to workers who are busy building wind blades for these big wind turbines and a biofuel plant, families and small-business owners trying to navigate through a tough economy, talking to farmers about what's happening to family farms in the region. And because it's folks like all of you and towns like Quincy that give America its heartbeat, that's why it's so important for me to be able to visit.

It's towns like this where working men and women built the American Dream with their bare hands. This is where our roots are. I just met a young man coming in; he says he's my cousin. Where—there he is, right there. [*Laughter*] Seriously, it's—what is it, fourth generation?

Audience member. Yes.

The President. Four generations back? I told him he was a little better looking than me. [*Laughter*] But all of us trace back to this experience of parents, grandparents, great-grandparents building this American Dream, not having much to begin with. And that dream is shared by every Illinoisan and every American, the chance to make a good living, to raise a healthy and secure family, and most of all, to give our kids opportunities that we didn't have ourselves.

Now, the truth is, is that sometimes it feels like that dream is slipping away. Times are tough in Quincy. Times are tough all across America. We've gone through the worst economy since the Great Depression. And even though our economy is growing again, even though our markets are climbing again and our businesses are finally beginning to create jobs again, there are a lot of folks who still aren't feeling that recovery in their own lives.

And I've heard their stories across the country. I've read it in the letters that I get each night. And a lot of them are worried about whether or not they're going to be able to sustain their dream for a better life. Many felt that way even before this most recent crisis, even before the economic storm of the past 2 years. Folks were living up to their responsibilities as best they could, working hard, looking after their families, giving back to their communities, but they kept on finding themselves getting hurt in this economy in ways they didn't expect. And part of it was because Washington and Wall Street weren't living up to their responsibilities.

Now, that's why I asked to be your President. That's why so many of you joined the campaign. You joined me because you believed we had it within our power to change things.

Audience members. Yeah!

The President. You figured we could solve the problems that had been holding us back year after year after year and focus on working Americans again. You believed we could keep the American Dream alive in our time and for all time. And so that's what I want to talk about today.

When I took office, we were in the midst of this historic financial crisis brought on by reckless and irresponsible speculation on Wall Street. That in turn had led to a recession that hammered Main Street across America. And you saw lost jobs and lost homes and lost businesses and downscaled dreams.

The first thing we had to do, then, was to mount an aggressive response to make sure

that this terrible recession didn't turn into another great depression. And let's face it, that required some tough steps to stabilize the financial sector. And some of those steps weren't popular. I knew they weren't popular. I've got pollsters. [*Laughter*] They told me, boy, that's really going to be unpopular. [*Laughter*] But we made those decisions anyway because the well-being of millions of Americans depended on them. Even if they didn't poll well, they were the right thing to do. It was the only thing we could do to take those steps.

So we took these steps to get America back on its feet. We aimed tax relief right at the middle class, the cornerstone of the American Dream. We made sure that we cut taxes for 95 percent of working families, put money in their pockets because they were experiencing hard times, fewer hours, or somebody in the family being laid off, making sure that they could still buy groceries and pay the bills to keep the economy afloat.

We cut taxes for small businesses. We cut taxes for first-time home buyers. We cut taxes for students and parents paying for college. And all of this—not only did this help those individual families, but it increased purchasing power and spending power for businesses all across the country. And then we extended unemployment benefits, and we made COBRA cheaper for folks who had lost their jobs. And then we helped give help to the States. And Pat Quinn will tell you, because of the Federal assistance that was provided, we averted some massive layoffs of teachers and police officers and firefighters all across the country.

So we did what it took to rescue our economy and spark its recovery. And that work goes on. And so I'm pleased to see that we were losing 700,000 jobs a month when I came into office, now we're gaining jobs. The economy was contracting, now the economy is growing. The markets are back. We're making progress. We're moving in the right direction.

But keep in mind, I didn't run for President just to get back to where we were when we started. I want us to do better than we were doing. I want folks to have more opportunity. I want people to have more and better jobs. And I want our young people to be getting better educations and more access to college.

It's time to rebuild our economy on a new foundation so that we've got real and sustained growth. It's time to extend opportunity to every corner of Main Street, in every city and every town and every county in America, so that young people don't feel like they've got to move someplace else to make their way. They can stay right here in Quincy. They can stay in Monroe. They can stay in Macon. They can stay in Fort Madison.

It's time to create conditions so that Americans who work hard can gain ground again. And they don't have to take out a bunch of credit card debt. They don't have to endanger their long-term financial future. And that's what—that's at the heart of all our efforts.

It's why we made the biggest investment in clean energy in our history, creating middle class jobs in middle America that harness the wind and the Sun and biofuels, that won't be shipped away, jobs that will stay right here in the United States of America and create energy independence so we don't have to import as much oil.

It's why we took on the special interests and reformed the student loan system so that it works for students, not bankers. I don't know if people paid attention to this because we were having such a big debate around health care; people may have missed this. The way the student loan system was working, the Federal Government was guaranteeing these loans, but the banks were still taking billions of dollars of profits out of the student loan program. And my attitude is, well, if we're guaranteeing them, then where's the risk? So why—what are you getting paid for?

So we said, we'll just lend the money directly to the students. And that saved tens of billions of dollars in wasteful spending that we're now reinvesting in making college more affordable and upgrading America's community colleges, so that every young person in America can get ahead in the 21st century.

And yes, Quincy, that's why we finally passed health reform in America, reform that will begin to end some of the worst practices in the insurance industry this year. So this year, they're

going to—they will have to stop dropping you when you get sick. This year, children with preexisting conditions, they've got to be able to buy insurance. This year, some of these lifetime limits that mean that you got insurance but you still end up being bankrupt, those practices are going to end.

And in a few years, millions of families and small-business owners are going to have more choice, more competition. You're going to be able to purchase the same kind of high-quality, affordable care that Members of Congress get. And you know that's going to be pretty good. You know they're going to give themselves good insurance. You're going to be able to buy it too.

And by the way, this reform will reduce our deficit by more than $1 trillion. And listen, don't—you know, this notion—I know the debate was contentious. But the truth of the matter is, since I've been here, I've already met—I was in Mount Pleasant, Iowa, met a woman—[*laughter*]—met a woman at Jerry's—you know Jerry's, right? And this is a restaurant there, and met a woman and she said—she came up and she said, "My husband is self-employed. I'm a homemaker. We both have preexisting conditions. We need help now." And I told her, "Well, this is exactly why we fought so hard for health care reform." And then today I met a woman who had breast cancer, and she was wondering how soon can we start moving on some of these programs inside the health care legislation.

This isn't some abstraction. Sometimes, the folks who were fighting us, they made it sound as if, oh, he just wants big Government, this—no. I just want people to be able to not go bankrupt and lose their house when they get sick. I just want them not to have—see their premiums doubled. I don't want them to be taken advantage of by insurance companies. I want you to get a fair deal and a fair shake. And that's part of my job as President of the United States of America.

The President. Now——

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you back.

Now, speaking of you getting a fair shake, that's why we need good old commonsense Wall Street reform. And we need it today. We don't need it next year. We don't need to do another study and examine it. We need it now.

And in case you're wondering, let me just take a minute to explain why it's important to you. The crisis we went through, it wasn't part of the normal economic cycle. What happened was you had some people—not all people—there's some very decent people here, but—who are in the financial sector—but you had some people on Wall Street who took these unbelievable risks with other people's money.

Audience member. Damn. [*Laughter*]

The President. They made bets. They were making bets on what was going to happen in the housing market, and they would create these derivatives and all these instruments that nobody understood. But it was basically operating like a big casino. And it was producing big profits and big bonuses for them, but it was all built on shaky economics and some of these subprime loans that had been given out. And because we did not have commonsense rules in place, those irresponsible practices came awfully close to bringing down our entire economy and millions of dreams along with it.

We had a system where some on Wall Street could take these risks without fear of failure, because they keep the profits when it was working, and as soon as it went south, they expected you to cover their losses. So it was one of those heads, they tail—tails, you lose.

So they failed to consider that behind every dollar that they traded, all that leverage they were generating, acting like it was Monopoly money, there were real families out there who were trying to finance a home or pay for their child's college or open a business or save for retirement. So what's working fine for them wasn't working for ordinary Americans. And we've learned that clearly. It doesn't work out fine for the country. It's got to change.

Now, what we're doing—I want to be clear here, we're not trying to push financial reform because we begrudge success that's fairly earned. I mean, I do think at a certain point you've made enough money. [*Laughter*] But part of the American way is you can just keep on making it if you're providing a good prod-

uct or you're providing a good service. We don't want people to stop fulfilling the core responsibilities of the financial system to help grow the economy.

I've said this before. I've said this on Wall Street just last week. I believe in the power of the free market. And I believe in a strong financial system. And when it's working right, financial institutions, they help make possible families buying homes and businesses growing and new ideas taking flight. An entrepreneur may have a great idea, but he may need to borrow some money to make it happen. It would be hard for a lot of us to buy a house—our first house, at least—if we weren't able to take out a mortgage.

So there's nothing wrong with a financial system that helps the economy expand. And there are a lot of good people in the financial industry who are doing things the right way. And it's in our interests when those firms are strong and when they're healthy.

But some of these institutions that operated irresponsibly, they're not just threatening themselves. They threaten the whole economy, and they threaten your dreams, your prospects, everything that you worked so hard to build.

So we just want them to operate in a way that's fair and honest and in the open, so that we don't have to go through what we've already gone through. We want to make sure the financial system doesn't just work for Wall Street, but it works for Main Street too. It works for Quincy. It works for Mount Pleasant. It works for Macon and Fort Madison.

Now, let me explain to you what this reform should look like, because one of the things you discover when you get to Washington is, what's black is white and what's up is down and sometimes people will——

Audience member. Lie.

The President. I didn't say lie, but—[*laughter*]—they will tell stories about what's going on. So let me just be very clear in terms of what we're proposing on financial reform. First—and I know this is important to you because it's important to me—we're going to make sure the American taxpayer is never again on the hook when a Wall Street firm fails. Never again. We don't want to see another bailout. That's what this reform does.

Now, you've got some—you had some who were saying, cynically, just claiming the opposite, that somehow this was a bill that institutionalized bailouts. What this bill did was it said, no, if you have a firm on Wall Street that fails, the financial industry is going to pay, not taxpayers. So a vote for reform is a vote to end taxpayer-funded bailouts once and for all. If a crisis like this again happens, financial firms are going to foot the bill. That's point number one.

Point number two: We're going to close the loopholes that allowed derivatives and all these other large, risky deals that don't make a lot of economic sense and that could threaten our entire economy. We want to bring those deals out into the—out of the dark alleys of our financial system into the light of day, so that everybody knows exactly what's happening, what risks are being taken—investors, shareholders, everybody knows what's going on. That's the second thing.

Number three, this reform is going to give you more power because we're going to put in place the strongest consumer financial protections in history. Because—and the reason this is important—this crisis wasn't just the result of what happened on Wall Street. It also happened because there were a lot of decisions by folks out on Main Street who were taking out mortgages they didn't understand, credit cards they didn't understand, auto loans that weren't a good deal. Some took on obligations they couldn't afford, but millions of others were deceived or misled by shifting terms and confusing conditions and forests of fine print.

And your attorney general, Lisa Madigan, has been fighting on behalf of consumers in this State, and she knows how badly we need these protections. In fact, Lisa and a bunch of other attorney generals came to testify on behalf of the need for these consumer protection bills because they see this stuff in their offices every day. And it's true all across the country.

Now, some argue that giving consumers more information in clear, concise ways is somehow going to stifle competition. I believe the opposite. See, I think if you know what you're buying, you can make a good decision.

And that means that the companies, instead of competing to see who can offer the most confusing products, companies will have to compete the old-fashioned way by offering the best product.

But that's not going to reduce innovation or competition. You just should be knowing what you're buying. It's like a lemon law, right? You don't want to go into the used car lot and get something where they've changed the odometer and put on a fresh coat of paint on some old beater and pretend like it's a new car. Well, it's the same thing with financial products. You should know what you're getting. All right, so that's the third thing.

Finally, we're going to give the people who own these companies, these financial companies—mainly investors and pension holders and shareholders like many of you—we want you to have more say in the way they're run. Because some of these firms, they've got these huge salaries, huge bonuses that create a perverse incentive to encourage people to take reckless risks. But if you own stock in these companies, you need to get some say in how they operate. You'll get to decide how managers are paid and how those firms operate. And that means that we'll actually increase the connection between Main Street and Wall Street. They'll be more accountable to you.

So that's the reform we've put forward. These are the reforms that we're putting forward: accountability, which means no more bailouts; closing loopholes—no more trading of things like derivatives in the shadows; consumer protections—no more deceptive products; a say on pay so that we give shareholders a more powerful voice. That's what we're trying to do.

Now, I don't think this should be a partisan issue. Everybody—Republicans and Democrats and Independents—were hurt by this crisis. So everybody should want to fix it. So I'm very pleased that after a few days of delay, it appears an agreement may be at hand to allow this debate to move forward on the Senate floor on this critical issue. I'm very pleased by that.

And I want to work with anyone—Republican or Democrat—who wants to pursue these reforms in good faith. And there can be some legitimate differences on certain issues, but the bottom line is, consumers have to be protected. We have to end bailouts. We've got to make sure that these trading practices are out in the open. We've got to make sure that people have a say in terms of how these firms operate so they're more accountable.

So as long as we're adhering to those clear principles, then I feel okay. What I don't want is a deal made that is written by the financial industry lobbyists. We've had enough of that. We've had enough of that. I want to listen to what they have to say, but I don't want them writing the bill. I don't want Democrats and Republicans agreeing to a bill written by them, for them. I want a bill that's written for you, for the American people.

So we're going to see how this debate unfolds. We're going to get this done. And we're going to get it done because you demand it. It's been 2 years since this crisis, born on Wall Street, slammed into Main Street with its full fury. And while things aren't nearly back to normal out here, they're getting back to normal pretty quick up there. Some in Washington think this debate is moving too fast. They think, well, this is kind of a political game, let's see how this whole thing can play to our advantage in November.

See, that's not how I play. I've been calling for better rules on Wall Street since 2007, before this crisis happened. So I don't think we're moving too fast. I think we've been moving too slow. It's time to get this done. And I don't think you want to see us wait for another year or 2 years. I don't think you think Washington is moving too fast. I think you want to get this done.

You shouldn't have to wait another day for the protections from some of the practices that got us into this mess. We can't let the recovery that's finally beginning to take hold fall prey to a whole new round of recklessness. If we don't learn the lessons of this crisis, we doom ourselves to repeat it. And I refuse to let that happen. So the time for reform is now.

Quincy, let me just say this. Through all the noise and the lobbyists and the partisanship, and I know sometimes you're watching TV and

saying, jeesh, everybody is yelling and hollering, and why are they so mad? But this debate comes down to a simple choice: Are we going to go down the same road, where irresponsibility of a few can put millions of families at risk and stick taxpayers with a tab?

Audience members. No!

The President. Or are we going to protect consumers and strengthen our financial system and put rules in place that keep this from happening ever again? Are we going to give in to the special interests, or are we going to score another victory for the American people? Are we going to stick with the status quo, or are we going to bring about fundamental change that makes things work for ordinary Americans?

We've got the power to do something about this. That's all it comes down to, the will to act. I still believe we can come together, just like you all came together during those floods, filling those sandbags, everybody joining together, everybody breaking a little sweat, everybody helping out. That's how America got built.

We are not powerless in the face of our challenges. We don't quit when things get tough. We're not afraid. When something happens, we come together. We move forward. We act. We are Americans; our destiny is written by us, not for us. And if we remember that and summon that spirit once again, we're going to strengthen our economy today and tomorrow and restore security to the middle class.

That's what we're fighting for: the American Dream right here in Quincy, right here in Illinois, all across the country.

God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:44 p.m. in the Oakley Lindsay Center. In his remarks, he referred to Palmyra, IL, resident Michael Kite, who spoke with the President before the event.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Fiscal Responsibility Legislation

April 28, 2010

Today the House took another critical step toward increased fiscal responsibility by passing the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act. This bipartisan legislation will help save taxpayer dollars by reining in wasteful overpayments from the Federal Government to individuals, organizations, and contractors, the kind of unacceptable accounting mistakes that cost taxpayers $98 billion in 2009. This bill also puts in place more rigorous thresholds for when programs must be scrutinized for payment errors and expands the authority of Federal agencies to use private sector auditors to find and recapture Government overpayments. And it dramatically increases transparency and accountability in Government spending. In short, it changes business as usual in Washington.

I believe that we have a special responsibility to be wise stewards of Americans' hard-earned tax dollars. That's why last November, I issued an Executive order to curb improper payments by boosting transparency, holding agencies accountable, and creating strong incentives for compliance. And it's why this March, I signed an order calling on all Federal agencies to launch tough audits to recover some of the money lost to improper payments last year. I applaud the House for passing legislation today that supports these goals, and I hope that the Senate will take swift action to send a bill to my desk as soon as possible.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 3393. The memorandum of March 10 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

Remarks to the White House Press Pool and an Exchange With Reporters
April 28, 2010

The President. I am very pleased that the United States Senate has decided to proceed to the financial regulatory bill by unanimous consent. It is the right thing to do. And I want to reiterate what I said earlier, that this shouldn't have to be a partisan issue. Republicans, Democrats, Independents, everybody was hurt by the crisis on Wall Street. It is something that we can prevent with some better rules of the road. And I hope that we can get this done quickly, reconcile it with the work that was done over on the House side, and that I can sign this bill into law very soon. But I want to congratulate the Senate on making progress on an issue that's vital to everybody in the country.

All right?

Financial Regulatory Reform

Q. Sir, Goldman Sachs says that they didn't do anything wrong with their past dealings during the hearings. Do you have any response to that?

The President. I don't want to comment on a pending case that's been brought by an independent agency. I will say that I think most Americans would say that some of the behavior generally on Wall Street, even if it's legal, doesn't seem to serve much of an economic purpose and puts, as we've discovered, the entire economy at risk. And the more that we can make sure there's transparency, openness, clarity about how the financial system's working, the more that we have, for example, higher capital requirements, less leverage in the system, it may be a little boring, it may reduce bonuses for some of the players on Wall Street, but we'll end up having a safer, more secure financial system. And I think banks and other financial institutions can get back to making money the old-fashioned way, which is by lending it to companies to build businesses and create jobs and do all the things that we want our financial system to do.

Arizona's Illegal Immigration Enforcement Legislation/U.S. Border Security/Immigration Reform

Q. Mr. President, can your administration do something to mitigate the effects of the Arizona immigration law?

The President. Well, we're examining it now. But as I said at that town hall meeting yesterday, I understand people's frustrations about the border. If you've got hundreds of thousands of people coming in, not playing by the rules, that's a problem. And the Federal Government has been abdicating on its responsibilities for a very long time on this issue. That's why I've called for comprehensive immigration reform, and I want that to proceed, and I want it to be done on a bipartisan basis.

What I think is a mistake is when we start having local law enforcement officials empowered to stop people on the suspicion that they may be undocumented workers, because that carries a great amount of risk that core values that we all care about are breached. And it's not just—this isn't just my opinion. You've seen a number of very prominent Republicans say that this is a problem.

So I understand the frustration of people in Arizona and the border States. We've ramped up border security. We've put in a lot of resources since I've become President. Our enforcement actions are up. And in fact, I've been attacked by immigration rights groups for being too tough on that front. But obviously, we've still got to do more. We have to do more, though, in the context of a comprehensive plan that maintains our status as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. And this kinds—these kinds of shortcuts, I think, will end up polarizing the situation instead of solving the problem.

Supreme Court Nominations

Q. Is this one of the issues that's coming up in your discussions with some of the potential Supreme Court nominees?

The President. It is.

Q. Is immigration and the Arizona law something that's coming up in your discussions with possible nominees?

The President. I never ask Supreme Court nominees about specific cases that might go before them. I talk about their broader judicial philosophy.

Immigration Reform/Legislative Agenda

Q. Are you committed to pushing forward on immigration law this year?

The President. Well, I've made calls to Republicans to see if we can get them to join us. And this is a difficult issue. It generates a lot of emotions, and the politics are difficult. But I've been unwavering in saying what we need to do. I think that I can get a majority of Democrats to support a comprehensive approach. But I need some help on the Republican side. We had that kind of help a couple of years ago. Senator McCain was one of the leaders in that process. I gave him a lot of credit for it and still do.

And so the question is, can we get some movement on that front? Lindsey Graham has been in serious conversations with Senator Schumer. I appreciate his courage on that. And my hope is, is that we can get a working group that can move this forward so that we've got serious legislation that solves the border problem and solves the wide range of issues that we face under immigration reform in a way that can garner the support of the American people.

You notice in the town hall meeting yesterday, those folks aren't enthusiastic about illegal immigration. But when you lay it out for them, a sensible way of doing it—holding people who've broken the law responsible, securing our borders, but also recognizing we're not going to send millions of people back, many of whom have children who might be U.S. citizens, and that there should be a more sensible way of dealing with it—people understand that.

So it's a matter of political will. Now, look, we've gone through a very tough year, and I've been working Congress pretty hard, so I know there may not be an appetite immediately to dive into another controversial issue. There's still work that has to be done on energy, midterms are coming up, so I don't want us to do something just for the sake of politics that doesn't solve the problem. I want us to get together, get the best ideas on both sides, work this through, and when it's ready to go, let's move. But I think we need to start a process, at least, to open up a smarter, better discussion than the one that is raging right now.

Okay? Thank you, guys. One more. I'll give him the last question since this is his first ride on the plane.

Criteria for Supreme Court Nominations

Q. Senator Leahy's been talking a lot about conservative judicial activism, and I wonder if you see that as a frame through which the new Supreme Court nomination and confirmation will be considered. You've talked about understanding the——

The President. Well, I mean, here's what I will say. It used to be that the notion of a activist judge was somebody who ignored the will of Congress, ignored democratic processes, and tried to impose judicial solutions on problems instead of letting the process work itself through politically. And in the sixties and seventies, the feeling was, is that liberals were guilty of that kind of approach.

What you're now seeing, I think, is a conservative jurisprudence that oftentimes makes the same error. And I think rather than a notion of judicial restraint, which should apply both to liberals and conservative jurists, what you're seeing is arguments about original intent and other legal theories that end up giving judges an awful lot of power, in fact, sometimes more power than duly elected representatives.

And so I'm not looking at this particular judicial nomination through that prism alone, but I think it is important for us to understand that judicial—the concept of judicial restraint cuts both ways. And the core understanding of judicial restraint is, is that, generally speaking, we should presume that the democratic processes and laws that are produced by the House and the Senate and State legislatures, et cetera, and the administrative process that goes with it is afforded some deference as long as core constitutional values are observed.

But I think that in and of itself is not the only criteria by which I'm making selections on judges.

All right? Thank you, guys.

President's Visit to Illinois

Q. How do you think the trip went? How did the trip go?

The President. I thought it was fun. I thought it was great. And it was a reminder that sometimes there's a mismatch between the way politics are portrayed in Washington and how people are feeling.

I think it's a less toxic atmosphere. People are genuinely concerned about jobs, or they've got serious questions about how the new health care bill is going to work, what's happening with immigration, or other issues. But generally, I think what people are looking for is that their elected officials think about them first and foremost and are working hard. They realize that some of these problems are hard, that they're not going to be solved overnight. They just want to make sure that we're working on their behalf and not on behalf of either some ideological agenda or special interest in Washington. So I really enjoyed it. It took me back to my start in politics.

All right, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:52 p.m. aboard Air Force One en route to Andrews Air Force Base, MD.

Eulogy at a Funeral Service for Civil Rights Activist Dorothy I. Height
April 29, 2010

The President. Please be seated. Let me begin by saying a word to Dr. Dorothy Height's sister, Ms. Aldridge. To some she was a mentor, to all she was a friend, but to you she was family, and my family offers yours our sympathy for your loss.

We are gathered here today to celebrate the life and mourn the passing of Dr. Dorothy Height. It is fitting that we do so here, in our National Cathedral of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. Here in a place of great honor. Here in the House of God, surrounded by the love of family and of friends. The love in this sanctuary is a testament to a life lived righteously, a life that lifted other lives, a life that changed this country for the better over the course of nearly one century here on Earth.

Michelle and I didn't know Dr. Height as well, or as long, as many of you. We were reminded during a previous moment in the service, when you have a nephew who's 88—[*laughter*]—you've lived a full life.

But we did come to know her in the early days of my campaign. And we came to love her, as so many loved her. We came to love her stories. And we loved her smile. And we loved those hats—[*laughter*]—that she wore like a crown—regal. In the White House, she was a regular. She came by not once, not twice; 21 times she stopped by the White House. [*Laughter*] Took part in our discussions around health care reform in her final months.

Last February, I was scheduled to see her and other civil rights leaders to discuss the pressing problems of unemployment—Reverend Sharpton, Ben Jealous of the NAACP, Marc Morial of the National Urban League. Then we discovered that Washington was about to be blanketed by the worst blizzard in record—2 feet of snow.

So I suggested to one of my aides, we should call Dr. Height and say we're happy to reschedule the meeting. Certainly if the others come, she should not feel obliged. True to form, Dr. Height insisted on coming, despite the blizzard, never mind that she was in a wheelchair. She was not about to let just a bunch of men—[*laughter*]—in this meeting. It was only when the car literally could not get to her driveway that she reluctantly decided to stay home. But she still sent a message—[*laughter*]—about what needed to be done.

And I tell that story partly because it brings a smile to my face, but also because it captures the quiet, dogged, dignified persistence that all of us who loved Dr. Height came to know

so well, an attribute that we understand she learned early on.

Born in the capital of the old Confederacy, brought north by her parents as part of that great migration, Dr. Height was raised in another age, in a different America, beyond the experience of many. It's hard to imagine, I think, life in the first decades of that last century when the elderly woman that we knew was only a girl. Jim Crow ruled the South. The Klan was on the rise, a powerful political force. Lynching was all too often the penalty for the offense of black skin. Slaves had been freed within living memory, but too often, their children, their grandchildren remained captive, because they were denied justice and denied equality, denied opportunity, denied a chance to pursue their dreams.

The progress that followed, progress that so many of you helped to achieve, progress that ultimately made it possible for Michelle and me to be here as President and First Lady, that progress came slowly.

That progress came from the collective efforts of multiple generations of Americans. From preachers and lawyers and thinkers and doers, men and women like Dr. Height, who took it upon themselves, often at great risk, to change this country for the better. From men like W.E.B Du Bois and A. Philip Randolph, women like Mary McLeod Bethune and Betty Friedan, they're Americans whose names we know. They are leaders whose legacies we teach. They are giants who fill our history books. Well, Dr. Dorothy Height deserves a place in this pantheon. She too deserves a place in our history books. She too deserves a place of honor in America's memory.

Look at her body of work: desegregating the YWCA; laying the groundwork for integration on Wednesdays in Mississippi; lending pigs to poor farmers as a sustainable source of income; strategizing with civil rights leaders, holding her own, the only woman in the room, Queen Esther to this Moses generation, even as she led the National Council of Negro Women with vision and energy, vision and class.

But we remember her not solely for all she did during the civil rights movement. We remember her for all she did over a lifetime, behind the scenes, to broaden the movement's reach, to shine a light on stable families and tight-knit communities, to make us see the drive for civil rights and women's rights not as a separate struggle, but as part of a larger movement to secure the rights of all humanity, regardless of gender, regardless of race, regardless of ethnicity.

It's an unambiguous record of righteous work, worthy of remembrance, worthy of recognition. And yet one of the ironies is, is that year after year, decade in, decade out, Dr. Height went about her work quietly, without fanfare, without self-promotion. She never cared about who got the credit. She didn't need to see her picture in the papers. She understood that the movement gathered strength from the bottom up, those unheralded men and women who don't always make it into the history books but who steadily insisted on their dignity, on their manhood and womenhood. She wasn't interested in credit. What she cared about was the cause—the cause of justice, the cause of equality, the cause of opportunity—freedom's cause.

And that willingness to subsume herself, that humility and that grace, is why we honor Dr. Dorothy Height. As it is written in the Gospel of Matthew: "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." I don't think the author of the Gospel would mind me rephrasing: "whoever humbles herself will be exalted."

One of my favorite moments with Dr. Height—this is just a few months ago—we had decided to put up the Emancipation Proclamation in the Oval Office, and we invited some elders to share reflections of the movement. And she came, and it was a intergenerational event, so we had young children there as well as elders, and the elders were asked to share stories. And she talked about attending a dinner in the 1940s at the home of Dr. Benjamin Mays, then president of Morehouse College. And seated at the table that evening was a 15-year-old student, "a gifted child," as she described him, filled with a sense of purpose, who was trying to decide whether to enter medicine or law or the ministry.

And many years later, after that gifted child had become a gifted preacher—I'm sure he had been told to be on his best behavior—after he

led a bus boycott in Montgomery and inspired a nation with his dreams, he delivered a sermon on what he called "the drum major instinct," a sermon that said we all have the desire to be first, we all want to be at the front of the line.

The great test of a life, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, is to harness that instinct, to redirect it towards advancing the greater good, toward changing a community and a country for the better, toward doing the Lord's work.

I sometimes think Dr. King must have had Dorothy Height in mind when he gave that speech. For Dorothy Height met the test. Dorothy Height embodied that instinct. Dorothy Height was a drum major for justice, a drum major for equality, a drum major for freedom, a drum major for service. And the lesson she would want us to leave with today—a lesson she lived out each and every day—is that we can all be first in service. We can all be drum majors for a righteous cause. So let us live out that lesson. Let us honor her life by changing this country for the better as long as we are blessed to live. May God bless Dr. Dorothy Height and the Union that she made more perfect.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:40 a.m. at the Washington National Cathedral. In his remarks, he referred to Anthanette H. Aldridge, sister of the late Ms. Height; political activist Alfred C. Sharpton, Jr.; Benjamin T. Jealous, president and chief executive officer, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; and Marc H. Morial, president and chief executive officer, National Urban League.

Remarks Honoring the 2010 National and State Teachers of the Year
April 29, 2010

Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill

Good afternoon, everybody. Hello, everybody. Please have a seat. Welcome to the White House. Welcome to the Rose Garden. This is an extraordinary occasion, a beautiful day, appropriately so. So I hate to intrude on it, but before we begin, I do want to speak briefly to the American people about the recent BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

I've been receiving frequent briefings from members of my Cabinet and White House staff, including an update last night on the additional breach and another update this morning. And while BP is ultimately responsible for funding the cost of response and cleanup operations, my administration will continue to use every single available resource at our disposal, including, potentially, the Department of Defense, to address the incident.

Earlier today DHS Secretary Napolitano announced that this incident is of national significance, and the Department of Interior has announced that they will be sending SWAT teams to the Gulf to inspect all platforms and rigs. And I have ordered the Secretaries of Interior and Homeland Security as well as Administrator Lisa Jackson of the Environmental Protection Agency to visit the site on Friday to ensure that BP and the entire U.S. Government is doing everything possible not just to respond to this incident, but also to determine its cause. And I've been in contact with all the Governors of the States that may be affected by this accident.

Now, earlier this week, Secretaries Napolitano and Salazar laid out the next steps for a thorough investigation into what precipitated this event. I am sure there may be a few science teachers here who have been following this issue closely with their classes, and if you guys have any suggestions, please let us know. [*Laughter*]

Now, that's the real reason why all of you are here, because you are great teachers, engaging your students in the world around you. So I want to start by congratulating all of you for your extraordinary achievement. We could not be prouder. And I had occasion to meet each and every one individually; you could not ask for a better bunch. And it made me want to go back to school. [*Laughter*] Maybe not take the exams—[*laughter*]—but you could just tell these are people who love their work.

I want to acknowledge our wonderful Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, who is your biggest booster, day in and day out, as well as my good friend and a teacher herself, Dr. Jill Biden, who is here. I also want to thank Senator Harkin, Representative Boswell, and Dennis Van Roekel, president of the National Education Association, for their leadership and for joining us here today.

So to all the award winners, congratulations. We are thrilled to have you in what has been a long tradition here at the White House. For nearly six decades, through 12 Presidential administrations, we've gathered here to honor America's teachers and to celebrate your contribution to the life of our country. And we do this because we recognize the role that you play in sustaining our democracy, in creating the informed citizenry and engaged leaders that we need for our Government, a Government of and by and for the people.

And we do this because you're the key to our success in the global economy, preparing our kids to compete at a time when a nation's most valuable currency is the knowledge and skills of its people. And we do this because the impact you've had on all of our lives, pushing us, believing in us, insisting, sometimes despite all evidence to the contrary, that we have potential and that we have something worthy to contribute.

As President Kennedy once said: "Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education. . . . The human mind is our fundamental resource." And it's all of you who we entrust every day with that resource and that responsibility.

And that's why as President, I'm committed to doing every single thing that I can do to support your work, to create better standards and assessments that you can use in your classrooms, to make critical investments in education at every level, from early childhood education through college, and to recruit and develop and reward excellent teachers.

And it's why, through our recovery efforts, we've provided emergency aid that saved the jobs of more than 400,000 teachers and other education jobs and why I believe these efforts must continue. I believe these efforts must continue as States face severe budget shortfalls that put hundreds of thousands of jobs at risk. We need and our children need our teachers in the classroom. We need your passion and your patience, your skill and experience, your determination to reach every single child, the very qualities that define this year's Teacher of the Year, Sarah Brown Wessling, from Johnston High School in Johnston, Iowa. So congratulations, Sarah.

Whether teaching basic writing to at-risk freshmen or literary theory to Advanced Placement seniors, Sarah writes, "I see a story in every learner, unique and yearning to be read." That's why she creates individualized podcasts for each student with extensive feedback on their papers, prompting one parent to report that his own writing had improved just by listening to Sarah's comments to her daughter—to his daughter. [*Laughter*]

Sarah also helped develop 15 new courses this year alone, taking into account a wide array of interests and learning styles. And her students don't just write five-paragraph essays, but they write songs, public service announcements, film storyboards, even grant proposals for their own non-for-profit organizations.

One of her students reports that in Sarah's class, "No discussion was fruitless, no assignment was pointless, and not one day was boring." And I'm not sure I could have said that when I was in school. [*Laughter*]

And all of this is in addition to her work mentoring other teachers, organizing a statewide teaching symposium, helping design Iowa's core curriculum, serving as president of the Iowa Council of Teachers of English, and much more—slow down. [*Laughter*] Plus, she's got these three cute kids in front. [*Laughter*]

With Sarah as a teacher, good students have become great students. Students who'd been discouraged and disengaged have discovered a passion for learning. And many of her students have gone on to become teachers themselves, one of the best tributes any teacher could ask for.

In her application essay, Sarah wrote movingly about the achievements of several of her students, describing the transformation of one student as follows: "Instead of asking what, she

asked why; instead of asking why, she asked why not; instead of asking why not, she asked what if."

In honoring Sarah Brown Wessling and all of you, we also honor all those teachers across America who inspire students to ask what if, who enrich their lives and their prospects every single day.

But let's be clear: I think all the teachers here would agree with me, this is not the responsibility of teachers alone. Our teachers can prepare the best lesson plans imaginable, but you all can't guarantee that your students will show up ready to learn. You can be there for them before school, after school, and during lunch, but you can't be there at night to make sure those assignments get done or in the morning to make sure they're out of bed and to school on time. You can give your students all the encouragement in the world, but you can't give them the constant support and unconditional love that they need to succeed.

All of that is our job as parents. So today, even as we honor America's teachers, let's not forget that we all have a responsibility to educate our children. It is not just the job of schools, it's not just the job of teachers, but it's the job of our parents, it's the job of our communities, our places of worship. The message that we send in terms of our children being curious and active and aspiring for excellence, that's a job that all of us have to take on.

So let's turn off the TV. Let's put away the video games. Let's read to our kids once in a while. Let's make sure that homework is done and that they get a good night's sleep and a decent breakfast. Let's reach out to their teachers and ask what we can do to help. Let's be partners with teachers to prepare our kids to lead productive, fulfilling lives.

In the end, I think Sarah put it best when she wrote, simply, "My greatest contributions are my students." That's true of us as a society as well, that our greatest contribution is what we do for the next generation, the sacrifices we make, the examples that we set, and all that we do to give them opportunities that we never dreamed of. All of you have dedicated your lives to that work, and for that, we honor you and we thank you, today and every day. Congratulations, everybody.

And it's now my pleasure to introduce the 2010 Teacher of the Year, Sarah Brown Wessling, and invite her to say a few words. But first I'm going to give her the apple.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:54 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Statement on Congressional Action on Campaign Finance Legislation
April 29, 2010

I welcome the introduction of this strong bipartisan legislation to control the flood of special interest money into America's elections. Powerful special interests and their lobbyists should not be able to drown out the voices of the American people. Yet they work ceaselessly toward that goal. They claim the protection of the Constitution in extending this power, and they exploit every loophole in the law to escape limits on their activities. The legislation introduced today would establish the toughest ever disclosure requirements for election-related spending by big oil corporations, Wall Street, and other special interests so the American people can follow the money and see clearly which special interests are funding political campaign activity and trying to buy representation in our Government. I have long believed that sunlight is the best disinfectant, and this legislation will shine an unprecedented light on corporate spending in political campaigns. This bill will also prohibit foreign entities from manipulating the outcomes of American elections and help close other special interest loopholes.

I hope that Congress will give this legislation the swift consideration it deserves, which is especially urgent now in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision. Passing the legislation is a critical step in restoring our Government to its rightful owners, the American people.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 5175.

Statement on Immigration Reform Legislation
April 29, 2010

It is the Federal Government's responsibility to enforce the law and secure our borders, as well as to set clear rules and priorities for future immigration. The continued failure of the Federal Government to fix the broken immigration system will leave the door open to a patchwork of actions at the State and local level that are inconsistent and, as we have seen recently, often misguided.

The proposal outlined today in the Senate is a very important step in the process of fixing our Nation's broken immigration system. I am especially pleased to see that this detailed outline is consistent with the bipartisan framework presented by Senators Chuck Schumer and Lindsey Graham last month and is grounded in the principles of responsibility and accountability.

What has become increasingly clear is that we can no longer wait to fix our broken immigration system, which Democrats and Republicans alike agree doesn't work. It's unacceptable to have 11 million people in the United States who are living here illegally and outside of the system. I have repeatedly said that there are some essential components that must be in immigration legislation. It must call for stronger border security measures, tougher penalties for employers who hire illegal immigrants, and clearer rules for controlling future immigration. And it must require those who are here illegally to get right with the law, pay penalties and taxes, learn English, pass criminal background checks, and admit responsibility before they are allowed to get in line and eventually earn citizenship. The outline presented today includes many of these elements. The next critical step is to iron out the details of a bill. We welcome that discussion, and my administration will play an active role in engaging partners on both sides of the aisle to work toward a bipartisan solution that is based on the fundamental concept of accountability that the American people expect and deserve.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

Remarks on the National Economy
April 30, 2010

Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico

Good morning, everybody. Before I make a statement on the economy, I just want to offer an update on the ongoing Federal response to the worsening oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

I have dispatched the Secretaries of Interior and Homeland Security, as well as the Administrator of the EPA, my Assistant for Energy and Climate Change Policy, and the NOAA Administrator to the Gulf Coast to ensure that we continue to do everything necessary to respond to this event. And I expect their reports from the ground today.

As I said yesterday, BP is ultimately responsible under the law for paying the costs of response and cleanup operations, but we are fully prepared to meet our responsibilities to any and all affected communities. And that's why we've been working closely with State and local authorities since the day of the explosion.

There are now five staging areas to protect sensitive shorelines, approximately 1,900 Federal response personnel are in the area, and more than 300 response vessels and aircraft on the scene 24/7. We've also laid approximately 217,000 feet of protective boom, and there are more on the way.

I've ordered Secretary Salazar to conduct a thorough review of this incident and report back to me in 30 days on what, if any, additional precautions and technologies should be required to prevent accidents like this from happening again. And we're going to make sure that any leases going forward have those safeguards. We've also dispatched teams to the Gulf

to inspect all deepwater rigs and platforms to address safety concerns.

So let me be clear: I continue to believe that domestic oil production is an important part of our overall strategy for energy security, but I've always said it must be done responsibly, for the safety of our workers and our environment. The local economies and livelihoods of the people of the Gulf Coast as well as the ecology of the region are at stake. And we're going to continue to update the American people on the situation in the Gulf going forward.

Now, I'd like to say a few words about the economy. Every 3 months, the Federal Government measures the total output of goods and services our businesses, our workers, and our Government produce. It determines whether our economy is shrinking or growing, the single broadest measure of America's economic health. At the height of our economic crisis, that measure all too often was delivering grim news. But today is a different story.

In the first quarter of last year, our economy shrank at a rate of 6.4 percent. Today we learned that in the first quarter of this year, our economy grew at a rate of 3.2 percent. What this number means is that our economy as a whole is in a much better place than it was 1 year ago. The economy that shrank for four quarters in a row has now grown for three quarters in a row. And that growth has been a condition for job growth; the economy that was losing jobs a year ago is creating jobs today.

After the single biggest economic crisis in our lifetimes, we're heading in the right direction. We're moving forward. Our economy is stronger; that economic heartbeat is growing stronger.

But I measure progress by a different pulse: the progress the American people feel in their own lives day in, day out. And this week, I spent a few days visiting with folks in small towns in the Midwest, places where the damage done by the worst recession in our lifetimes is profound. They're still trying to recover from a shockwave of lost homes, lost businesses, and more than 8 million lost jobs. It's a tragedy that has families and communities across America too often feeling like they're on life support.

So while today's GDP report is an important milepost on our road to recovery, it doesn't mean much to an American who has lost his or her job and can't find another. For millions of Americans—our friends, neighbors, and fellow citizens ready and willing to get back to work—"you're hired" is the only economic news they're waiting to hear. And they are why the work of moving this economy forward remains our focus every single day.

Now, government can't replace every job that has been lost. That's not government's role. It is America's business all across the country—the private sector, businesses that have always been and will always be the engines of our job creation. Our task, then, is to create the conditions necessary for those businesses to open their doors, expand their operations, and ultimately, hire more workers.

That's precisely what we've tried to do by cutting taxes for small businesses, by backing thousands of loans supporting billions of dollars in lending, and by making targeted investments in the areas of our economy where the potential for job growth is greatest, areas like clean energy.

So as an example, this week, I visited workers at a plant in Fort Madison, Iowa. Some of you guys went along. And just a few short years ago, that plant was shuttered, and it was dark. Today, it is alive and humming with more than 600 employees at work manufacturing some of the most advanced blades for wind turbines in the world. That facility capitalized on its growth by taking advantage of an Advanced Energy Manufacturing Tax Credit in the recovery that we passed last year, which allowed it to add equipment, boost output, and hire new workers at that plant.

In fact, this program was so successful that it was oversubscribed by a ratio of 3 to 1. That's why I've called for an additional $5 billion in investment into these projects to accelerate the creation of clean energy jobs in America's factories. Because every time a new factory or plant opens or expands in America, it becomes important to more people than the workers it employs; it becomes an economic

lifeline to a community, capable of supporting dozens or hundreds or even thousands of jobs indirectly.

So the CEOs and the workers that we have here today could tell you the same thing. Malcolm Unsworth is the CEO of Itron—where did he go? There he is, right here. This is a company that produces smart meters to help businesses and consumers analyze real-time data about how they use energy. And these meters help reduce carbon emissions, improve energy efficiency, and save consumers money, and they're critical components of the smart electric grid of tomorrow.

The $3.4 billion investment that the Recovery Act made towards that smart grid helped increase demand for Itron's products. And in January, Itron competed for and won its own Advanced Energy Manufacturing Tax Credit. And it's using that tax credit to meet that new demand, adding production lines at its plants in Waseca of Minnesota, where it has hired 40 new workers, in Oconee, South Carolina, where it's hired 120 new workers.

Carla Reysack and James Morris are here, and these are two of the workers who have just been hired. James, a native of Oconee County, recently found himself laid off from a local plant after punching in for 28 years. Today, he and his wife Angela both work at Itron, helping to forge a clean energy future for their three daughters.

David Vieau, right over here, is president and CEO of A123 Systems, a company that produces advanced batteries for energy storage and next-generation vehicles. Last August, following a nationwide competition among America's clean energy technology leaders, Vice President Biden traveled to Michigan to announce that A123 was one of the 48 companies to win a Recovery Act grant for advanced battery technology.

That grant helped A123 hire 44 new workers. And that grant is supporting the construction of three new plants in the State of Michigan, which A123 expects will allow it to hire more than 120 workers by the end of this year, more than 1,000 by the end of next year, and more than 3,000 by the end of 2012. Two of those workers, James Fenton and Nino Biundo, are here today. They lost their previous jobs in the recession. And then 123—A123 hired them both to help manufacture the batteries of tomorrow.

A123 has already begun construction on one facility in the city of Livonia, which is scheduled to go on line in July, and they've begun designing a facility in the city of Romulus. And they've announced plans to build their first high-volume factory in Brownstown. So truth be told, A123 was looking to build that factory in Asia. But because it received that grant, it chose the State of Michigan for its largest and most innovative plant yet. And that plant will be one of 30 new plants to go fully operational over the next 6 years manufacturing electric vehicle batteries and components right here in the United States of America.

So this is what's possible in a clean energy economy, these folks right here, doing extraordinary work. This is what happens when we place our bets on American workers and American businesses. And we're going to continue working to help them manufacture more success stories like these across all sectors of our economy.

So we've still got a long way to go on our road to recovery. There are going to be more ups and downs along the way. But today's news is another sign that we're on the right track. And we're going to keep doing everything we can to help our businesses take the baton and power our recovery today and lead us to a more hopeful and more prosperous set of days in the future.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:26 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

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

idiot, which is how I know that I'm getting a good, representative sample. [*Laughter*] Some of the letters make you think, like the one that I received last month from a kindergarten class in Virginia.

Now, the teacher of this class instructed the students to ask me any question they wanted. So one asked, "How do you do your job?" Another asked, "Do you work a lot?" [*Laughter*] Somebody wanted to know if I wear a black jacket or if I have a beard, so clearly they were getting me mixed up with the other tall guy from Illinois. [*Laughter*] And one of my favorites was from a kid who wanted to know if I lived next to a volcano. [*Laughter*] I'm still trying to piece the thought process on this one. [*Laughter*] Loved this letter. But it was the last question from the last student in the letter that gave me pause. The student asked, "Are people being nice?" Are people being nice?

Well, if you turn on the news today or yesterday or a week ago or a month ago, particularly one of the cable channels, you can see—[*laughter*]—you can see why even a kindergartener would ask this question. [*Laughter*] We've got politicians calling each other all sorts of unflattering names. Pundits and talking heads shout at each other. The media tends to play up every hint of conflict because it makes for a sexier story, which means anyone interested in getting coverage feels compelled to make their arguments as outrageous and as incendiary as possible.

Now, some of this contentiousness can be attributed to the incredibly difficult moment in which we find ourselves as a nation. The fact is, when you leave here today, you will search for work in an economy that is still emerging from the worst crisis since the Great Depression. You live in a century where the speed with which jobs and industries move across the globe is forcing America to compete like never before. You will raise your children at a time when threats like terrorism and climate change aren't confined within the borders of any one country. And as our world grows smaller and more connected, you will live and work with more people who don't look like you or think like you or come from where you do.

I really enjoyed Alex's remarks, because that's a lot of change. And all these changes, all these challenges inevitably cause some tension in the body politic. They make people worry about the future, and sometimes they get people riled up.

But I think it's important that we maintain some historic perspective. Since the days of our founding, American politics has never been a particularly nice business. It's always been a little less gentile during times of great change. A newspaper of the opposing party once editorialized that if Thomas Jefferson were elected, "Murder, robbery, rape, adultery, and incest will be openly taught and practiced." [*Laughter*] Not subtle. Opponents of Andrew Jackson often referred to his mother as a "common prostitute," which seems a little over the top. [*Laughter*] Presidents from Teddy Roosevelt to Lyndon Johnson have been accused of promoting socialism or worse. And we've had arguments between politicians that have been settled with actual duels. There was even a caning once on the floor of the United States Senate, which I'm happy to say didn't happen while I was there. [*Laughter*] It was a few years before. [*Laughter*]

The point is, politics has never been for the thinskinned or the faint of heart, and if you enter the arena, you should expect to get roughed up. Moreover, democracy in a nation of more than 300 million people is inherently difficult. It's always been noisy and messy, contentious, complicated. We've been fighting about the proper size and role of Government since the days the Framers gathered in Philadelphia. We've battled over the meaning of individual freedom and equality since the Bill of Rights was drafted. As our economy has shifted emphasis from agriculture to industry to information to technology, we have argued and struggled at each and every juncture over the best way to ensure that all of our citizens have a shot at opportunity.

So before we get too depressed about the current state of our politics, let's remember our history. The great debates of the past all stirred great passions. They all made somebody angry and at least once led to a terrible war. What is amazing is that despite all the

conflict, despite all its flaws and its frustrations, our experiment in democracy has worked better than any form of government on Earth.

On the last day of the Constitutional Convention, Benjamin Franklin was famously asked, "Well, Doctor, what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?" And Franklin gave an answer that's been quoted for ages. He said, "A republic, if you can keep it." If you can keep it.

Well, for more than 200 years, we have kept it. Through revolution and civil war, our democracy has survived. Through depression and world war, it has prevailed. Through periods of great social and economic unrest, from civil rights to women's rights, it has allowed us slowly, sometimes painfully, to move towards a more perfect Union.

And so now, class of 2010, the question for your generation is this: How will you keep our democracy going? At a moment when our challenges seem so big and our politics seem so small, how will you keep our democracy alive and vibrant? How will you keep it well in this century?

Now, I'm not here to offer some grand theory or detailed policy prescription. But let me offer a few brief reflections based on my own experiences and the experiences of our country over the last two centuries.

First of all, American democracy has thrived because we have recognized the need for a Government that, while limited, can still help us adapt to a changing world. On the fourth panel of the Jefferson Memorial is a quote I remember reading to my daughters during our first visit there. It says, "I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and constitutions, but . . . with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times."

The democracy designed by Jefferson and the other Founders was never intended to solve every problem with a new law or a new program. Having thrown off the tyranny of the British Empire, the first Americans were understandably skeptical of government. And ever since, we've held fast to the belief that government doesn't have all the answers, and we have cherished and fiercely defended our individual freedom. That's a strand of our Nation's DNA.

But the other strand is the belief that there are some things we can only do together, as one Nation, and that our Government must keep pace with the times. When America expanded from a few colonies to an entire continent and we needed a way to reach the Pacific, our Government helped build the railroads. When we transitioned from an economy based on farms to one based on factories and workers needed new skills and training, our Nation set up a system of public high schools. When the markets crashed during the Depression and people lost their life savings, our Government put in place a set of rules and safeguards to make sure that such a crisis never happened again, and then put a safety net in place to make sure that our elders would never be impoverished the way they had been. And because our markets and financial systems have evolved since then, we're now putting in place new rules and safeguards to protect the American people.

Now, this notion, class, hasn't always been partisan. It was the first Republican President, Abraham Lincoln, who said the role of government is to do for the people what they cannot do better for themselves. And he'd go on to begin that first intercontinental railroad and set up the first land-grant colleges. It was another Republican, Teddy Roosevelt, who said, "The object of government is the welfare of the people." And he's remembered for using the power of Government to break up monopolies and establish our National Park System. Democrat Lyndon Johnson announced the Great Society during a commencement here at Michigan, but it was the Republican President before him, Dwight Eisenhower, who launched the massive Government undertaking known as the Interstate Highway System.

Of course, there have always been those who've opposed such efforts. They argue government intervention is usually inefficient, that it restricts individual freedom and dampens individual initiative. And in certain instances, that's been true. For many years, we had a welfare system that too often discouraged people from taking responsibility for their own upward mobility. At times, we've neglected the role of parents, rather than government, in cultivating a child's education. And sometimes regulations

fail, and sometimes their benefits don't justify their costs.

But what troubles me is when I hear people say that all of government is inherently bad. One of my favorite signs during the health care debate was somebody who said, "Keep Your Government Hands Out Of My Medicare"—[*laughter*]—which is essentially saying, "Keep Government Out Of My Government-Run Health Care Plan." [*Laughter*]

When our Government is spoken of as some menacing, threatening foreign entity, it ignores the fact that in our democracy, Government is us. We, the people, hold our—[*applause*]—we, the people, hold in our hands the power to choose our leaders and change our laws and shape our own destiny.

Government's the police officers who are protecting our communities and the service men and women who are defending us abroad. Government is the roads you drove in on and the speed limits that kept you safe. Government is what ensures that mines adhere to safety standards and that oil spills are cleaned up by the companies that caused them. Government is this extraordinary public university, a place that's doing lifesaving research and catalyzing economic growth and graduating students who will change the world around them in ways big and small.

The truth is, the debate we've had for decades now between more government and less government, it doesn't really fit the times in which we live. We know that too much government can stifle competition and deprive us of choice and burden us with debt. But we've also clearly seen the dangers of too little government, like when a lack of accountability on Wall Street nearly leads to the collapse of our entire economy.

So, class of 2010, what we should be asking is not whether we need "big government" or a "small government," but how we can create a smarter and better government. Because in an era of iPods and TiVo, where we have more choices than ever before—even though I can't really work a lot of these things—[*laughter*]—but I have 23-year-olds who do it for me—[*laughter*]—government shouldn't try to dictate your lives, but it should give you the tools you need to succeed. Government shouldn't try to guarantee results, but it should guarantee a shot at opportunity for every American who's willing to work hard.

So yes, we can and should debate the role of government in our lives. But remember, as you are asked to meet the challenges of our time, remember that the ability for us to adapt our Government to the needs of the age has helped make our democracy work since its inception.

Now, the second way to keep our democracy healthy is to maintain a basic level of civility in our public debate. These arguments we're having over government and health care and war and taxes, these are serious arguments. They should arouse people's passions, and it's important for everybody to join in the debate with all the vigor that the maintenance of a free people requires.

But we can't expect to solve our problems if all we do is tear each other down. You can disagree with a certain policy without demonizing the person who espouses it. You can question somebody's views and their judgment without questioning their motives or their patriotism. Throwing around phrases like "socialists" and "Soviet-style takeover" and "fascist" and "rightwing nut"—[*laughter*]—that may grab headlines, but it also has the effect of comparing our Government, our political opponents, to authoritarian, even murderous regimes.

Now, we've seen this kind of politics in the past. It's been practiced by both fringes of the ideological spectrum, by the left and the right, since our Nation's birth. But it's starting to creep into the center of our discourse. And the problem with it is not the hurt feelings or the bruised egos of the public officials who are criticized. Remember, they signed up for it. Michelle always reminds me of that. [*Laughter*] The problem is that this kind of vilification and over-the-top rhetoric closes the door to the possibility of compromise. It undermines democratic deliberation. It prevents learning, since, after all, why should we listen to a "fascist" or a "socialist" or a "rightwing nut" or a "leftwing nut"? [*Laughter*]

It makes it nearly impossible for people who have legitimate but bridgeable differences to

sit down at the same table and hash things out. It robs us of a rational and serious debate, the one we need to have about the very real and very big challenges facing this Nation. It coarsens our culture, and at its worst, it can send signals to the most extreme elements of our society that perhaps violence is a justifiable response.

So what do we do? As I found out after a year in the White House, changing this type of politics is not easy. And part of what civility requires is that we recall the simple lesson most of us learned from our parents: Treat others as you would like to be treated, with courtesy and respect. But civility in this age also requires something more than just asking if we can't just all get along.

Today's 24/7 echo chamber amplifies the most inflammatory sound bites louder and faster than ever before. And it's also, however, given us unprecedented choice. Whereas most Americans used to get their news from the same three networks over dinner or a few influential papers on Sunday morning, we now have the option to get our information from any number of blogs or web sites or cable news shows. And this can have both a good and bad development for democracy. For if we choose only to expose ourselves to opinions and viewpoints that are in line with our own, studies suggest that we become more polarized, more set in our ways. That will only reinforce and even deepen the political divides in this country.

But if we choose to actively seek out information that challenges our assumptions and our beliefs, perhaps we can begin to understand where the people who disagree with us are coming from.

Now, this requires us to agree on a certain set of facts to debate from. That's why we need a vibrant and thriving news business that is separate from opinion makers and talking heads. That's why we need an educated citizenry that values hard evidence and not just assertion. As Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan famously once said, "Everybody is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts." [*Laughter*]

Still, if you're somebody who only reads the editorial page of the New York Times, try glancing at the page of the Wall Street Journal once in a while. If you're a fan of Glenn Beck or Rush Limbaugh, try reading a few columns on the Huffington Post web site. It may make your blood boil, your mind may not be changed, but the practice of listening to opposing views is essential for effective citizenship. It is essential for our democracy.

And so too is the practice of engaging in different experiences with different kinds of people. I look out at this class, and I realize, for 4 years at Michigan, you have been exposed to diverse thinkers and scholars, professors and students. Don't narrow that broad intellectual exposure just because you're leaving here. Instead, seek to expand it. If you grew up in a big city, spend some time with somebody who grew up in a rural town. If you find yourself only hanging around with people of your own race or ethnicity or religion, include people in your circle who have different backgrounds and life experiences. You'll learn what it's like to walk in somebody else's shoes, and in the process, you will help to make this democracy work.

Which brings me to the last ingredient in a functioning democracy, one that's perhaps most basic and has already been mentioned, and that is participation.

Class of 2010, I understand that one effect of today's poisonous political climate is to push people away from participation in public life. If all you see when you turn on the TV is name-calling, if all you hear about is how special interest lobbying and partisanship prevented Washington from getting something done, then you might think to yourself, what's the point of getting involved?

Here's the point: When we don't pay close attention to the decisions made by our leaders, when we fail to educate ourselves about the major issues of the day, when we choose not to make our voices and opinions heard, that's when democracy breaks down. That's when power is abused. That's when the most extreme voices in our society fill the void that we leave. That's when powerful interests and their lobbyists are most able to buy access and influence in the corridors of power, because none of us are there to speak up and stop them.

Participation in public life doesn't mean that you all have to run for public office, though we

could certainly use some fresh faces in Washington. [*Laughter*] But it does mean that you should pay attention and contribute in any way that you can. Stay informed. Write letters or make phone calls on behalf of an issue that you care about. If electoral politics isn't your thing, continue the tradition so many of you started here at Michigan, and find a way to serve your community and your country, an act that will help you stay connected to your fellow citizens and improve the lives of those around you.

You know, it was 50 years ago that a young candidate for President came here to Michigan and delivered a speech that inspired one of the most successful service projects in American history. And as John F. Kennedy described the ideals behind what would become the Peace Corps, he issued a challenge to the students who had assembled in Ann Arbor on that October night: "On your willingness to contribute part of your life to this country," he said, "will depend the answer whether a free society can compete. I think it can," he said.

This democracy we have is a precious thing. For all the arguments and all the doubts and all the cynicism that's out there today, we should never forget that as Americans, we enjoy more freedoms and opportunities than citizens in any other nation on Earth. We are free to speak our mind and worship as we please. We are free to choose our leaders and criticize them if they let us down. We have the chance to get an education and work hard and give our children a better life.

None of this came easy. None of this was preordained. The men and women who sat in your chairs 10 years ago and 50 years ago and 100 years ago, they made America possible through their toil and their endurance and their imagination and their faith. Their success and America's success was never a given. And there is no guarantee that the graduates who will sit in these same seats 10 years from now or 50 years from now or 100 years from now will enjoy the same freedoms and opportunities that you do. You too will have to strive. You too will have to push the boundaries of what seems possible. For the truth is, our Nation's destiny has never been certain.

What is certain, what has always been certain, is the ability to shape that destiny. That is what makes us different. That is what sets us apart. That is what makes us Americans, our ability at the end of the day to look past all our differences and all of our disagreements and still forge a common future. And that task is now in your hands, as is the answer to the question posed at this university half a century ago about whether a free society can still compete.

If you are willing, as past generations were willing, to contribute part of your life to the life of this country, then I, like President Kennedy, believe we can, because I believe in you.

Congratulations on your graduation, 2010. May God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:40 a.m. at Michigan Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Mary Sue Coleman, president, and Alexander W. Marston, 2010 bachelor of arts graduate and student speaker, University of Michigan; and political commentators Glenn Beck and Rush Limbaugh.

Remarks at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner
May 1, 2010

The President. Thank you so much, Ed. And to all the other board members, to honored guests, and to the lovely First Lady, good evening.

Ed is right, I work a lot. And so I wasn't sure that I should actually come tonight. Biden talked me into it. [*Laughter*] He leaned over, and he said, "Mr. President, this is no ordinary dinner." [*Laughter*] "This is a big—[*electronic beep*]—ing meal."

It's been quite a year since I've spoken here last, lots of ups, lots of downs, except for my approval ratings, which have just gone down. [*Laughter*] But that's politics. It doesn't bother

me. Besides, I happen to know that my approval ratings are still very high in the country of my birth. [*Laughter*]

And then just the other day, my dear friend Hillary Clinton pulled me aside, and she gave me a pep talk. She said, despite the numbers, she said, "Don't worry, Barack, you're likeable enough." [*Laughter*] Which made me feel better. Of course, I may not have had the star power that I once had, but in my defense, neither do all of you. [*Laughter*]

People say to me, "Mr. President, you helped revive the banking industry, you saved GM and Chrysler, what about the news business?" I have to explain, hey, I'm just the President. [*Laughter*] I'm not a miracle worker here. [*Laughter*]

Though I am glad that the only person whose ratings fell more than mine last year is here tonight. Great to see you, Jay. [*Laughter*] I'm also glad that I'm speaking first, because we've all seen what happens when somebody takes the time slot after Leno's. [*Laughter*]

Jay Leno. Goodnight, everyone. [*Laughter*]

The President. By the way, all of the jokes here tonight are brought to you by our friends at Goldman Sachs. [*Laughter*] So you don't have to worry, they make money whether you laugh or not. [*Laughter*]

We do have a number of notable guests in attendance here tonight. Obviously, I'm most pleased that Michelle accompanied me. She doesn't always go to these things. And there are few things in life that are harder to find and more important to keep than love—well, love and a birth certificate. [*Laughter*]

The Jonas Brothers are here. They're out there somewhere. Sasha and Malia are huge fans. But, boys, don't get any ideas. [*Laughter*] I have two words for you: Predator drones. [*Laughter*] You will never see it coming. [*Laughter*] You think I'm joking? [*Laughter*]

Speaking of tween heartthrobs, Scott Brown is here. I admire Scott, a rare politician in Washington with nothing to hide. [*Laughter*] Now, you should be aware that Scott Brown is not the only one with a salacious photo spread floating around. Recently, David Axelrod was offered a centerfold opportunity of his own; now, I did not know that Krispy Kreme had a catalog. [*Laughter*] But it's true.

I saw Michael Steele backstage when we were taking pictures, a.k.a. Notorious GOP. [*Laughter*] Michael, who knows what truly plagues America today, taxation without representin'. My brother. [*Laughter*] I did a similar routine last year, but it always works. [*Laughter*]

Odds are that the Salahis are here. [*Laughter*] There haven't been people that were more unwelcome at a party since Charlie Crist. [*Laughter*]

Unfortunately, John McCain couldn't make it. Recently, he claimed that he had never identified himself as a maverick. And we all know what happens in Arizona when you don't have ID. [*Laughter*] *Adios, amigos!* [*Laughter*]

Look, I feel for John. You know, we were on the road together and obviously had a hard-fought battle. And you learn, certainly at the national level, politics isn't easy. This year, I've experienced my share of disappointments. For example, I had my heart set on the Nobel Prize—for Physics. [*Laughter*] But hey, you can't win 'em all. [*Laughter*]

Speaking of undeserved honors, a few weeks ago I was able to throw out the first pitch at the Nationals game. And I don't know if you saw it, but I threw it a little high and a little outside. This is how FOX News covered it:

[*At this point, an altered image of FOX News's coverage of the story was shown on the screen.*]

"President Panders to Extreme Left Wing of Batter Box." [*Laughter*] On the other hand, MSNBC had a different take:

[*An altered image of MSNBC's "Countdown with Keith Olbermann" was shown on the screen.*]

"President Pitches No-Hitter." [*Laughter*] And then CNN went a different way altogether:

[*A video was shown of CNN's coverage of the eruption of the Eyjafjallajokull volcano in Iceland.*]

CNN Anchor Rick Sanchez. I was just asking Chad, how can you get a volcano in Iceland? Isn't it too—when you think of a volcano, you think of Hawaii and long words like that. You don't think of Iceland, you think it's too cold to have a volcano there.

[*The video clip ended.*]

The President. I guess that's why they're the most trusted name in news. [*Laughter*]

Now, look, I have a reputation for giving cable a hard time, so let's pick on Politico for a while. [*Laughter*] You know, people attack Politico for putting a new focus on trivial issues, political fodder, gossip sheet. That's not fair. Politico has been doing this for centuries now. Just check out these headlines—our researchers found these.

[*An altered image of the Politico newspaper was shown on the screen.*]

"Japan Surrenders—Where's the Bounce?" Then there's this one:

[*An image was shown on the screen.*]

"Lincoln Saves Union, But Can He Save House Majority?" I don't know if you can see, there's a little portion there: "He's lost the Southern White vote." [*Laughter*] It's an astute analysis there.

[*An image was shown on the screen.*]

And my favorite, July 3, 1776: "Senior Whig Official: Talks Break Down, Independence Dead." [*Laughter*]

So this is nothing new. But even though the mainstream press gives me a hard time, I hear that I'm still pretty big on Twitter, Facebook, or as Sarah Palin calls it, "the socialized media." [*Laughter*]

Of course, that's not the only thing that we've been accused of socializing this year. You might have heard we passed a health care bill and—[*applause*]. Is that Roger Ailes applauding out there? [*Laughter*] Some Republicans have suggested that the bill contains a few secret provisions. Now, that's ridiculous. There aren't a few secret provisions in the health care plan; there are, like, hundreds. [*Laughter*]

Tonight, in the interest of transparency, I'd like to share a couple. Let's see, this provision is called the "Bay State of Denial." It reads: "This bill shall cover short-term memory loss related to the passage of Massachusetts health care reform." So good news, Mitt, your condition is covered. [*Laughter*]

This next provision is called the "Jersey Shore-Up." It reads: "The following individuals shall be excluded from the indoor tanning tax within this bill: Snooki, J-Woww, the Situation, and House Minority Leader John Boehner." [*Laughter*]

This provision ought to put a common misconception to rest. It says right here: "If you do not like the ruling of your death panel, you can appeal." [*Laughter*]

Now, look, obviously, I've learned this year politics can be a tough business, but there are times where you just can't help but laugh. You know what really tickles me? Eric Massa. [*Laughter*] Apparently, Massa claimed that Rahm came up to him one day in the House locker room, stark naked, started screaming obscenities at him, to which I say, welcome to my world. [*Laughter*] I feel you. It's a tense moment.

You know, even as we enjoy each other's company tonight, we're also mindful of the incredible struggles of our fellow Americans in the Gulf Coast, both those leading the efforts to stem this crisis and those along the coast whose livelihoods are in jeopardy as a result of the spill.

Also in our thoughts and prayers tonight are the men and women in uniform who put their lives at risk each and every day for our safety and freedom. So in that spirit, I'd also like to pay a tribute to the journalists who play an extraordinary role in telling their stories.

Earlier today I gave the commencement address at Michigan, where I spoke to the graduates about what is required to keep out de-

mocracy thriving in the 21st century. And one of the points I made is that for all the changes and challenges facing your industry, this country absolutely needs a healthy, vibrant media. Probably needs it more than ever now.

Today's technology has made it possible for us to get our news and information from a growing range of sources. We can pick and choose not only our preferred type of media, but also our preferred perspective. And while that exposes us to an unprecedented array of opinions, analysis, and points of view, it also makes it that much more important that we're all operating on a common baseline of facts. It makes it that much more important that journalists out there seek only the truth.

And I don't have to tell you that. Some of you are seasoned veterans who have been on the political beat for decades; others here tonight began their careers as bloggers not long ago. But I think it's fair to say that every single reporter in this room believes deeply in the enterprise of journalism. Every one of you, even the most cynical among you, understands and cherishes the function of a free press and the preservation of our system of government and of our way of life.

And I want you to know that for all the jokes and the occasional gripes, I cherish that work as well. In fact, tonight I wanted to present all of you with a bipartisan congressional resolution that honors all those wonderful contributions that journalists have made to our country and the world, but unfortunately, I couldn't break the filibuster. [*Laughter*]

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:04 p.m. at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to journalist Edwin Chen of Bloomberg News, in his capacity as president of the White House Correspondents' Association; Jay Leno, host, NBC's "The Tonight Show"; entertainers the Jonas Brothers; Michael S. Steele, chairman, Republican National Committee; Tareq and Michaele Salahi, who attended a White House state dinner without invitation on November 24, 2009; Gov. Charles J. Crist, Jr., of Florida; former Gov. Sarah Palin of Alaska; Roger Ailes, chairman, FOX News Channel and Fox Television Stations; former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts; Nicole "Snooki" Polizzi, Jenni "J-Woww" Farley, and Mike "The Situation" Sorrentino, castmembers, MTV's program "The Jersey Shore"; former Rep. Eric J.J. Massa; and White House Chief of Staff Rahm I. Emanuel. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 2.

Remarks on Oil Spill Relief Efforts in Venice, Louisiana
May 2, 2010

Attempted Terrorist Attack in New York City

Good afternoon, everybody. First, let me say a few words about the incident in New York City. I want to commend the work of the NYPD, the New York Fire Department, and the FBI, which responded swiftly and aggressively to a dangerous situation. And I also want to commend the vigilant citizens who noticed the suspicious activity and reported it to the authorities.

I just got off the phone on the way down here with Mayor Bloomberg to make sure that State and Federal officials are coordinating effectively. Since last night, my national security team's been taking every step necessary to ensure that our State and local partners have the full support and cooperation of the Federal Government. We're going to do what's necessary to protect the American people, to determine who's behind this potentially deadly act, and to see that justice is done. And I'm going to continue to monitor the situation closely and do what it takes, at home and abroad, to safeguard the security of the American people.

Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill Relief Efforts

Now, we just finished a meeting with Admiral Thad Allen, our national incident commander for this spill, as well as Coast Guard personnel who are leading the response to this crisis.

And they gave me an update on our efforts to stop the BP oil spill and mitigate the damage.

By the way, I just want to point out, I was told there was drizzling out here. [*Laughter*] Is this Louisiana drizzle right here? [*Laughter*]

They gave me a sense of how this spill is moving. It is now about 9 miles off the coast of southeastern Louisiana. And by the way, we had the Governor of Louisiana, Bobby Jindal, as well as parish presidents who were taking part in this meeting because we want to emphasize the importance of coordinating between local, State, and Federal officials throughout this process.

Now, I think the American people are now aware—certainly, the folks down in the Gulf are aware—that we're dealing with a massive and potentially unprecedented environmental disaster. The oil that is still leaking from the well could seriously damage the economy and the environment of our Gulf States, and it could extend for a long time. It could jeopardize the livelihoods of thousands of Americans who call this place home.

And that's why the Federal Government has launched and coordinated an all-hands-on-deck, relentless response to this crisis from day one. After the explosion on the drilling rig, it began with an aggressive search and rescue effort to evacuate 115 people, including 3 badly injured. And my thoughts and prayers go out to the family of the 11 workers who have not yet—who have not been found.

When the drill unit sank on Thursday, we immediately and intensely investigated by remotely operated vehicles the entire 5,000 feet of pipe that's on the floor of the ocean. In that process, three leaks were identified, the most recent coming just last Wednesday evening. As Admiral Allen and Secretary Napolitano have made clear, we've made preparations from day one to stage equipment for a worst-case scenario. We immediately set up command center operations here in the Gulf and coordinated with all State and local governments. And the third breach was discovered on Wednesday.

We already had by that time in position more than 70 vessels and hundreds of thousands of feet of boom. And I dispatched the Secretaries of the Interior and Homeland Security, the Administrator of the EPA, Lisa Jackson, who is here, my Assistant for Energy and Climate Change Policy, and the Administrator of NOAA to the Gulf Coast to ensure that we are doing whatever is required to respond to this event.

So I want to emphasize, from day one we have prepared and planned for the worst, even as we hoped for the best. And while we have prepared and reacted aggressively, I'm not going to rest—and none of the gentlemen and women who are here are going to 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 their livelihoods.

Now, currently, the most advanced technology available is being used to try and stop a leak that is more than 5,000 feet under the surface. Because this leak is unique and unprecedented, it could take many days to stop. And that's why we're also using every resource available to stop the oil from coming ashore and mitigating the damage it could cause. And much of the discussion here at the center was focused on if we and when we have to deal with these mitigation efforts. Thus far, as you can tell, the weather has not been as cooperative as we'd like on this front. But we're going to continue to push forward.

I also want to stress that we are working closely with the Gulf States and local communities to help every American affected by this crisis. So let me be clear: BP is responsible for this leak; BP will be paying the bill. But as President of the United States, I'm going to spare no effort to respond to this crisis for as long as it continues. And we will spare no resource to clean up whatever damage is caused. And while there will be time to fully investigate what happened on that rig and hold responsible parties accountable, our focus now is on a fully coordinated, relentless response effort to stop the leak and prevent more damage to the Gulf.

I want to thank the thousands of Americans who've been working around the clock to stop this crisis, whether it's the brave men and women of our military or the local officials

who call the Gulf home. They are doing everything in their power to mitigate this disaster, prevent damage to our environment, and help our fellow citizens.

And during this visit, I am hoping to have the opportunity to speak with some of the individuals who are directly affected by the disaster. I've heard already that people are, understandably, frustrated and frightened, especially because the people of this region have been through worse disasters than anybody should have to bear. But every American affected by this spill should know this: Your Government will do whatever it takes, for as long as it takes, to stop this crisis.

This is one of the richest and most beautiful ecosystems on the planet, and for centuries, its residents have enjoyed and made a living off the fish that swim in these waters and the wildlife that inhabit these shores. This is also the heartbeat of the region's economic life. And we're going to do everything in our power to protect our natural resources, compensate those who have been harmed, rebuild what has been damaged, and help this region persevere like it has done so many times before. That's a commitment I'm making as President of the United States, and I know that everybody who works for the Federal Government feels the exact same way.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:25 p.m. at Coast Guard Station Venice. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York City.

Statement on Polish Constitution Day
May 2, 2010

On behalf of the American people, I send my warmest congratulations to all who celebrate Polish Constitution Day, both in Poland and here in America. In the 209 years since Poland adopted its Constitution, that document has served as an inspiration to many around the world as a beacon of equality and democratic freedoms. Here at home, Polish Americans are an important part of our national character, serving as leaders in a variety of industries and having helped shape our Nation. The United States and Poland remain close allies and essential partners, and we are bound to each other through our NATO obligations to our collective security. As we continue to confront global challenges together, I am confident that our partnership will only further strengthen and deepen.

As we mark this day of celebration, I want to again express the deep condolences of the American people on the tragic loss of President Lech Kaczynski, First Lady Maria Kaczynska, and the many distinguished military and civilian leaders who were traveling with them. The resilience of the Polish people in the face of this tragedy serves as a model of courage and inspiration to us all.

Remarks on Presenting the Commander in Chief's Trophy to the United States Naval Academy Midshipmen
May 3, 2010

The President. All right. Hello, everybody. Please have a seat. Welcome to the White House, and congratulations on winning your seventh straight Commander in Chief's Trophy. Does this ever get old? No.

Now, I do have to warn you, I consulted with the White House counsel, and according to the 22d Amendment, you're only allowed to come back here one more time—[*laughter*]—before it's somebody else's turn. But we are honored to have all of you here today.

I want to start by acknowledging a few people who are with us. Of course, I want to thank your Superintendent, Vice Admiral Jeffrey Fowler, for being here and the outstanding work that he does. I also want to recognize the

Secretary of the Navy, Ray Mabus, who is with us and is doing an outstanding job as Secretary of the Navy.

I want to welcome Lieutenant Commander Wesley Brown, class of 1949, back to the White House. Here he is, right here. Wesley was the Academy's first African American graduate. So we are extremely honored to have you here today, sir. Thank you.

Finally, I obviously want to congratulate Coach Ken—a fellow Hawaiian, I should point out—on winning another—having another great season, a winning season in Annapolis.

Now, I know it's an understatement to say that this program has been pretty successful over the years. You've been to a bowl game every year since 2003. You've pulled off seven straight wins against Air Force, eight against Navy.

Audience members. Army.

The President. Or against Army, excuse me. [*Laughter*] Excuse me. It would be hard for Navy to beat Navy. [*Laughter*]

That's even more impressive, Coach Ken says, because the Army-Navy game isn't just one of the biggest rivalries in college football; it's one of the biggest rivalries in sports, period.

But last season was special from the very beginning. In your first game, you gave the Buckeyes a run for their money in front of 105,000 fans. You beat Notre Dame for the second time in 3 years, proving once again that even though your linemen are going up against guys who are 40 or 50 pounds heavier than they are, the Midshipmen can still run with the big dogs.

Speaking of running, I want to congratulate Ricky Dobbs for setting the NCAA rushing record for touchdowns by a quarterback this season with 27. Where's Ricky? Where is he? The previous record was held by a guy named Tebow, so that's not an easy feat. [*Laughter*]

Now, I also understand Ricky has announced for the Presidency—[*laughter*]—in the year 2040. I know people are announcing early these days—[*laughter*]—but, Ricky, that's a bit much. [*Laughter*] But it does mean that when Navy comes back for the Commander in Chief's Trophy 30 years from now, you might hear a speech from this guy. [*Laughter*]

This team wouldn't be the same without your captains, Osei Asante and Ross Pospisil. And so—where are those guys? Osei, Ross, where are you? Congratulations. Beside their leadership on the field, I was incredibly proud to hear about the toy drive that Ross organized last year. The team raised $1,700 and bought, wrapped, and delivered toys to four needy families, and you guys did it in the middle of a blizzard. So we are very proud of you for that. And I want to thank all of you guys for your compassion and your generosity.

In the end, it's the willingness to put others above yourselves that sets this team and all the service academies apart. Your days are packed with morning inspections and a full load of classes, football practice, and military duties. And oftentimes, you're lucky if you can get a few minutes to yourselves before studying into the night.

But you do it because each of you has a higher calling: to serve your country in a time of war. As Ross says: "We are always going to be remembered for what we have done on the football field. That's all well and good. But we want to make a difference outside Bancroft Hall and outside the Academy walls." And that, I think, is the kind of ethic that makes us all so proud.

In a few short weeks, 32 of you will have that chance when you become officers in the United States Navy and Marine Corps. Last year, I was honored to attend the Academy commencement and see firsthand the incredible spirit that drives every midshipman at Annapolis—in addition to getting two chest bumps. [*Laughter*] It's true.

Wherever you go, you'll remember the brothers standing with you today. And you'll remember the lessons that you learned at the Academy and as a member of this team. And

you'll know what it takes to go through fire and emerge a better man and a better leader.

So I want you to know that I have no greater honor and no greater responsibility than serving as your Commander in Chief. And I promise you that this country will stand with you, from the moment you put on the uniform to the moment you take it off, as you devote your lives to freedom's cause.

God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much. Coach.

[*At this point, Ken Niumatalolo, head coach of the U.S. Naval Academy football team, delivered brief remarks, after which the President was presented with a team jersey and commemorative ring.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Tim Tebow, former quarterback, University of Florida Gators. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Coach Niumatalolo.

Statement on World Press Freedom Day

May 3, 2010

World Press Freedom Day is observed every year on May 3 to remind us of the critical importance of this core freedom. It is a day in which we celebrate the invaluable role played by the media in challenging abuses of power, identifying corruption, and informing all citizens about the important issues that shape our world. It is also a day for us to sound the alarm about restrictions on the media, as well as the threats, violence, or imprisonment of many of its members and their families because of their work.

Last year was a bad one for the freedom of the press worldwide. While people gained greater access than ever before to information through the Internet, cell phones, and other forms of connective technologies, Governments like China, Ethiopia, Iran, and Venezuela curtailed freedom of expression by limiting full access to and use of these technologies.

Moreover, more media workers were killed for their work last year than any year in recent history. The high toll was driven in large part by the election-related killings of more than 30 journalists in the Philippine Province of Maguindanao, the deadliest single event for the press in history, along with murders of journalists in Russia, Somalia, Mexico, and Honduras. In this year, like in other years, nearly three out of four of the journalists killed were local news gatherers who were murdered in their own nations.

Chauncey Bailey was one such local journalist. A tireless reporter who covered his own city of Oakland, California, Bailey was widely respected for his many exposes of abuse and corruption. He was gunned down 3 years ago near his office while taking a homeless man to breakfast. A trial of the alleged perpetrator is scheduled to begin this summer. Such accountability is critical to deterring further attacks. I note with concern that the murderers of journalists succeed in avoiding responsibility for their crimes in nearly 9 out of 10 cases and urge fellow governments to address this problem.

Even more journalists and bloggers find themselves imprisoned in nations around the world. Iran, following its crackdown on dissent after the last elections, now has more journalists behind bars than any other nation. Governments in Belarus, Burma, China, Cuba, Eritrea, North Korea, Tunisia, Uzbekistan, and Venezuela imprisoned journalists who wrote articles critical of Government leaders and their policies.

But for every media worker who has been targeted, there are countless more who continue to inform their communities despite the risks of reprisal. On World Press Freedom Day, we honor those who carry out these vital tasks despite the many challenges and threats they face, as well as the principle that a free and independent press is central to a vibrant and well-functioning democracy.

NOTE: The statement referred to Yusuf Bey IV, who allegedly ordered the 2007 murder of journalist Chauncey Bailey.

Letter to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference
May 3, 2010

To the participants of the NPT Review Conference,

Forty years after the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty entered into force, we have come together to answer a simple question with consequences for us all: as individual nations and as an international community, will we uphold the rights and responsibilities of all nations in order to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons?

For four decades, the NPT has been the cornerstone of our collective efforts to prevent the proliferation of these weapons. But today, this regime is under increasing pressure. A year ago in Prague, I therefore made it a priority of the United States to strengthen each of the treaty's key pillars as we work to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, and to pursue the peace and security of a world without them.

Over the coming weeks, we will see whether nations with nuclear weapons will fulfill their NPT obligations to move toward nuclear disarmament. Building on our new START Treaty with Russia and our Nuclear Posture Review, which reaffirms the central importance of the NPT, the United States is meeting its responsibilities and setting the stage for further cuts.

We will see whether nations without nuclear weapons will fulfill their obligation to forsake them. History shows that nations that pursue this path find greater security and opportunity as an integrated member of the international community. Nations that ignore their obligations find themselves less secure, less prosperous and more isolated. That is the choice nations must make.

Finally, we will work to ensure that nations that abide by their obligations can access peaceful nuclear energy. The United States is committed to this goal and will pursue a new framework for civil nuclear cooperation that permits nations that uphold their responsibilities to enjoy the peaceful uses of the atom.

Today, the eyes of the world are upon us. Over the coming weeks, each of our nations will have the opportunity to show where we stand. Will we meet our responsibilities or shirk them? Will we ensure the rights of nations or undermine them? In short, do we seek a 21st century of more nuclear weapons or a world without them?

These are the questions we must answer, the challenges we must meet. At this conference and beyond, let us come together, in partnership, to pursue the peace and security that our people deserve.

Sincerely,

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

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

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Actions of the Government of Syria
May 3, 2010

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1622(d), provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency, unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the actions of the Government of Syria declared in Executive Order 13338 of May 11, 2004, and relied upon for additional steps taken in Executive Order 13399 of April 25, 2006, and Executive Order 13460 of Feb-

ruary 13, 2008, is to continue in effect beyond May 11, 2010.

While the Syrian government has made some progress in suppressing foreign fighter networks infiltrating suicide bombers into Iraq, its actions and polices, including continuing support for terrorist organizations and pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and missile programs, pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue in effect the national emergency declared with respect to this threat and to maintain in force the sanctions to address this national emergency. As we have communicated to the Syrian government directly, Syrian actions will determine whether this national emergency is renewed or terminated in the future.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 3, 2010.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks to the Business Council
May 4, 2010

Attempted Terrorist Attack in New York City

Thank you. Please be—please have a seat. Thank you so much. Ron, thank you for the introduction and your leadership.

Before I begin, I hope you don't mind, I indicated to Jim Owen that I want to give the American people a brief update on the investigation into the attempted terrorist attack in Times Square. A suspect is now in custody and is being questioned. The American people can be assured that the FBI and their partners in this process have all the tools and experience they need to learn everything we can, and that includes what, if any, connection this individual has to terrorist groups, and it includes collecting critical intelligence as we work to disrupt any future attacks. Justice will be done, and we will continue to do everything in our power to protect the American people.

Attorney General Eric Holder and other members of my national security team are going to be providing more details, but let me say this: This incident is another sobering reminder of the times in which we live. Around the world and here at home, there are those who would attack our citizens and who would slaughter innocent men, women, and children in pursuit of their murderous agenda. They will stop at nothing to kill and disrupt our way of life. But once again, an attempted attack has been—failed.

It has failed because ordinary citizens were vigilant and reported suspicious activity to the authorities. It failed because these authorities—local, State, and Federal—acted quickly and did what they're trained to do. I've had the opportunity to personally thank some of the citizens and law enforcement officers whose quick thinking may have saved hundreds of lives. And this suspect has been apprehended because of close and effective coordination at every level, including our Joint Terrorism Task Force and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Finally, New Yorkers have reminded us once again of how to live with their heads held high. Now, we know that the aim of those who try to carry out these attacks is to force us to live in fear and thereby amplifying the effects of their attacks, even those that fail. But as Americans and as a nation, we will not be terrorized. We will not cower in fear. We will not be intimidated. We will be vigilant, and we will work together. And we will protect and defend the country we love to ensure a safe and prosperous future for our people. That's what I intend to do as President, and that's what we will do as a nation.

Of course, expanding prosperity is what you work for at the Business Council, so I'm pleased to have this opportunity to meet with you. It has been a little more than a year since I last spoke to the members of this organization. And over the past year, I've appreciated the advice of-

fered by many of the leaders in this room as we've grappled with a set of very difficult economic challenges.

I am here today to reiterate the importance of this partnership and the importance of seeking common ground. I recognize we're not going to agree on every single item, but as I indicated to a group of your members last night, my door is always open. For ultimately, I believe the success of the American economy depends not on the efforts of government, but on the innovation and enterprise of America's businesses. And it will be America's businesses that help us emerge from this period of economic crisis and economic turmoil.

Now, the fact is, these have been a tough 2 years for our country. I don't need to tell you that. At the height of the recession, countless businesses had to shut their doors. Trillions of dollars in savings were lost, forcing seniors to postpone retirement and young people to forgo college, entrepreneurs to give up on starting up a company. Many businesses that remained standing had to let people go. And some of you had to make some painful decisions. And more than 8 million men and women lost their jobs during the course of the downturn.

Just about every day, I hear from some of these people, people who are out of work. I hear from them through letters that I receive each night or in town halls that I've held across America. Every once in a while, I hear from children seeking to make sense of what's happening in their families, of the sadness and uncertainty that they don't fully understand. And it's a reminder that what has happened is not just an economic problem, it is a human tragedy. It's for this reason that my administration has maintained a relentless focus on reviving the economy and job growth. And in order to deal with this crisis, we've had to make a number of difficult decisions, some of which are very unpopular.

But as many of you have reported, today, we're beginning to see some hopeful signs. When I last spoke to members of the Business Council, soon after taking office, the economy was losing an average of 750,000 jobs each month. Today, America is adding jobs again. Many of the businesses in this room have resumed hiring, which is welcome news. Last year, the economy was in freefall. Today, the economy is growing again. In fact, we've seen the fastest turnaround in growth in nearly three decades. And while we had been seeing a steady decline in manufacturing, we learned yesterday that manufacturing expanded in April for the ninth consecutive month and at the fastest pace in nearly 6 years.

Now, by no stretch of the imagination can we declare victory. Not until the millions of our neighbors who are looking for work can find work. Not until incomes and economic security are actually increasing for middle class families, many who saw their income and wages flatline even during boom times in the nineties and—over the last decade, after the nineties, rather. And not until we face the weaknesses in our economy that preceded this recession, problems that have been allowed to fester for decades.

We've been reminded of late that we can also face at any time a sudden and costly crisis that can harm our economy. One of the discussions that we had last night was around the BP oil spill, which is going to affect the lives and livelihoods of people all along the Gulf Coast, from the fishing industry to the tourism industry. We are committed to preventing as much of the economic damage as possible by working to contain the impact of this potentially devastating spill. In addition, wherever possible, I would like to see the people most affected by the disaster employed in helping in the cleanup. And we will continue to explore every possible option to create jobs and support local economies in the Gulf, while continuing to monitor any potential effects on the national economy. But obviously, this is going to be a significant challenge, and we are going to be working overtime to make sure that we mitigate its impacts.

More broadly, spurring job creation and economic expansion continues to be our number-one domestic priority. That's why, as I've said since the very beginning of my administration, we can't just rebuild the economy to where it was, we're going to have to rebuild it stronger than before. We've got to rebuild it

on a new foundation of lasting growth. We have to tackle structural problems—from education to energy, from our financial system to our health care system, from our trade imbalance to our fiscal imbalance—that didn't just lead to 2 years of recession, but a decade of economic insecurity for middle class families.

Now, there's a legitimate question about what the Government's role can and should be in bringing about this new foundation for growth. And if you turn on cable news, you might run into folks with some strong feelings, and also some misleading claims, about the view of my administration on the subject. What has guided me throughout the last year and a half, what has informed the decisions I've made is a fundamental belief in markets that are free and open to all who are willing to work hard and pursue their talents.

I believe businesses like yours are what drive growth and create the conditions in which families and small businesses can thrive. And I believe America's greatest strength has always been society—that it's a society that values and rewards the ingenuity of people. That doesn't relieve Government of its responsibility to help foster sustained economic growth and to ensure that our markets are functioning freely. Government can't light a spark in the mind of an engineer, but it can help an engineering student get loans to pay her tuition. Government will seldom be the source of new and innovative products, but it can invest in basic research that isn't necessarily profitable in the near term, but that holds vast potential in the long term. Government can build the infrastructure that allows products and services to reach customers. Government can create incentives—in clean energy, for example—that promote innovation and exports. These things are public goods that no business, no individual is going to provide on their own, but that create a favorable environment in which everybody—companies across the country—can open and expand.

And that's why as part of this new foundation that we seek to build, we're investing in education, because our economic success depends on making sure people have the skills to match their talents. So we launched a national competition last year to improve our schools based on a simple idea: Instead of funding the status quo, we'll only invest in reform. We've recently announced the first winners in what we're calling this Race to the Top. And across America, it's making a difference, as States are implementing reforms to raise student achievement, to improve education in math and science, and to turn around failing schools that steal the future of too many young Americans.

As part of this effort, I've promised to speak at a high school commencement every year to highlight schools that are encouraging excellence and preparing their students for college and careers. And today, in fact, after a vote to narrow down the finalists on our web site, whitehouse.gov, we announced that I'm going to be speaking to graduates of Kalamazoo Central High School in Kalamazoo, Michigan. So those of you based in Michigan, you should be pleased. Go Giants! That's—[*laughter*]—we're looking forward to talking to those young people.

We've also set this goal: America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020. And we're making progress towards meeting that. Congress passed legislation that will make college more affordable by ending unnecessary taxpayer subsidies that go to financial intermediaries for student loans. The bill also includes one of the most significant investments in community colleges in history, because community colleges are a career pathway for the children of so many working families. And last night, during our discussion, one of the things—a theme that continually came up was the fact that there are a lot of skilled jobs out there that don't necessarily require a 4-year college degree, but they're not being filled because we haven't done a good enough job on just basic math—high school math skills, for example. We see our investment in the community colleges as a potential way to bridge that, even as we're working on improving K through 12 outcomes.

We are seeing rising enrollment in both 2- and 4-year schools across America. We want to make sure that those folks who are enrolling are getting the best education possible so they can serve effectively as part of your workforce.

Next, we've tackled what's been an undeniable drag on our economy, and that's the cost of health care. And I appreciate the willingness of many of the leaders in this room, including Ron and Angela and some folks that I spoke to yesterday, to work with us and advise us on this issue. I believe that the passage of this legislation is good for America's businesses. In fact, just 2 weeks ago, 4 million small-business owners found a postcard from the IRS in their mailboxes. And it was actually one of those rare moments in which something from the IRS was a welcome discovery. Because of the reforms that were passed, millions of small-business owners are eligible for a health care tax cut this year, worth perhaps tens of thousands of dollars, to help afford the coverage they provide to their employees.

Businesses will also be eligible for additional relief for providing insurance to retirees who are not yet eligible for Medicare. A lot of the companies in this room can apply for this assistance starting this June. It used to be, if you worked for a big company, when you retired, you could count on having health insurance until you were eligible for Medicare. But one of the consequences of skyrocketing health care costs is that the proportion of large firms providing insurance to its retirees has been cut in half over the past two decades. So these folks are often unable to find affordable coverage on the individual market. So this is going to be a welcome reform for many businesses that are trying to do the right thing by their retirees and for the retirees themselves. And it will provide a bridge to when health exchanges come on line in a few years.

Now, we're only at the beginning. Many of the provisions in the health care bill have yet to be implemented. I'm pleased to say that—though, that already many insurance companies are voluntarily accelerating implementation of this law. Many insurance companies have decided to allow parents, for example, to add their young-adult children to their policies now, instead of waiting until next fall. Some firms have rolled back exorbitant planned rate increases. And others have stopped the practice of rescission, where people are dropped from their coverage after they get sick. These steps are all greatly appreciated. They're the right thing to do. We will hold these companies accountable to their word and to the law, not to be vindictive, but to fulfill our responsibilities to the American people. But I think that we've seen a spirit of cooperation over the last several weeks that I'm very happy about.

Now, even as we seek to improve the skills of our workforce and reduce the crushing burden of health care costs on businesses and families, this alone is not going to be enough to drive the 21st-century global economy. We need to ensure that our economy is fostering and rewarding innovation. And that's why we're building the infrastructure of tomorrow, investing in expanded broadband access and health information technology, clean energy facilities, first—the first high-speed rail network in America.

That's why we've set a goal of devoting more than 3 percent of our GDP to research and development, an amount that exceeds the level achieved even at the height of the space race. And we've also proposed making the research and experimentation tax credit permanent, a tax credit that helps companies like yours afford the high costs of developing new technologies and new products, because ultimately, the key to our long-term prosperity is going to be sparking even greater innovation than we've already seen.

And that's why in my State of the Union Address, I set a goal of doubling our exports over the next 5 years to increase—an increase that would support 2 million jobs. And to help meet this goal, we launched the National Export Initiative, where the Federal Government will significantly ramp up its advocacy on behalf of U.S. exporters. We are substantially expanding the trade financing available to exporters, including small and medium-sized companies. And while always keeping our security needs in mind, we're going to reform our export controls to eliminate unnecessary barriers. So in sectors where we have a huge competitive and technological advantage, we're going to be able to send more of those products to markets overseas. And we're going

to pursue a more strategic and aggressive effort to open up new markets for our goods.

Now, we also have to recognize that the long-term economic health of our country depends on addressing the fiscal health of our Government. And I know that's going to be a significant topic of discussion today. We continue to face not only the consequences of an economic and fiscal crisis, we also face a fiscal emergency that has built up over years. We have a structural deficit that is unsustainable. The day I walked in the door, the deficit stood at $1.3 trillion, with projected deficits of $8 trillion over the next 10 years. So even as we've made massive investments to rebuild the economy in the short term, we're going to continue to do what's necessary to spur job creation and economic growth, but we also have to rein in these deficits in the long run.

And that's why I insisted health reform not add to our national debt. In fact, it's expected to bring down the deficit by as much as $1 trillion over the next two decades. We've also restored what's called the pay-as-you-go rule so that Congress can't spend a dollar on either new tax cuts or new spending unless it saves a dollar elsewhere. We've gone through the budget line by line, cutting waste. And I've proposed a freeze in Government spending for 3 years. My budget also ends loopholes and tax giveaways for oil and gas companies, as well as tax breaks for the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans, just because we can't afford them. And finally, I've appointed a bipartisan fiscal commission to take a hard look at the growing gap between what the Government spends and what the Government raises in revenue.

Now, I understand that some of you got a briefing on this issue in preparation for today's meeting. I think you understand the choices are going to be tough. But we are making—we are determined to make these tough choices. We're determined to put our Nation on a stronger fiscal footing. Because in the end, we need an economy that's powered less by what we borrow and consume and more by what we produce and what we build. I believe that's essential. My administration believes it's essential. And we're going to need to work with you to help get to where we need to be.

Now, none of these steps will matter if our financial system remains vulnerable to another crisis like the one that we've just been through. As we've learned so painfully in recent years, Government has an obligation to set basic, commonsense rules in the marketplace. This is not a hindrance, it's essential to the functionings of the market. In the absence of these rules, it becomes more attractive for some to game the system than to compete and innovate honestly within it. And this erodes trust in our markets. It makes our economy less attractive to investors from around the world. And at worst, it can put the entire financial system in jeopardy, which serves no one.

So that's why I'm working to pass a set of reforms to hold Wall Street accountable and protect consumers. And I want to be clear: The reforms we've proposed are in no way designed to hamstring businesses. These are changes to make sure that our markets are working in a way that is open and transparent and inoculated against the kind of massive, dangerous risks that nearly brought the whole financial sector down. And that's in the interests of every business here and in the interest of the economy as a whole.

Now, I—you're going to be hearing from my Treasury Secretary, Tim Geithner, who will speak to these issues in greater detail. But in brief, these reforms would achieve three things.

First, they'd create what we did not have before, and that is a way to protect the financial system, the broader economy, and American taxpayers in the event that a large financial firm collapses. Now, what we call this resolution authority will ensure that taxpayers are never again on the hook because a firm is deemed too big to fail.

Second, these reforms would bring new transparency to our financial markets. Part of what led to this crisis was that firms like AIG made huge and risky bets, using derivatives and other complicated financial instruments in ways that defied accountability or even common sense.

Now, we believe that there is a legitimate role for these financial products in our economy. They can help allay risk. They can help spur investment. And there are a lot of companies

that use these instruments to legitimate ends, managing exposure to fluctuating prices or currencies. But the position of my administration on derivatives from the beginning has been simple: We can't have a $600 trillion market operating in the dark. We want to ensure that the bulk of these trades take place on an open exchange and the rest take place in the full light of day and in full view of those charged with oversight.

The third thing that this reform will accomplish is to enact the strongest consumer financial protections ever. This financial crisis wasn't just the result of decisions made on Wall Street, it was the result of decisions made around kitchen tables all across America by folks who took on mortgages and credit cards and auto loans. And while too many Americans took on financial obligations that they knew they couldn't afford, millions of others were, frankly, duped. They didn't know what they were getting into. They were misled by deceptive terms and conditions buried in the fine print. And this didn't just affect these families, it hurt the entire economy.

That's why we need to give consumers more protection in our financial system. With a dedicated agency setting ground rules and looking out for ordinary people in our financial system, we're going to be able to empower consumers with clear information when they're making financial decisions. And that way, instead of competing to offer confusing products, consumers will benefit from companies that are competing the old-fashioned way, by offering better products. And I believe that unless your business model depends on bilking people, there is little to fear from these new rules. It is just going to be able to empower consumers to know what they're getting into.

Finally, we give investors more say and more sway in the financial system. These Wall Street reforms will give shareholders a voice with respect to salaries and bonuses awarded to top executives, addressing a concern that has grown as a result of this crisis.

So that's what reform will look like. I'm pleased that the filibuster was dropped in the Senate and that Members on the other side of the aisle agreed to allow a debate. We expect a vigorous debate with amendments on both sides. But make no mistake: We cannot allow these reforms to be watered down. And for those of you in the financial industry whose companies may be employing lobbyists seeking to weaken this bill, I want to urge you, as I said on Wall Street a couple weeks ago, to join us rather than to fight us.

That doesn't mean that there aren't going to be legitimate differences on the details of what is a complicated piece of legislation. But in its broad parameters, this proposal is a commonsense, reasonable, nonideological approach to target the root problems that we've seen in our financial sector. And I believe these reforms are not only in the interests of the broader economy, they are in the interests of the financial industry as well. Because reform will not only safeguard our system against crises, it will also make our system stronger and more competitive, instilling confidence here at home and across the globe. And I want America's financial sector to continue to be the most trusted and the most respected in the world. That requires reform.

And this brings me to a final point. We face some very big challenges right now. The only way we're going to get through them, the only way we ever have, is if we align the interests of workers and businesses and Government around a common purpose. At a time of such economic anxiety, it's tempting and, frankly, sometimes easier to turn against one another. So politicians can rail against Wall Street or against each other. Businesses can fault Capitol Hill. And all of this back and forth makes for easy talking points, it makes for good political theater, but it doesn't solve our problems. It doesn't move us forward. It just traps us in the same debates that have held us back for a very long time. It prevents us from tackling the challenges that we've been putting off for decades.

I don't believe we can afford that kind of politics anymore. Not now. I believe that we are in this together. I believe that we will succeed or we'll falter as one people. But I am confident that if we can rise above these failures of the past, then we're not only going to recover, but we're going to emerge stronger

than before. And because of the caliber of the leaders and businesses represented in this room, because of the ingenuity of our entrepreneurs, because of the drive and skill and talents of our people, I believe, and I know you believe, that our best days are still ahead of us.

So yes, these have been a very difficult 2 years. But the storm is receding, and the skies are brightening, and America is poised to lead the world once again toward new horizons. You're going to be a part of that process, and I thank you for your leadership.

Thank you. May God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:07 a.m. at the Park Hyatt Washington hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Ronald A. Williams, vice chairman, James W. Owens, chairman, and Angela F. Braly, member, the Business Council; and Faisal Shahzad, suspect in the May 1 attempted terrorist attack in Times Square.

Statement on the Flooding in the Southeast
May 4, 2010

Our thoughts and prayers are with every American who has been impacted by the severe weather and flooding in the Southeast, and our deepest condolences go out to those who have lost loved ones. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the local first-responders who have been working tirelessly to save lives and protect property in the face of these devastating storms. I have spoken with the Governors in the most severely impacted States, and yesterday I dispatched FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate to Tennessee to view the flood damage firsthand and to report back on any unmet needs. Federal officials have been dispatched to the region, and we will continue working in close coordination with State and local officials to support response and recovery efforts.

Statement on Indonesia's Decision to Initiate the Ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty
May 4, 2010

I welcome Indonesia's important announcement at the opening session of the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference that they are "initiating the process of the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty." The United States thanks President Yudhoyono and the Government of Indonesia for its responsible leadership in the global effort to reinforce the nuclear nonproliferation regime. This is another signal that nations are joining a renewed effort to reinforce global nonproliferation, which advances the vision I outlined in Prague in 2009 and advances the security of the United States, Indonesia, and the world. Reinforcing the norm against nuclear testing will help prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and support our efforts to pursue the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.

The United States is committed to the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and to its early entry into force, and we will work with the United States Senate to help achieve advice and consent to this important international agreement. The United States stands ready to work with all states and encourages them to ratify the treaty and to help bring it into force.

Remarks on Signing the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010

May 5, 2010

Good afternoon, everybody. Danny Akaka, aloha. [*Laughter*] Since the 9/11 attacks more than 8 years ago, the United States has been a nation at war. In this time, millions of Americans have worn the uniform. More than a million have served in Afghanistan and Iraq. Many have risked their lives; many have given their lives. All are the very embodiment of service and patriotism. And as a grateful nation, humbled by their service, we can never honor these American heroes or their families enough.

Along with their loved ones, we give thanks every time our men and women in uniform return home. But we're forever mindful that our obligations to our troops don't end on the battlefield. Just as we have a responsibility to train and equip them when we send them into harm's way, we have a responsibility to take care of them when they come home.

As Michelle and Dr. Biden have reminded us in all their visits to military bases and communities, our obligations must include a national commitment to inspiring military families, the spouses and children who sacrifice as well.

We have a responsibility to veterans like Ted Wade, who joins us here today with his wonderful wife Sarah. We are so proud of both of them. Six years ago, Sergeant Wade was serving in the 82d Airborne Division in Iraq when his Humvee was struck by an IED, an improvised explosive device. He lost much of his right arm and suffered multiple injuries, including severe traumatic brain injury. He was in a coma for more than 2 months, and doctors said it was doubtful that he would survive.

But he did survive, thanks to the care he received over many months and years, thanks to Ted's indomitable spirit, and thanks to the incredible support from Sarah, who has been at his side during every step of a long and very difficult journey. As I've said many times, our Nation's commitment to our veterans and their families—to patriots like Ted and Sarah—is a sacred trust, and upholding that trust is a moral obligation.

Since taking office, my administration, in partnership with many of the veterans' organizations who are here today, has worked to make sure that America fulfills this obligation. We've dramatically increased funding for veterans' health care, including our wounded warriors, especially those with the signature wounds of today's wars: posttraumatic stress and traumatic brain injury. Under Secretary Ric Shinseki's outstanding leadership, we're building a 21st-century VA, including budget reform to ensure predictable funding, and a historic increase in the VA budget.

But as we all know, keeping faith with our veterans and their families is work that is never truly finished. As a nation, as the beneficiaries of their service, there's always more we can do and more that we must do. And that's what we're doing today, as I sign this important legislation, the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act.

With this legislation, we're expanding mental health counseling and services for our veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq, including our National Guardsmen and reservists. We're authorizing the VA to utilize hospitals and clinics outside the VA system to serve more wounded warriors like Ted with traumatic brain injury.

We're increasing support to veterans in rural areas, with the transportation and housing they need to reach VA hospitals and clinics. We're expanding and improving health care for our women's veterans, to meet their unique needs, including maternity care for newborn children. And we'll launch a pilot program to provide child care for veterans receiving intensive medical care.

We're eliminating copays for veterans who are catastrophically disabled. And we're expanding support to homeless veterans, because in the United States of America, no one who has served this Nation in uniform should ever be living on the streets.

Finally, this legislation marks a major step forward in America's commitment to families and caregivers who tend to our wounded warriors every day. They're spouses like Sarah. They're parents once again caring for their sons and daughters. Sometimes they're children helping to take care of their mom or dad.

These caregivers put their own lives on hold, their own careers and dreams aside, to care for a loved one. They do it every day, often around the clock. As Sarah can tell you, it's hard physically and it's hard emotionally. It's certainly hard financially. And these tireless caregivers shouldn't have to do it alone. As of today, they'll be getting more of the help that they need.

If you're like Sarah, and caring for a severely injured veteran from Afghanistan or Iraq, you'll receive a stipend and other assistance, including lodging when you travel for your loved one's treatment. If you need training to provide specialized services, you'll get it. If you need counseling, you'll receive it. If you don't have health insurance, it will be provided. And if you need a break, it will be arranged, up to 30 days of respite care each year.

So today is a victory for all the veterans' organizations who fought for this legislation. It's a tribute to those who led the fight in Congress, including Senator and World War II vet Danny Akaka and Senator Richard Burr, and in the House, Representatives Mike Michaud and Bob Filner. And I thank all the Members of Congress who are joining us here today.

Most of all, today is a victory for veterans like Ted and caregivers like Sarah, who, by the way, has become a passionate and very effective voice on behalf of wounded warriors and their families. Testifying before Congress, she said of her husband, "Just like he needed a team in the military to accomplish the mission, he needs a team at home in the longer war."

So to Ted and to Sarah, to all our veterans and your families, with this legislation we're building a stronger team here at home that you need, now and for the long road to recovery. And that's why I'm very much looking forward to signing this legislation. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:29 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to S. 1963, approved May 5, which was assigned Public Law No. 111–163.

Remarks at a Cinco de Mayo Celebration
May 5, 2010

The President. Hello, everybody.

Audience member. Viva Obama!

The President. Viva! [*Laughter*] Good evening, everyone. *Buenas noches*. Michelle and I are so honored to welcome you to the White House. And you all brought outstanding weather, so we thank you for that. [*Laughter*] Thank you. I know that a lot of you would rather be watching tonight's game, the Spurs against *los* Suns from Phoenix.

Tonight's another one of our great events here at the White House celebrating Latino culture in America, including our concert some of you might have attended that we had during Hispanic Heritage Month on the South Lawn, *Fiesta Latina*. And Malia and Sasha will probably never forget playing drums with Sheila E. [*Laughter*] Michelle, on the other hand, would prefer to forget the sight of me trying to dance with Thalia. [*Laughter*] I didn't think I was that bad. [*Laughter*]

The First Lady. You were okay. [*Laughter*]

The President. But there will be no—[*laughter*]—there will be no repeat performances tonight.

Audience members. Aww. [*Laughter*]

The President. We gather to mark a day that's become as celebrated here in the United States as it is in Mexico. And we're honored to be joined by Mexico's Interior Secretary, Fernando Gomez Mont, and his lovely wife Gloria. Please give them a big round of applause. It's good to see you again. And a great friend to me and the United States, Ambassador Arturo Sarukhan and his wonderful wife Veronica, who are also here; it's good to see you again.

Now, the events of this date in history are well known, how nearly 150 years ago, at the

Battle of Puebla, a band of Mexican patriots faced off against a massive European army and won a victory that inspires the world to this day. Less well known is that General Zaragoza, who led those patriots, was born in what is now the town of Goliad in Texas. In fact, you can go there today.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Are you from there?

Audience member. Yes.

The President. You can visit his birthplace. It's a historic landmark, includes a 10-foot tall statue of the general, presented by the people of Mexico and preserved by the people of the United States.

So the glory of this day is shared by both of our countries. And so is the pride in the lasting contributions that Hispanics have made to America throughout our history, including the men and women who join us here tonight.

We're joined by dedicated Members of Congress and members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, as well as some of their staffs. This includes Senator Bob Menendez; hey, Bob. Representative Xavier Becerra, where's Xavier? There he is, back there. Chairwoman Nydia Velazquez, where's Nydia?

We're joined by outstanding members of my Cabinet, including Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis. Hilda! As well as Secretary of Homeland Security Napolitano is here. And although she's down—although he's down on the Gulf helping to lead our response to the oil spill, I want to acknowledge my outstanding Interior Secretary, Ken Salazar.

We're joined by Hispanic Americans serving at every level of my Government. And I'm proud that we've nominated more Latinos to senior positions than any administration in history, not just because they're Latino, but because they're the best people for the job. And I should note that many of those appointments are Latinas, wise Latinas, undoubtedly. And although she's not here tonight, I think we should give a little round of applause to our first Latina on the Supreme Court, Sonia Sotomayor.

We're also joined by leaders from every segment of American society. And I especially want to welcome those of you serving on the commission to explore the creation of a new museum in Washington to celebrate the history of Latinos in America. And I look forward to seeing the results of the commission's hard work and to the day when we open the doors on a new National Museum of the American Latino.

Tonight's performers are a wonderful example of how Latin culture's shaped and strengthened the fabric of America. So I want to say thank you to Maru and the Montero Dance Company, along with Javier Cortes. Thank you very much. Before I came out, I was listening to you guys inside. [*Laughter*] You sounded really good.

Now, by celebrating the story of Hispanics in America, we're really celebrating the larger story of America. After all, the dreams of Mexican Americans and all Latinos are the same dreams as any other American. It's why, in the face of unprecedented economic crises, we took bold action to get our economy growing again, creating jobs again, and laying the foundation for lasting prosperity. That's good for all Americans, including Hispanics, among whom the unemployment rate remains unacceptably high and who are ready to go back to work.

It's why, after nearly a century, we passed historic health care reform, with the help of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. And we're grateful to them. That's good for all Americans. It's good for all Americans, including the millions of Latinos who will finally get the coverage they lack today, as well as the Latino small-business owners who will finally be able to provide coverage for their employees. And that allows them to join the children of legal immigrants, who are finally able to get health care through the SCHIP program, something that we did very early on in my administration.

It's why we've made college more affordable, why we're reforming education. And that's good for all children, including Latinos, who, instead of having the highest dropout rate, deserve every chance to achieve their God-given potential.

So today reminds us that America's diversity is America's strength. That's why I spoke out

against the recently passed law in Arizona. Make no mistake: Our immigration system is broken. And after so many years in which Washington has failed to meet its responsibilities, Americans are right to be frustrated, including folks along border States. But the answer isn't to undermine fundamental principles that define us as a nation. We can't start singling out people because of who they look like or how they talk or how they dress. We can't turn law-abiding American citizens and law-abiding immigrants into subjects of suspicion and abuse. We can't divide the American people that way. That's not the answer. That's not who we are as the United States of America.

And that's why I've instructed my administration to closely monitor the new law in Arizona, to examine the civil rights and other implications that it may have. That's why we have to close the door on this kind of misconceived action by meeting our obligations here in Washington.

So I want to say it again, just in case anybody's confused: The way to fix our broken immigration system is through commonsense, comprehensive immigration reform. And that means responsibility from our Government to secure our borders, something we have done and will continue to do. It means responsibility from businesses that break the law by undermining American workers and exploiting undocumented workers. They've got to be held accountable. It means responsibility from people who are living here illegally. They've got to admit that they broke the law and pay taxes and pay a penalty and learn English and get right before the law and then get in line and earn their citizenship.

Comprehensive reform, that's how we're going to solve this problem. And I know there's been some commentary over the last week since I talked about this difficult issue. Well, is this politically smart to do? Can you get Republican votes? Look, of course, it's going to be tough; that's the truth. Anybody who tells you it's going to be easy or that I can wave a magic wand and make it happen hasn't been paying attention to how this town works. [*Laughter*]

We need bipartisan support. But it can be done, and it needs to be done. So I was pleased to see a strong proposal for comprehensive reform presented in the Senate last week, and I was pleased that it was based on a bipartisan framework. I want to begin work this year, and I want Democrats and Republicans to work with me, because we've got to stay true to who we are, a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants.

That's the spirit that I saw in some remarkable men and women that I recently hosted right here in the Rose Garden. They came from more than a dozen countries. And even though they weren't yet citizens, they had enlisted in the United States military. And one woman was named Perla Ramos, and she was born and raised in Mexico. She came to the United States shortly after 9/11. Her husband was a U.S. marine, and she said, "A passion for the military grew inside me."

In time, she joined herself, enlisting in the Navy. And she said, "I take pride in our flag and the history that forged this great Nation and the history we write day by day." And as Perla's Commander in Chief, I took great pride in helping to swear her in, a daughter of Mexico and one of our newest American citizens. So she continues a great tradition of Mexican Americans serving in our military, someone in whom both our nations can take great pride.

So today I want us to remember the United States and Mexico are not simply neighbors bound by geography and history; we're two societies that are woven together by millions of family and friends, by common interests and a shared future. Those are bonds that are unbreakable. They're bonds of an aspirational community: you and your mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters who struggled and sacrificed to realize the American Dream. They're also bonds of commerce and trade that sustain millions of jobs, both in Mexico and in the United States.

They're bonds that are represented in the trust and respect that I have for President Calderon, as we work together to create opportunity and prosperity for our peoples and confront the drug cartels and violence that threaten both our countries. It's the warmth that Michelle felt on her recent trip to Mexico, her first solo trip as First Lady. And it's the friendship and cooperation that we'll deepen when we

host President Calderon and First Lady Margarita Zavala for their state visit and dinner in a couple of weeks.

That's the spirit that all of you are putting on display today. So thank you for living it in your own lives. Thank you for sharing it with us tonight.

Have a wonderful party. You can be as noisy as you want. [*Laughter*]

The First Lady. We can hear you.

The President. We can hear you, though. [*Laughter*] If it goes past a certain hour, we'll kick you out. [*Laughter*] All right?

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:58 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers Sheila Escovedo, Ariadna Thalia Sodi Miranda, Maru Montero, and Javier Cortes; and Mexico's Ambassador to the U.S. Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Death of President Umaru Yar'Adua of Nigeria
May 5, 2010

We are saddened by the news of Nigerian President Umaru Yar'Adua's passing, and our thoughts and prayers are with the Yar'Adua family and the people of Nigeria as they mourn his loss. Tonight we remember and honor President Yar'Adua's profound personal decency and integrity, his deep commitment to public service, and his passionate belief in the vast potential and bright future of Nigeria's 150 million people.

President Yar'Adua worked to promote peace and stability in Africa through his support of Nigerian peacekeeping efforts as well as his strong criticism of undemocratic actions in the region. He was committed to creating lasting peace and prosperity within Nigeria's own borders, and continuing that work will be an important part of honoring his legacy.

Under President Yar'Adua's leadership, Nigeria and the United States took steps to deepen the strong bilateral relationship between our two nations, and that work has continued even in recent months when President Yar'Adua's illness forced him to step back from his governing duties. The Nigerian people and Government should know that in this time of national mourning they have a friend and enduring partner in the United States and that together we will continue to work to address the common challenges we face.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Proposed Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Australia Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy
May 5, 2010

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit to the Congress, pursuant to sections 123 b. and 123 d. of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2153(b), (d)) (the "Act"), the text of a proposed Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Australia Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy. I am also pleased to transmit my written approval, authorization, and determination concerning the Agreement, and an unclassified Nuclear Proliferation Assessment Statement (NPAS) concerning the Agreement. In accordance with section 123 of the Act, as amended by title XII of the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–277), a classified annex to the

NPAS, prepared by the Secretary of State in consultation with the Director of National Intelligence, summarizing relevant classified information, will be submitted to the Congress separately. The joint memorandum submitted to me by the Secretaries of State and Energy and a letter from the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission stating the views of the Commission are also enclosed.

The proposed Agreement has been negotiated in accordance with the Act and other applicable law. In my judgment, it meets all applicable statutory requirements and will advance the nonproliferation and other foreign policy interests of the United States.

The proposed Agreement provides a comprehensive framework for peaceful nuclear cooperation with Australia based on a mutual commitment to nuclear nonproliferation. The Agreement has an initial term of 30 years from the date of its entry into force, and will continue in force thereafter for additional periods of 5 years each, unless terminated by either party on 6 months' advance written notice at the end of the initial 30-year term or at the conclusion of any of the additional 5-year periods. The proposed Agreement permits the transfer of information, material, equipment (including reactors), and components for nuclear research and nuclear power production. It does not permit transfers of Restricted Data, sensitive nuclear technology, sensitive nuclear facilities, or major critical components of such facilities. In the event of termination of the proposed Agreement, key nonproliferation conditions and controls continue with respect to material, equipment, and components subject to the proposed Agreement.

Australia is a non-nuclear weapon state party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Australia has concluded a Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Australia is a party to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, which establishes international standards of physical protection for the use, storage, and transport of nuclear material. It is also a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, whose non-legally binding guidelines set forth standards for the responsible export of nuclear commodities for peaceful use. A more detailed discussion of Australia's domestic civil nuclear activities and its nuclear nonproliferation policies and practices, including its nuclear export policies and practices, is provided in the NPAS and the NPAS classified annex submitted to the Congress separately.

I have considered the views and recommendations of the interested agencies in reviewing the proposed Agreement and have determined that its performance will promote, and will not constitute an unreasonable risk to, the common defense and security. Accordingly, I have approved the Agreement and authorized its execution. I urge the Congress to give it favorable consideration.

This transmission shall constitute a submittal for purposes of both sections 123 b. and 123 d. of the Act. My Administration is prepared to begin immediately the consultations with the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs as provided in section 123 b. Upon completion of the 30 days of continuous session review provided for in section 123 b., the 60 days of continuous session review provided for in section 123 d. shall commence.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 5, 2010.

Statement on Senate Action on Financial Regulatory Reform and Consumer Protection Legislation
May 6, 2010

Nearly 2 years after the collapse on Wall Street that cost over 8 million jobs on Main Street, the American people deserve strong, tough reform that will help prevent another financial crisis. The bill before the Senate demands accountability from Wall Street and includes the strongest consumer protections ever.

Unfortunately, throughout this debate, there have been partisan attempts to obstruct progress and weaken reform. Today the Senate is considering a Republican amendment that will gut consumer protections and is worse than the status quo. I will not allow amendments like this one written by Wall Street's lobbyists to pass for reform. This amendment will significantly weaken consumer protection oversight, includes dangerous carve-outs for payday lenders, debt collectors, and other financial services operations, and hurts the ability of community and local banks to compete by creating an unlevel playing field with their nonbank competitors.

As I have said throughout this process, I want to continue to work with Democrats and Republicans because protecting the American people should not be a partisan issue. But we must work together in good faith. Alternatives that gut consumer protections and do nothing to empower the American people by cracking down on unfair and predatory practices are unacceptable, and I urge the Senate to vote no on weakening consumer protections and instead stand with the American people.

NOTE: The statement referred to S. 3217.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Home Star Legislation
May 6, 2010

The "Home Star Energy Retrofit Act" is a commonsense bill that will create jobs, save consumers money, and strengthen our economy. I commend the House on passing this bill, and I particularly want to thank Congressman Peter Welch of Vermont for all of his hard work on this issue. At a time when millions of Americans are looking for work and companies are ready to take on new customers, this legislation will help jump-start job growth and demand for new products created right here in America. This rebate program will not only put people back to work, it will lower costs for homeowners who choose to improve their home with products like energy-efficient windows, water heaters, and air conditioners. And it will also save consumers money on energy bills down the road.

I'm convinced that the country that leads in clean energy is also going to be the country that leads in the global economy, and I want America to be that nation. I will not settle for anything less than first place when it comes to new energy technologies, and this bill will create the incentives to help us accomplish that goal. We have workers eager to do new installations and renovations and factories ready to produce new energy-efficient building supplies. Today's House vote is an important step forward, and I look forward to working with the Senate to improve this legislation so we can help more middle class homeowners make these investments without delay.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 5019.

Remarks on the National Economy
May 7, 2010

All right. Good morning, everybody. On what seems like a daily basis, we're barraged with statistics and forecasts and reports and data related to the health of the economy. But from the first days of this administration, amidst the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, I've said that the truest measure of progress would be whether or not we were creating jobs. That's what matters in people's lives. What matters is whether someone who needs a job can find work, whether people can provide for their families and save for the future and achieve some measure of economic security.

Everything we've done has been with this goal in mind. And today I'm happy to report that we received some very encouraging news. In April, the economy added 290,000 jobs, with the vast majority, approximately 230,000, coming from the private sector. This is the largest monthly increase in 4 years. And we created 121,000 more jobs in February and March than previously estimated, which means we've now seen job growth for 4 months in a row.

These numbers are particularly heartening when you consider where we were a year ago, with an economy in freefall. At the height of the downturn, around the time that I took office, we were losing an average of 750,000 jobs per month.

So this news comes on the heels of a report last week that the overall output of our economy, our GDP, is increasing. We now know that the economy has been growing for the better part of a year. And this steady growth is starting to give businesses the confidence to expand and to hire new people.

I should also note that the unemployment rate ticked up slightly from 9.7 to 9.9. Given the strength of these job numbers, this may seem contradictory, but this increase is largely a reflection of the fact that workers who had dropped out of the workforce entirely are now seeing jobs again and—are now seeking jobs again, encouraged by better prospects.

Now, I want to emphasize, the economic crisis we've faced has inflicted a lot of damage on families and businesses across our country, and it's going to take time to repair and rebuild. Over the course of this recession, more than 8 million jobs were lost. So there are a lot of people out there who are still experiencing real hardship. And we've got to be mindful that today's job numbers, while welcome, leave us with a lot of work to do. It's going to take time to achieve the strong and sustained job growth that is necessary. And of course, long before this recession hit, for a decade, middle class families had been experiencing a sense of declining economic security.

So yes, we've got a ways to go. But we've also come a very long way. And we can see that the difficult and, at times, unpopular steps that we've taken over the past year are making a difference. Productivity is up. The hours people are working are up. Both are signs the company may be hiring more workers in the months to come. We saw the largest increase in manufacturing employment since 1998. And we can see the benefits of our Recovery Act in the strong employment reports from construction and other sectors, where we've made key investments in creating and saving jobs.

Of course, there are limits to what the Government can do. The true engine of job growth in this country will always be the private sector. That's why we are very pleased to see the strong employment growth on the private sector side.

What Government can do is help create the conditions for companies to hire again. What it can do is build the infrastructure and offer the incentives that will allow small businesses to add workers, that will help entrepreneurs take a chance on an idea, that will lead manufacturers to set up shop not overseas, but right here in United States of America.

And that's what we've been doing. Right now a series of tax incentives and other steps to promote hiring are taking effect. Because of a bill I signed into law a few weeks ago, businesses are now eligible for tax cuts for hiring unemployed workers. Companies are also able to write off more of their investments in new equipment. And we're spurring additional investments in school renovation, clean energy projects, and

road construction, which will create jobs while laying a new foundation for lasting growth.

In addition, as part of health reform, 4 million small businesses recently received a postcard in their mailbox telling them that they're eligible for a health care tax cut this year. It's worth perhaps tens of thousands of dollars to each of these companies, and it will provide welcome relief to small-business owners, who too often have to choose between health care and hiring.

So that's what's already come on line. But we still have more to do. In my State of the Union Address, I called for a $30 billion small-business lending fund, which would help increase the flow of credit to small companies that were hit hard by the decline in lending that followed the financial crisis. And, obviously, small businesses are a major source of job creation.

This morning we sent draft legislation to Congress on this fund, which now includes a new State small-business credit initiative. This State initiative, which was designed with the help of Governors and Members of both the House and the Senate, will help expand lending for small businesses and manufacturers at a time when budget shortfalls are leading States to cut back on vitally important lending programs.

In addition, with State and local governments facing huge budget gaps, we're seeing layoffs of teachers, police officers, firefighters, and other essential public servants, which not only harms the economy, but also the community and the economy as a whole. So we are working with Congress to find ways to keep our teachers in the classrooms, the police officers on the beat, and firefighters on call.

A few months ago, I also proposed giving people rebates to upgrade the energy efficiencies of their home. This will not only save families money, it will create jobs in hard-hit construction and manufacturing sectors, since things like windows and insulation are overwhelmingly made in the United States of America. I was gratified to see a bipartisan vote to pass this proposal, called Home Star, in the House of Representatives yesterday. I'm calling on the Senate to act as well. And I'm urging Congress to expand the clean energy manufacturing tax credit, which is helping create jobs across America building wind turbines and solar panels.

Even as we take these steps to increase hiring in the short and long run, we're also mindful of other economic factors that can emerge. So I want to speak to the unusual market activity that took place yesterday on Wall Street. The regulatory authorities are evaluating this closely, with a concern for protecting investors and preventing this from happening again. And they will make findings of their review public, along with recommendations for appropriate action.

I also spoke this morning with German Chancellor Merkel regarding economic and financial developments in Europe. We agreed on the importance of a strong policy response by the affected countries and a strong financial response from the international community. I made clear that the United States supports these efforts and will continue to cooperate with European authorities and the IMF during this critical period.

So this week's job numbers come as a relief to Americans who found a job, but it offers, obviously, little comfort to those who are still out of work. So to those who are out there still looking, I give you my word that I'm going to keep fighting every single day to create jobs and opportunities for people. Every one of my team that's standing alongside me here has the same sense of mission. We're not going to rest until we've put this difficult chapter behind us. And I won't rest until you, and millions of your neighbors caught up in these storms, are able to find a good job and reach a brighter day.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:03 a.m. in the South Driveway at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

The President's Weekly Address
May 8, 2010

It's now been a little over a month since I signed health insurance reform into law. And while it will take some time to fully implement this law, reform is already delivering real benefits to millions of Americans. Already, we're seeing a health care system that holds insurance companies more accountable and gives consumers more control.

Two weeks ago, 4 million small-business owners and organizations found a postcard in their mailbox informing them that they could be eligible for a health care tax cut this year, a tax cut potentially worth tens of thousands of dollars, a tax cut that will help millions provide coverage to their employees.

Starting in June, businesses will get even more relief for providing coverage to retirees who are not yet eligible for Medicare. And a little over a month from now, on June 15, senior citizens who fall into the prescription drug coverage gap known as the doughnut hole will start receiving a $250 rebate to help them afford their medication.

Aside from providing real, tangible benefits to the American people, the new health care law has also begun to end the worst practices of insurance companies. For too long, we've been held hostage to an insurance industry that jacks up premiums and drops coverage as they please. But those days are finally coming to an end.

After our administration demanded that Anthem BlueCross justify a 39-percent premium increase on Californians, the company admitted the error and backed off its plan. And this week, our Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, wrote a letter to all States urging them to investigate other rate hikes and stop insurance companies from gaming the system. To help States achieve this goal, we've set up a new Office of Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight and will provide grants to States with the best oversight programs.

In the next month, we'll also be putting in place a new patient's bill of rights. It'll provide simple and clear information to consumers about their choices and their rights. It will set up an appeals process to enforce those rights. And it will prohibit insurance companies from limiting a patient's access to their preferred primary care provider, ob-gyn, or emergency room care.

We're holding insurance companies accountable in other ways as well. As of September, the new health care law prohibits insurance companies from dropping people's coverage when they get sick and need it most. But when we found out that an insurance company was systematically dropping the coverage of women diagnosed with breast cancer, my administration called on them to put an end to this practice immediately. Two weeks ago, the entire insurance industry announced that it would comply with the new law early and stop the perverse practice of dropping people's coverage when they get sick.

On Monday, we'll also be announcing the new rule that allows young adults without insurance to stay on their parent's plan until they're 26 years old. Even though insurance companies have until September to comply with this rule, we've asked them to do so immediately to avoid coverage gaps for new college graduates and other young adults. This also makes good business sense for insurance companies, and we're pleased that most have agreed. Now we need employers to do the same, and we're willing to work with them to make this transition possible. These changes mean that starting this spring, when young adults graduate from college, many who do not have health care coverage will be able to stay on their parents' insurance for a few more years. And you can check healthreform.gov to find a list of all the insurance carriers who have agreed to participate right away.

I've said before that implementing health insurance reform won't happen overnight, and it will require some tweaks and changes along the way. Ultimately, we'll have a system that provides more control for consumers, more accountability for insurance companies, and more affordable choices for uninsured Americans. But already, we're seeing how reform is improving the lives of millions of Americans. Already,

we are watching small businesses learn that they will soon pay less for health care. We are seeing retirees realize they'll be able to keep their coverage and seniors realize they'll be able to afford their prescriptions. We're seeing consumers get a break from unfair rate hikes and patients get the care they need when they need it and young adults getting the security of knowing that they can start off life with one less cost to worry about. At long last, this is what health care reform is achieving. This is what change looks like. And this is the promise we will keep as we continue to make this law a reality in the months and years to come.

Thanks so much.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:45 p.m. on May 6 in the Library at the White House for broadcast on May 8. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 7, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 8. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Interview With Sergey Brilev of Rossiya TV
May 6, 2010

Mr. Brilev. President Obama, thanks so much for having me here.

The President. Thank you very much.

World War II/Contribution of the Soviet Union

Mr. Brilev. I've got several important issues in Russian-American bilateral relations, which we will, of course, discuss. But first, let me come back to the events which happened 65 years ago. Now, Russia is, of course, a country which lost more than 20 million people; Russia proper, 70 percent of the losses of the USSR. And it's self-sufficient to say Second World War and Russia. But it's also an important issue here. What do you tell your children, for instance, about the Second World War?

The President. Well, we have personal connections. My grandfather fought in World War II. He was part of Patton's army. And my great uncle, my grandmother's brother, was one of those who liberated Buchenwald, and so obviously, those memories are very important. And the May 9th commemoration in Russia is so important because it reminds us of the extraordinary sacrifices that the then-Soviet Union made and the strength of the alliance between the U.S. and the Russian people.

In fact, our current Ambassador in Moscow, Ambassador Beyrle, his father briefly fought with the Soviet Army. He was part of U.S. operations there, was captured, escaped into the Soviet Union, and ended up fighting with the Soviet Union Army for a time. And that, I think, symbolizes how the joint Allied efforts helped to defeat fascism, and it is one of the most important military alliances of all time.

Counterterrorism Efforts/Nuclear Arms Reduction/Russia-U.S. Relations

Mr. Brilev. Now that we are into reset, given today's certain responses, which are the common enemies of today?

The President. Well, obviously, terrorism is one of them. Immediately after the tragic events in Moscow, I called President Medvedev and pledged that the United States would work in any way that Moscow thought made sense in helping to find the perpetrators of this terrible act.

We just recently had an attempted terrorist act in New York, and it's a signal, I think, that whether these activities are happening in Moscow or they're happening in New York, that countries have to work together to make sure that these terrorists are apprehended, that their networks are destroyed, that their sources of financing dry up.

And no single country is going to be able to do that on their own; countries are going to have to work together. And that is something that I'm very much looking to increasing cooperation between the United States and Russia.

Beyond that, though, I think it's important to recognize that the whole concept of reset between U.S. and Russian relations is not just

on issues of security. We have a lot of security issues that we have to discuss. Obviously, I'm very proud of the START Treaty and our efforts to reduce our nuclear arsenals. But one of the things that President Medvedev and I have discussed is how can we really ramp up our commercial, our trade, our economic ties. How can we help to promote the innovation agenda in Russia? What are we doing around high-tech industries that can produce jobs and raise standards of livings for both the Russian people and the United States? And that's an area where I think you're going to see a lot of work and a lot of cooperation.

One of things we're very excited about is we set up a Presidential commission with 16 active groups on everything from energy to high-tech. And I recently extended an invitation to President Medvedev to visit the United States in late June. And one of the things we hope he's going to be able to do is not just visit Washington, but also travel, for example, to Silicon Valley and see how the connections between universities and venture capital and business has been able to create some of the extraordinary inventions that all of us use today.

Ratification of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty

Mr. Brilev. Now that you mentioned the START Treaty, when are we going to ratify it? And what are the chances?

The President. My hope is that we ratify it this year on our side and——

Mr. Brilev. During this Congress or after the election?

The President. Well, I'd like to see it happen before the election. Obviously, it's technical, and I think it's appropriate for the Senate to examine it, but we're going to be putting forward the text of the treaty, the annexes, all the necessary materials before the Senate in short order. And our hope is, is that they will be able to review it quickly and recognize that this is an important step in the efforts of both the United States and Russia to meet our obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty to lower our stockpiles, at the same time as we work together to hold other countries accountable on obligations regarding the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Iran/North Korea/Global Adherence to Nuclear Non-Proliferation Principles

Mr. Brilev. Well, that was the point actually of signing the treaty, to save money and also to convince the rest of the world. But then after what Mr. Ahmadi-nejad had to say this week, are we convincing the rest of the world?

The President. Well, look, I think Iran and North Korea are two special cases. I think most countries around the world have recognized that the core principles of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the NPT, would say that countries are—that have nuclear weapons should try to reduce their reliance on nuclear weapons, that countries that don't have them should forgo them, and that everybody has the right to peaceful nuclear energy. That principle has been embraced by a lot of countries. And there are countries like South Africa, for example, that had gone fairly far down the path of developing a nuclear weapon and decided this didn't make sense for us.

North Korea and Iran are two outliers, countries that have insisted on flouting international rules and U.N. Security Council resolutions, aren't cooperating the way they need to with the IAEA. And so I've been very heartened by the cooperation that we've seen so far between the United States, Russia, the other members of the P–5-plus-1, in terms of imposing the kinds of pressure and sanctions that are necessary to get Iran to choose a more responsible path that will lead it back into the heart of the international community.

NATO-Russia Relations

Mr. Brilev. Having signed the treaty, and having carried out several other things within the reset framework agenda, we have achieved a better mutual understanding. How can you convert it into something of a substance in such particular area as European security? Because also, NATO is a solution for those countries which are in, but NATO is not a solution for self-sufficient countries like Russia. What's to do be done there?

The President. Well, President Medvedev has put forward some ideas about a new security architecture in Europe. We're examining

them. I take them very seriously. But I think that the most important thing at this point is to work with the institutions we have to see if we can rebuild the trust that for some time had been lost.

So, for example, I have been supportive of NATO-Russia consultation in a much more systematic way than has been observed over the last several years.

My sense is, is that all the parties in Europe, all the members of the NATO alliance, want to have a strong, cooperative relationship with Russia. There are certain core principles that we think have to be observed within that cooperative framework: a respect for territorial integrity of internationally recognized borders, a belief that a country's core sovereignty includes its ability to choose how it allies itself, a rejection of the notion of spheres of influence, whether it's U.S. spheres or European spheres or Russian spheres.

Within those broad principles, though, if you look—going back to your earlier question—the real threats against Russian well-being or U.S. well-being to a large degree are at this point much more aligned than they've ever been. It has to do with nonstate actors. It has to do with the proliferation of nuclear weapons. It has to do with environmental catastrophes. It has to do with an integrated economy in which if you see a crisis in Greece taking place that can affect world markets. These are all issues in which cooperation rather than antagonism are the order of the day.

And I think President Medvedev recognizes this. I've been very impressed with him. I think he is a strong leader, a good man, very thoughtful. I find it very easy to do business with him, and I think we've established a relationship, a real trust that can be hopefully bearing fruit in the negotiations and conversations that we have in years to come.

National Economy/International Financial System

Mr. Brilev. I'll use this opportunity now that you mentioned Greece and the economic crisis. I had a free day yesterday preparing for this interview, so I went fishing to Maryland. I met someone called Dave Shelby, I think, the captain of the boat. I caught a 24-pounder—[*laughter*]. He said to me that he's got 30 percent less clients—well, then, of course, the fuel is up a dollar per gallon. And I was comparing his economic comments with my position, and strangely enough and luckily enough, I can actually afford more things in America these days because of the ruble which is so stronger than the—comparatively than euro and dollar were meant to be.

Where do you see the dollar, given the circumstances with the global economic crisis? Would you like to see a weaker dollar—although it doesn't sound nice for the American public, but still? Internationally speaking, a stronger dollar? Where are you?

The President. My basic principle is to focus on the fundamentals of the economy. We have a market-based mechanism for determining the value of currencies. I think that if we have a strong U.S. economy, we're going to have a strong dollar. And obviously, we've just gone through a very difficult period; the whole world has. We've seen stabilization, and the U.S. economy is slowly strengthening in ways that, I think, if you'd asked a year ago, we might have said that it was going to take longer than it has for that stabilization to take place.

I am very concerned about what's happening in Europe. But I think it is an issue that the Europeans recognize is very serious. Greece is taking some very difficult measures; at least, they've put forward a plan that calls for difficult measures. And if we can stabilize Europe, that will be good for the United States and that will be good for Russia as well.

But the key point today is the degree of integration among all economies. That's why I have said, and the United States is actively pursuing, the belief that the G–20 framework is so important, that we have to recognize that China, Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa, all these countries that traditionally have been viewed as on the periphery of economic decisionmaking, they are now at the core—India—are huge economies. And what happens there is going to impact us in the same way that what happens in Moscow or New York is going to impact them.

Mr. Brilev. The G–20 shall indeed substitute the G–8?

The President. Well, my belief is, is that there's going to be a transition period, but that the G–20 represents the economic framework of the future.

Adoption of Russian Children

Mr. Brilev. Lastly, so lucky to be in front of the U.S. President, but still I have to ask one last question: the adoption issue. Well, I do not support those who say, "Well, Americans killing Russian children." This is not the case. Absolute majority of the children adopted from Russia have their lives here. Even more important is the fact that more and more Russians are adopting Russian children in Russia. In fact, there are more Russians than Americans these days doing such things. But then, still, 17 kids have been killed—or, well, died in this country. It is an issue, especially after this American woman sent Artem Saveliev to Russia. What's to be done?

The President. Well, first of all, obviously, what happened with the small number of children who have been adversely affected is terrible. And we can't minimize what's happened. As you point out, there have been tens of thousands of Russian children adopted by U.S. families. The overwhelming majority are leading happy, healthy lives. But ultimately, the policy has to be what's best for children, whether they're living in Russia or they're living in the United States.

What we've done is to set up a bilateral discussion between our State Department and counterparts in Russian to find out how do we create an agreement in which children are protected. And I think that's ultimately the goal. And as the father of two children, obviously, it breaks my heart to think about children who have been vulnerable, have probably already gone through difficult situations and then are subjected to even more difficult situations in the past. But as you point out, I think it's also important to recognize that in the overwhelming majority of cases, adoptions are the absolute best thing for the child. And we want to make sure that we preserve the best of the system while eliminating these abuses.

Mr. Brilev. Mr. President, thanks so much, indeed.

The President. I enjoyed it. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 1:50 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to his great uncle Charles Payne; and U.S. Ambassador to Russia John R. Beyrle. Mr. Brilev referred to President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; and Artem Saveliev, an 8-year-old Russian boy who was sent back to Russia by his American adoptive mother Torry Ann Hansen. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 8. A portion of this interview could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Statement on Russia's Commemoration of the 65th Anniversary of the End of World War II

May 8, 2010

On May 9, the Russian Federation will host a commemoration of one of the most important events in human history, the defeat of fascism in World War II. This achievement was won only by the extraordinary sacrifices made by many people, including Americans and Russians, and those sacrifices will be honored by the presence of troops from the many nations that came together to defend our common security and human dignity in an hour of maximum peril. In marking this occasion, President Medvedev has shown remarkable leadership in honoring the sacrifices of those who came before us and in speaking so candidly about the Soviet Union's suppression of "elementary rights and freedoms." His words remind us that we must all work together on behalf of a world in which the fundamental human rights that all people deserve are protected.

Commencement Address at Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia
May 9, 2010

The President. Thank you, Hampton. Thank you, class of 2010. Please, everybody, please have a seat.

Audience member. I love you, Obama!

The President. I love you back. That's why I'm here. I love you guys.

Good morning, everybody.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. To all the mothers in the house: As somebody who is surrounded by women in the White House—[*laughter*]—grew up surrounded by women, let me take a moment just to say thank you for all that you put up with each and every day. We are so grateful to you, and it is fitting to have such a beautiful day when we celebrate all our mothers.

Thank you to Hampton for allowing me to share this special occasion. To all the dignitaries who are here, the trustees, the alumni, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins——

Audience member. Woo!

The President. That's a cousin over there. [*Laughter*]

Now, before we get started, I just want to say, I'm excited the battle of the real HU will be taking place in Washington this year. [*Laughter*] You know I am not going to pick sides. [*Laughter*] But my understanding is it's been 13 years since the Pirates lost. As one Hampton alum on my staff put it, the last time Howard beat Hampton, the Fugees were still together. [*Laughter*]

Let me also say a word about President Harvey, a man who bleeds Hampton blue. In a single generation, Hampton has transformed from a small Black college into a world-class research institution. And that transformation has come through the efforts of many people, but it has come through President Harvey's efforts in particular, and I want to commend him for his outstanding leadership as well as his great friendship to me.

Most of all, I want to congratulate all of you, the class of 2010. I gather that none of you walked across Ogden Circle. [*Laughter*]

Audience members. We did!

The President. You did? Okay. [*Laughter*]

You know, we meet here today, as graduating classes have met for generations, not far from where it all began, near that old oak tree off Emancipation Drive. I know my University 101. [*Laughter*] There, beneath its branches, by what was then a Union garrison, about 20 students gathered on September 17, 1861. Taught by a free citizen, in defiance of Virginia law, the students were escaped slaves from nearby plantations who had fled to the fort seeking asylum.

And after the war's end, a retired Union general sought to enshrine that legacy of learning. So with a collection from church groups, Civil War veterans, and a choir that toured Europe, Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute was founded here, by the Chesapeake, a home by the sea.

Now, that story is no doubt familiar to many of you. But it's worth reflecting on why it happened, why so many people went to such trouble to found Hampton and all our Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The founders of these institutions knew, of course, that inequality would persist long into the future. They were not naive. They recognized that barriers in our laws and in our hearts wouldn't vanish overnight.

But they also recognized the larger truth, a distinctly American truth. They recognized, class of 2010, that the right education might allow those barriers to be overcome, might allow our God-given potential to be fulfilled. They recognized, as Frederick Douglass once put it, that "education . . . means emancipation." They recognized that education is how America and its people might fulfill our promise. That recognition, that truth—that an education can fortify us to rise above any barrier, to meet any test—is reflected again and again throughout our history.

In the midst of civil war, we set aside land grants for schools like Hampton to teach farmers and factory workers the skills of an industrializing nation. At the close of World War II, we made it possible for returning GIs to at-

tend college, building and broadening our great middle class. At the cold war's dawn, we set up area studies centers on our campuses to prepare graduates to understand and address the global threats of a nuclear age.

So education is what has always allowed us to meet the challenges of a changing world. And Hampton, that has never been more true than it is today. This class is graduating at a time of great difficulty for America and for the world. You're entering a job market in an era of heightened international competition, with an economy that's still rebounding from the worst crisis since the Great Depression. You're accepting your degrees as America still wages two wars, wars that many in your generation have been fighting.

And meanwhile, you're coming of age in a 24/7 media environment that bombards us with all kinds of content and exposes us to all kinds of arguments, some of which don't always rank that high on the truth meter. And with iPods and iPads and Xboxes and PlayStations—none of which I know how to work—[*laughter*]—information becomes a distraction, a diversion, a form of entertainment, rather than a tool of empowerment, rather than the means of emancipation. So all of this is not only putting pressure on you, it's putting new pressure on our country and on our democracy.

Class of 2010, this is a period of breathtaking change, like few others in our history. We can't stop these changes, but we can channel them, we can shape them, we can adapt to them. And education is what can allow us to do so. It can fortify you, as it did earlier generations, to meet the tests of your own time.

And first and foremost, your education can fortify you against the uncertainties of a 21st-century economy. In the 19th century, folks could get by with a few basic skills, whether they learned them in a school like Hampton or picked them up along the way. As long as you were willing to work, for much of the 20th century, a high school diploma was a ticket into a solid middle class life. That is no longer the case.

Jobs today often require at least a bachelor's degree, and that degree is even more important in tough times like these. In fact, the unemployment rate for folks who've never gone to college is over twice as high as for folks with a college degree or more.

Now, the good news is you're already ahead of the curve. All those checks you or your parents wrote to Hampton will pay off. [*Laughter*] You're in a strong position to outcompete workers around the world. But I don't have to tell you that too many folks back home aren't as well prepared. Too many young people, just like you, are not as well prepared. By any number of different yardsticks, African Americans are being outperformed by their white classmates, as are Hispanic Americans. Students in well-off areas are outperforming students in poorer rural or urban communities, no matter what skin color.

Globally, it's not even close. In 8th grade science and math, for example, American students are ranked about 10th overall compared to top performing countries. But African Americans are ranked behind more than 20 nations, lower than nearly every other developed country.

So all of us have a responsibility, as Americans, to change this, to offer every single child in this country an education that will make them competitive in our knowledge economy. That is our obligation as a nation.

But I have to say, class of 2010, all of you have a separate responsibility: to be role models for your brothers and sisters, to be mentors in your communities, and when the time comes, to pass that sense of an education's value down to your children, a sense of personal responsibility and self-respect, to pass down a work ethic and an intrinsic sense of excellence that made it possible for you to be here today.

So allowing you to compete in the global economy is the first way your education can prepare you. But it can also prepare you as citizens. With so many voices clamoring for attention on blogs and on cable, on talk radio, it can be difficult at times to sift through it all, to know what to believe, to figure out who's telling the truth and who's not. Let's face it: Even some of the craziest claims can quickly gain traction. I've had some experience—[*laughter*]—in that regard.

Fortunately, you will be well positioned to navigate this terrain. Your education has honed

your research abilities, sharpened your analytical powers, given you a context for understanding the world. Those skills will come in handy.

But the goal was always to teach you something more. Over the past 4 years, you've argued both sides of a debate. You've read novels and histories that take different cuts at life.

Audience member. Amen!

The President. You've discovered—see, I got a little "Amen" there, somebody—[*laughter*]—you've discovered interests you didn't know you had. You've made friends who didn't grow up the same way you did. You've tried things you'd never done before, including some things we won't talk about in front of your parents. [*Laughter*]

All of this, I hope, has had the effect of opening your mind, of helping you understand what it's like to walk in somebody else's shoes. But now that your minds have been opened, it's up to you to keep them that way. It will be up to you to open minds that remain closed that you meet along the way. That, after all, is the elemental test of any democracy, whether people with differing points of view can learn from each other and work with each other and find a way forward together.

And I'd add one further observation. Just as your education can fortify you, it can also fortify our Nation as a whole. More and more, America's economic preeminence, our ability to outcompete other countries, will be shaped not just in our boardrooms, not just on our factory floors, but in our classrooms and our schools, at universities like Hampton. It will be determined by how well all of us, and especially our parents, educate our sons and daughters.

What's at stake is more than our ability to outcompete other nations, it's our ability to make democracy work in our own Nation. You know, years after he left office, decades after he penned the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson sat down, a few hours' drive from here, in Monticello, and wrote a letter to a longtime legislator, urging him to do more on education. And Jefferson gave one principal reason, the one, perhaps, he found most compelling. "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free," he wrote, "it expects what never was and never will be."

What Jefferson recognized, like the rest of that gifted founding generation, was that in the long run, their improbable experiment called America wouldn't work if its citizens were uninformed, if its citizens were apathetic, if its citizens checked out and left democracy who those—to those who didn't have the best interests of all the people at heart. It could only work if each of us stayed informed and engaged, if we held our Government accountable, if we fulfilled the obligations of citizenship.

The success of their experiment, they understood, depended on the participation of its people, the participation of Americans like all of you, the participation of all those who have ever sought to perfect our Union.

I had a great honor of delivering a tribute to one of those Americans last week, an American named Dorothy Height. And as you probably know, Dr. Height passed away the other week at the age of 98. One of the speakers at this memorial was her nephew who was 88. And I said that's a sign of a full life when your nephew is 88. Dr. Height had been on the firing line for every fight, from lynching to desegregation to the battle for health care reform. She was with Eleanor Roosevelt, and she was with Michelle Obama. She lived a singular life, one of the giants upon whose shoulders I stand. But she started out just like you, understanding that to make something of herself, she needed a college degree.

So she applied to Barnard College, and she got in. Except, when she showed up, they discovered she wasn't White, as they had believed. And they had already given their two slots for African Americans to other individuals. Those slots—two—had already been filled. But Dr. Height was not discouraged. She was not deterred. She stood up, straight-backed, and with Barnard's acceptance letter in hand, she marched down to New York University and said, "Let me in." And she was admitted right away.

I want all of you to think about this, class of 2010, because you've gone through some hardships, undoubtedly, in arriving to where

you are today. There have been some hard days and hard exams, and you've felt put upon. And undoubtedly, you will face other challenges in the future.

But I want you to think about Ms. Dorothy Height, a Black woman in 1929 refusing to be denied her dream of a college education, refusing to be denied her rights, refusing to be denied her dignity, refusing to be denied her place in America, her piece of America's promise, refusing to let any barriers of injustice or ignorance or inequality or unfairness stand in her way. That refusal to accept a lesser fate, that insistence on a better life, that, ultimately, is the secret not only of African American survival and success, it has been the secret of America's survival and success.

So yes, an education can fortify us to meet the tests of our economy, the tests of our citizenship, and the tests of our times. But what ultimately makes us American, quintessentially American, is something that can't be taught: a stubborn insistence on pursuing our dreams.

It's the same insistence that led a band of patriots to overthrow an empire, that fired the passions of Union troops to free the slaves and Union veterans to found schools like Hampton, that led foot soldiers the same age as you to brave firehoses on the streets of Birmingham and billy clubs on a bridge in Selma, that led generation after generation of Americans to toil away quietly, your parents and grandparents and great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents, without complaint, in the hopes of a better life for their children and grandchildren.

That is what makes us who we are. A dream of brighter days ahead, a faith in things not seen, a belief that here in this country, we are the authors of our own destiny. That is what Hampton is all about. And it now falls to you, the class of 2010, to write the next great chapter in America's story, to meet the tests of your own time, to take up the ongoing work of fulfilling our founding promise. I'm looking forward to watching.

Thank you. God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to William R. Harvey, president, Hampton University; and Bernard Randolph, Sr., nephew of the late civil rights leader Dorothy I. Height.

Remarks on the Nomination of Solicitor General Elena Kagan To Be a Supreme Court Associate Justice

May 10, 2010

Thank you very much. Everybody, please have a seat. Good morning, everybody. Of the many responsibilities accorded to a President by our Constitution, few are more weighty or consequential than that of appointing a Supreme Court Justice, particularly one to succeed a giant in the law like Justice John Paul Stevens.

For nearly 35 years, Justice Stevens has stood as an impartial guardian of the law, faithfully applying the core values of our founding to the cases and controversies of our time. He's done so with restraint and respect for precedent—understanding that a judge's job is to interpret, not make law—but also with fidelity to the constitutional ideal of equal justice for all. He's brought to each case not just mastery of the letter of the law, but a keen understanding of its impact on people's lives. And he has emerged as a consistent voice of reason, helping his colleagues find common ground on some of the most controversial and contentious issues the Court has ever faced.

While we can't presume to replace Justice Stevens's wisdom or experience, I have selected a nominee who I believe embodies that same excellence, independence, integrity, and passion for the law, and who can ultimately provide that same kind of leadership on the Court, our Solicitor General and my friend, Elena Kagan.

Elena is widely regarded as one of the Nation's foremost legal minds. She's an acclaimed legal scholar with a rich understanding of constitutional law. She's a former White House

aide with a lifelong commitment to public service and a firm grasp of the nexus and boundaries between our three branches of Government. She's a trailblazing leader, the first woman to serve as dean of Harvard Law School, and one of the most successful and beloved deans in its history. And she is a superb Solicitor General, our Nation's chief lawyer representing the American people's interests before the Supreme Court, the first woman in that position as well. And she has won accolades from observers across the ideological spectrum for her well-reasoned arguments and commanding presence.

But Elena's respected and admired not just for her intellect and record of achievement, but also for her temperament, her openness to a broad array of viewpoints, her habit, to borrow a phrase from Justice Stevens, "of understanding before disagreeing," her fair-mindedness, and skill as a consensus builder.

These traits were particularly evident during her tenure as dean. At a time when many believed that the Harvard faculty had gotten a little one-sided in its viewpoint, she sought to recruit prominent conservative scholars and spur a healthy debate on campus. And she encouraged students from all backgrounds to respectfully exchange ideas and seek common ground, because she believes, as I do, that exposure to a broad array of perspectives is the foundation not just for a sound legal education, but of a successful life in the law.

And this appreciation for diverse views may also come in handy as a diehard Mets fan serving alongside her new colleague-to-be, Yankees fan, Justice Sotomayor, who I believe has ordered a pinstriped robe for the occasion. [*Laughter*]

But while Elena had a brilliant career in academia, her passion for the law is anything but academic. She's often referred to Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, for whom she clerked, as her hero. I understand that he reciprocated by calling her "Shorty." [*Laughter*] Nonetheless, she credits him with reminding her that, as she put it, "Behind law there are stories, stories of people's lives as shaped by the law, stories of people's lives as might be changed by the law." That understanding of law, not as an intellectual exercise or words on a page, but as it affects the lives of ordinary people, has animated every step of Elena's career, including her service as Solicitor General today.

And during her time in this office, she's repeatedly defended the rights of shareholders and ordinary citizens against unscrupulous corporations. Last year, in the *Citizens United* case, she defended bipartisan campaign finance reform against special interests seeking to spend unlimited money to influence our elections. Despite long odds of success, with most legal analysts believing the Government was unlikely to prevail in this case, Elena still chose it as her very first case to argue before the Court.

I think that says a great deal not just about Elena's tenacity, but about her commitment to serving the American people. I think it says a great deal about her commitment to protect our fundamental rights, because in a democracy, powerful interests must not be allowed to drown out the voices of ordinary citizens.

And I think it says a great deal about the path that Elena has chosen. Someone as gifted as Elena could easily have settled into a comfortable life in a corporate law practice; instead, she chose a life of service, service to her students, service to her country, service to the law and to all those whose lives it shapes.

And given Elena's upbringing, it's a choice that probably came naturally. Elena's the granddaughter of immigrants, whose mother was for 20 years a beloved public schoolteacher, as are her two brothers, who are here today. Her father was a housing lawyer, devoted to the rights of tenants. Both were the first in their families to attend college. And from an early age, they instilled in Elena not just the value of a good education, but the importance of using it to serve others.

As she recalled during her Solicitor General confirmation hearings: "Both my parents wanted me to succeed in my chosen profession. But more than that, both drilled into me the importance of service, character, and integrity." Elena's also spoken movingly about how her mother had grown up at a time when women had few opportunities to pursue their

ambitions and took great joy in watching her daughter do so.

Neither she nor Elena's father lived to see this day. But I think her mother would relish this moment. I think she would relish, as I do, the prospect of three women taking their seat on the Nation's highest Court for the first time in history, a Court that would be more inclusive, more representative, more reflective of us as a people than ever before.

And I think they would be tremendously proud of their daughter, a great lawyer, a great teacher, and a devoted public servant who I am confident will make an outstanding Supreme Court Justice.

So I hope that the Senate will act in a bipartisan fashion, as they did in confirming Elena to be our Solicitor General last year, and that they will do so as swiftly as possible, so she can get busy and take her seat in time to fully participate in the work of the Court this fall.

With that, I would like to invite the person who I believe will be the next Supreme Court Justice of the United States, Elena Kagan, to say a few words.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:02 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Irving and Marc Kagan, brothers of Supreme Court Associate Justice-designate Kagan. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Supreme Court Associate Justice-designate Kagan. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Death of Lena Horne

May 10, 2010

Michelle and I were deeply saddened to hear about the passing of Lena Horne, one of our Nation's most cherished entertainers. Over the years, she warmed the hearts of countless Americans with her beautiful voice and dramatic performances on screen. From the time her grandmother signed her up for an NAACP membership as a child, she worked tirelessly to further the cause of justice and equality. In 1940, she became the first African American performer to tour with an all-White band. And while entertaining soldiers during World War II, she refused to perform for segregated audiences, a principled struggle she continued well after the troops returned home.

Michelle and I offer our condolences to all those who knew and loved Lena, and we join all Americans in appreciating the joy she brought to our lives and the progress she forged for our country.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Proposed Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Russian Federation for Cooperation in the Field of Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy

May 10, 2010

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit to the Congress, pursuant to sections 123 b. and 123 d. of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2153(b), (d)) (the "Act"), the text of a proposed Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Russian Federation for Cooperation in the Field of Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy (the "Agreement"). I am also pleased to transmit my written approval of the proposed Agreement and determination that the proposed Agreement will promote, and will not constitute an unreasonable risk to, the common defense and security, together with a copy of an unclassified Nuclear Proliferation Assessment Statement (NPAS) concerning the Agreement.

In accordance with section 123 of the Act, as amended by title XII of the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–277), classified annexes to the NPAS, prepared by the Secretary of State in consultation with the Director of National Intelligence, summarizing relevant classified information, will be submitted to the Congress separately.

The proposed Agreement was signed in Moscow on May 6, 2008. Former President George W. Bush approved the Agreement and authorized its execution, and he made the determinations required by section 123 b. of the Act. (Presidential Determination 2008–19 of May 5, 2008, 73 *FR* 27719 (May 14, 2008)).

On May 13, 2008, President Bush transmitted the Agreement, together with his Presidential Determination, an unclassified NPAS, and classified annex, to the Congress for review (see House Doc. 110–112, May 13, 2008). On September 8, 2008, prior to the completion of the 90-day continuous session review period, he sent a message informing the Congress that "in view of recent actions by the Government of the Russian Federation incompatible with peaceful relations with its sovereign and democratic neighbor, Georgia," he had determined that his earlier determination (concerning performance of the proposed Agreement promoting, and not constituting an unreasonable risk to, the common defense and security) was no longer effective. He further stated that if circumstances should permit future reconsideration by the Congress, a new determination would be made and the proposed Agreement resubmitted.

After review of the situation and of the NPAS and classified annex, I have concluded: (1) that the situation in Georgia need no longer be considered an obstacle to proceeding with the proposed Agreement; and (2) that the level and scope of U.S.-Russia cooperation on Iran are sufficient to justify resubmitting the proposed Agreement to the Congress for the statutory review period of 90 days of continuous session and, absent enactment of legislation to disapprove it, taking the remaining steps to bring it into force.

The Secretary of State, the Secretary of Energy, and the members of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) have recommended that I resubmit the proposed Agreement to the Congress for review. The joint memorandum submitted to me by the Secretaries of State and Energy and a letter from the Chairman of the NRC stating the views of the Commission are enclosed.

I have considered the views and recommendations of the interested departments and agencies in reviewing the proposed Agreement, and have determined that performance of the proposed Agreement will promote, and will not constitute an unreasonable risk to, the common defense and security. Accordingly, I have approved the proposed Agreement and urge the Congress to give the proposed Agreement favorable consideration.

My reasons for resubmitting the proposed Agreement to the Congress for its review at this time are as follows:

The United States and Russia have significantly increased cooperation on nuclear nonproliferation and civil nuclear energy in the last 12 months, starting with the establishment of the Bilateral Presidential Commission Working Group on Nuclear Energy and Security. In our July 2009 Joint Statement on Nuclear Cooperation, Russian President Medvedev and I acknowledged the shared vision between the United States and Russia of the growth of clean, safe, and secure nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and committed to work together to bring into force the agreement for nuclear cooperation to achieve this end. The Russian government has indicated its support for a new United Nations Security Council Resolution on Iran and has begun to engage on specific resolution elements with P5 members in New York. On April 8, 2010, the United States and Russia signed an historic New START Treaty significantly reducing the number of strategic nuclear weapons both countries may deploy. On April 13, both sides signed the Protocol to amend the 2000 U.S.-Russian Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement, which is an essential step toward fulfilling each country's commitment to effectively and transparently dispose of at least

34 metric tons of excess weapon-grade plutonium, enough for about 17,000 nuclear weapons, with more envisioned to be disposed in the future. Russia recently established an international nuclear fuel reserve in Angarsk to provide an incentive to other nations not to acquire sensitive uranium enrichment technologies. Joint U.S. and Russian leadership continue to successfully guide the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism as it becomes a durable international institution. The United States believes these events demonstrate significant progress in the U.S.-Russia nuclear nonproliferation relationship and that it is now appropriate to move forward with this Agreement for cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The proposed Agreement has been negotiated in accordance with the Act and other applicable laws. In my judgment, it meets all applicable statutory requirements and will advance the nonproliferation and other foreign policy interests of the United States.

The proposed Agreement provides a comprehensive framework for peaceful nuclear cooperation with Russia based on a mutual commitment to nuclear nonproliferation. It has a term of 30 years, and permits the transfer, subject to subsequent U.S. licensing decisions, of technology, material, equipment (including reactors), and components for nuclear research and nuclear power production. It does not permit transfers of Restricted Data. Transfers of sensitive nuclear technology, sensitive nuclear facilities, and major critical components of such facilities may only occur if the Agreement is amended to cover such transfers. In the event of termination, key nonproliferation conditions and controls continue with respect to material, equipment, and components subject to the Agreement.

The Russian Federation is a nuclear weapon state party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Like the United States, it has a "voluntary offer" safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). That agreement gives the IAEA the right to apply safeguards on all source or special fissionable material at peaceful-use nuclear facilities on a list provided by Russia. The Russian Federation is also a party to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, which establishes international standards of physical protection for the use, storage, and transport of nuclear material. It is also a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, whose non-legally binding guidelines set forth standards for the responsible export of nuclear commodities for peaceful use. A more detailed discussion of Russia's domestic civil nuclear program and its nuclear nonproliferation policies and practices, including its nuclear export policies and practices, is provided in the NPAS and in the classified annexes to the NPAS submitted to the Congress separately.

This transmittal shall constitute a submittal for purposes of both sections 123 b. and 123 d. of the Act. My Administration is prepared to immediately begin the consultations with the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and House Committee on Foreign Affairs as provided in section 123 b. Upon completion of the 30-day continuous session period provided for in section 123 b., the 60-day continuous session period provided for in section 123 d. shall commence.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 10, 2010.

Statement on the Appointment of David Cameron as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

May 11, 2010

Today I was pleased to call David Cameron to extend my personal congratulations for the successful campaign that he ran and for becoming the new British Prime Minister. As I told the Prime Minister, the United States has no closer friend and ally than the United Kingdom,

and I reiterated my deep and personal commitment to the special relationship between our two countries, a bond that has endured for generations and across party lines and that is essential to the security and prosperity of our two countries and the world. I look forward to meeting with the Prime Minister at the G–8/G–20 meetings in June, and Michelle and I invited Prime Minister Cameron and his wife Samantha to visit Washington this summer.

I also send my best wishes to Gordon Brown and thank him for his friendship and his distinguished service as Prime Minister. He provided strong leadership during challenging times, and I have been grateful for his partnership. This historic election has been closely followed by the American people, and I have no doubt that the ties between our two countries will continue to thrive in the years to come.

The President's News Conference With President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan

May 12, 2010

President Obama. Good morning, everybody. Please be seated. I am very pleased to welcome President Karzai back to the White House. And I also want to welcome the President's delegation, including ministers from across his Government, whose presence speaks to the broad and deepening strategic partnership between the United States and Afghanistan.

This visit is an opportunity to return the hospitality that President Karzai showed me during my recent visit to Afghanistan. And that included a wonderful Afghan dinner that the President shared with us and where we were joined by members of his delegation. So, Mr. President, thank you and welcome to the United States.

More importantly, this visit is an opportunity for us to assess the progress of our shared strategy in Afghanistan and to advance the strong partnership between our two nations, one that's based on mutual interest and mutual respect.

I have reaffirmed the commitment of the United States to an Afghanistan that is stable, strong, and prosperous. Afghans are a proud people who have suffered and sacrificed greatly because of their determination to shape their own destiny.

There is no denying the progress that the Afghan people have made in recent years—in education, in health care, and economic development—as I saw in the lights across Kabul when I landed, lights that would not have been visible just a few years earlier.

Nor, however, can we deny the very serious challenges still facing Afghanistan. After 30 years of war, Afghanistan still faces daily challenges in delivering basic services and security to its people while confronting a brutal insurgency.

Whether Afghanistan succeeds in this effort will have consequences for the United States and consequences for the entire world. As we've seen in recent plots here in the United States, Al Qaida and its extremist allies continue to plot in the border regions between Afghanistan and Pakistan. And a growing Taliban insurgency could mean an even larger safe haven for Al Qaida and its affiliates.

So today we are reaffirming our shared goal to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida and its extremist allies in Afghanistan and Pakistan and to prevent its capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future. And we are reviewing the progress of our shared strategy and objectives: a military effort to reverse the Taliban's momentum and to strengthen Afghanistan's capacity to provide for their own security, a civilian effort to promote good governance and development, and regional cooperation, including with Pakistan, because our strategy has to succeed on both sides of the border.

Now, just over half of the additional military forces that I ordered to Afghanistan in December have now arrived, with the remainder

due by this summer. As part of our 46-nation coalition, allies and partners have increased their commitments as well. We're partnering with Afghan and coalition forces, and we've begun to reverse the momentum of the insurgency. We have taken the fight to the Taliban in Helmand Province, pushed them out of their stronghold in Marja, and are working to give Afghans the opportunity to reclaim their communities.

We've taken extraordinary measures to avoid civilian casualties. And I reiterated in my meeting with President Karzai that the United States will continue to work with our Afghan and international partners to do everything in our power to avoid actions that harm the Afghan people. After all, it's the Afghan people we are working to protect from the Taliban, which is responsible for the vast majority of innocent civilian deaths.

Meanwhile, the training and development of Afghan security forces continues so that they can begin to take the lead in security next year. Towards this end, we're working with the Afghan Government and our allies on a broader framework to guide the transition of responsibility for security, development, and governance in Afghan Provinces. I've also reaffirmed that the United States is committed to transferring responsibility for detention facilities to the Afghan Government.

To support the second part of our strategy, the civilian effort, more American diplomats and experts are now on the ground and are partnering with their Afghan counterparts. In his Inaugural Address and at the London conference, President Karzai committed to making good governance a top priority. And I want to acknowledge the progress that has been made, including strengthening anticorruption efforts, improving governance at Provincial and district levels, and progress towards credible parliamentary elections later this year. Of course, President Karzai and I both acknowledge that much more work needs to be done.

I also welcomed President Karzai's commitment to take additional steps that can improve the lives of the Afghan people in concrete ways, especially with regard to the rule of law, agricultural production, economic growth, and the delivery of basic services. I pledged America's continued support for these efforts, and I've asked Secretary Clinton to lead an American delegation to this summer's Kabul conference, where the Afghan Government will be presenting concrete plans to implement the President's commitments.

On the related subject of Afghan-led peace and reconciliation efforts, I appreciated the President sharing his plans for the upcoming consultative peace jirga, an important milestone that America supports. In addition, the United States supports the efforts of the Afghan Government to open the door to Taliban who cut their ties to Al Qaida, abandon violence, and accept the Afghan Constitution, including respect for human rights. And I look forward to a continued dialogue with our Afghan partners on these efforts.

In support of the final part of our strategy, a regional approach, we discussed the importance of Afghanistan's neighbors supporting Afghan sovereignty and security. I was pleased to host President Karzai and President Zardari of Pakistan together here at the White House a year ago, and our trilateral cooperation will continue. Indeed, Pakistan's major offensive against extremist sanctuaries and our blows against the leadership of Al Qaida and its affiliates advance the security of Pakistanis, Afghans, and Americans alike.

Finally, as we pursue our shared strategy to defeat Al Qaida, I'm pleased that our two countries are working to broaden our strategic partnership over the long term. Even as we begin to transition security responsibility to Afghans over the next year, we will sustain a robust commitment in Afghanistan going forward. And the presence here today of so many leaders from both our Governments underscores how we can partner across a full range of areas, including development and agriculture, education and health, rule of law and women's rights.

Together, we can unleash Afghanistan's vast potential. For example, I was pleased to welcome several remarkable Afghan women to our recent entrepreneurship summit here in Washington. And I look forward to formalizing a new strategic partnership between our countries lat-

er this year and to deepening the lasting friendship between our people.

As I've said on numerous occasions, there are many difficult days ahead in Afghanistan. We face a determined and ruthless enemy, but we go forward with confidence because we have something that our adversaries do not. We have a commitment to seek a future of justice and peace and opportunity for the Afghan people. And we have the courage and resolve of men and women from Afghanistan and our international coalition who are determined to help Afghans realize that future. And as I did at Bagram during my visit, I especially want to acknowledge the extraordinary sacrifices that are being made by American troops and civilians in Afghanistan every single day.

Our solidarity today sends a unmistakable message to those who would stand in the way of Afghanistan's progress. They may threaten and murder innocent people, but we will work to protect the Afghan people. They will try to destroy, but we will continue to help build Afghan capacity and allow Afghans to take responsibility for their country. They will try to drive us apart, but we will partner with the Afghan people for the long term, toward a future of greater security, prosperity, justice, and progress. And I'm absolutely convinced we will succeed.

That is the work that we have advanced today. And I again want to thank our partners, President Karzai and his delegation, for the progress we have made and can continue to make in the months and years ahead.

President Karzai.

President Karzai. Thank you, Mr. President. I'm very grateful, Mr. President, for the kind hospitality that you and your team offered during our—this visit to the United States. As always, you have been gracious and kind and very hospitable.

We began our visit the day before yesterday with an informal dinner with Secretary Clinton and Secretary Gates. And we yesterday had at the State Department with Secretary Clinton an extremely fruitful meeting of the groups of Afghan ministries and their counterparts in the U.S. Government, outlining the progress we have made in the past several years and our aspirations for the future and our common objectives towards the future as we travel along.

Mr. President, I yesterday had the honor of visiting Walter Reed's hospital, where I visited with the wounded who had returned from Afghanistan and from Iraq. It was a very difficult moment for me, Mr. President, to meet with a young man—very, very young man—who had lost two arms and legs. It was heart-rendering, and there were other wounded too, just like I have seen in Afghanistan.

This shows the commitment that the United States has to bringing security to Afghanistan and, by extension, to the United States and the rest of the world and the difficult task that we have ahead of us in securing our future generations a better and more secure life.

Mr. President, I thank you again for the excellent meeting this morning, in which President Obama and I discussed the entire structure of Afghan-American relationship—the issues that we have together inside Afghanistan, the progress that we have made together, the campaign that still is going on against terrorism, the successes of the past years, which are numerous and great—for which I again express gratitude on behalf of the Afghan people to the American people and to you, Mr. President.

And I also thanked President Obama for adding considerable resources to the success in Afghanistan on becoming the President of the United States, for which, Mr. President, I convey the gratitude of the Afghan people. And I can reassure you that we will work with dedication and extreme care to have those resources spent well and in place for a better future for the Afghan people.

We also discussed during our meeting this morning the Afghan-American strategic partnership and the relations towards the future beyond the successes that we will certainly gain against terrorism, the issues related to the region and Afghanistan, Afghanistan's difficulties and concerns with regard to capacity, institution building, the buildup of the Afghan security forces, the Afghan economy, the issues of agriculture and energy, and all those issues of developmental importance to Afghanistan,

for which the United States is putting in considerable resources.

We also discussed the peace process and the upcoming peace consultative jirga in Kabul, for which, Mr. President, I am grateful to you for your support and very kind advice. We also discussed the parliamentary elections—the upcoming parliamentary elections in Afghanistan and the Kabul conference. We discussed in quite detail and in a very frank and productive manner the issues of protection of civilians and judicial—with respect to the judicial independence of Afghanistan.

I found it very happy and—for me to convey back to the Afghan people that I found a very supportive voice from President Obama on these accounts. And I'm very glad to report to you that we'll be setting up a team of our senior advisers to work out the exact timelines of the transfer of detention centers to the Afghan Government, which I consider to be a major point of progress in our conversations.

Mr. President, I once again would like to convey to you and to the people of the United States our deep, heartfelt gratitude to the help that America has provided Afghanistan. Because of that, it is once again on the world map in a significantly impartial way. Our flag is flying all around the world. We are present in all the important occasions. We once again have a voice as the people of Afghanistan. And this would have not been possible without the sacrifices and the resources that the United States and our other allies have put in.

Afghanistan is grateful. Afghanistan will definitely, with your help, succeed towards the future. There are, of course, issues that are still of concern to all of us. We have shortcomings in Afghanistan still. Afghanistan is still a very, very poor country. The work that we have done promises a better future for all of us, and Afghanistan will assure you, Mr. President, that it will take the right steps in bringing a better Government to Afghanistan for the benefit of the Afghan people and in partnership with the United States of America.

I thank you once again, Mr. President, for the tremendous hospitality.

President Obama. Thank you. All right, we've got time for two questions from the U.S. press, two questions from the Afghan press. And so I will start with Mark Knoller of CBS Radio. Where's Mark?

Q. Right here, sir.

President Obama. There he is. Good to see you, Mark.

Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom/United Kingdom-U.S. Relations/Afghanistan-U.S. Relations

Q. Thanks. Gentlemen, it sounds from your statements as though you've been able to put aside the tensions and frictions that were in evidence a month or so ago. Can you tell us if you discussed those concerns that were raised at that time? And have you figured out how the relationship may have come off the tracks?

And, Mr. President, may I also ask you about your talk with the new Prime Minister of the United Kingdom yesterday? Are you worried in any way that the U.K.'s support in Afghanistan might wane?

President Obama. Well, I will take the second question first. I had a conversation with David Cameron yesterday. He's somebody who I had had the occasion of meeting when I had traveled to England previously. I find him to be a smart, dedicated, effective leader and somebody who we are going to be able to work with very effectively.

He reaffirmed—without me bringing it up—his commitment to our strategy in Afghanistan. And I am confident that the new Government is going to recognize that it is in the interests of all the coalition partners to help President Karzai succeed and to build a more prosperous and secure and stable Afghanistan, which in turn will help assure our long-term security.

And by the way, when we—when I had the conversation with Prime Minister Cameron, I—we also both reaffirmed the extraordinary special relationship between the United States and Great Britain, one that outlasts any individual party, any individual leader. It is built up over centuries, and it's not going to go away.

With respect to perceived tensions between the U.S. Government and the Afghan Government, let me begin by saying a lot of them were simply overstated. When I came into office, I

made it absolutely clear that I intended to resource an effective strategy in Afghanistan and work with the Afghan Government so that we have a strong, stable, prosperous Afghanistan. And I've used whatever political capital I have to make the case to the American people that this is in our national security interests, that it's absolutely critical that we succeed on this mission.

President Karzai agrees that we have to deal with the extremists that are disrupting life in Afghanistan. And our strategic approach has been entirely consistent. Now, obviously, there are going to be tensions in such a complicated, difficult environment, and a—in a situation in which on the ground, both Afghans and Americans are making enormous sacrifices.

We've had very frank discussions, and President Karzai agrees with me that we can't win through a military strategy alone, that we're going to have to make sure that we have effective governance, capacity building, economic development in order for us to succeed.

And I think that what we discussed this morning is a recognition on both sides that this transformation is not going to happen overnight, that a country that's come out of 30 years of war and dire poverty is not going to suddenly change across the board. Our job is to be a good friend and to be frank with President Karzai in saying, here's where we think we've got to put more effort. President Karzai's job is to represent his country and insist that its sovereignty is properly respected, even as he goes about the hard task of bringing about these changes in both his Government and his economy.

And so I am very comfortable with the strong efforts that President Karzai have—has made thus far. And I think that we both agree that we're going to have to make more efforts in the future. And there are going to be setbacks; there are going to be times where our Governments disagree on a particular tactic. But what I'm very confident about is, is that we share a broad strategy, one that I hope we can memorialize in a declaration by the end of this year.

President Karzai. Well, sir, the relationship between Afghanistan and the United States is now into its 10th year, in the form that it has since September 11, 2001. It's not an imaginary relationship, it's a real relationship. It's based on some very hard and difficult realities. We are in a campaign against terrorism together. There are days that we are happy; there are days that we are not happy. It's a mutual relationship towards a common objective.

And definitely, days have come in which we have had a difference of opinion, and definitely, days in the future will come in which we have difference of opinion. But the relationship between the two Governments and the two nations is strong and well rooted and has endured the past 10 years of extreme activity on both sides.

So I believe what you saw in the past few months is reflective of a deep and strong relationship. And in that sort of relationship, as President Obama rightly described, there are moments that we speak frankly to each other, and that frankness will only add to the strength of the relationship and contribute to the successes that we have.

The bottom line is that we are much more strongly related to each other today than we ever were before in this relationship. And that is a good message that I will take back to the Afghan people the day after tomorrow.

Pakistan/Afghan Civilian Casualties

Q. Thank you very much. First of all, thank you very much, Mr. President, to give this chance. There is a lot of issue in Afghanistan as long as I remember. First of all, I'm sorry, I should introduce myself. My name is Nazira Azim Karimi. I'm a correspondent for Ariana Television from Afghanistan.

Today I'm not talking about as a journalist, as a woman in Afghanistan. As long as I remember, regarding Afghanistan's situation, the only reason that Afghanistan is not civilized: Pakistan. You mentioned, President Obama, about Pakistan. Pakistan has a two faces regarding Afghanistan. That's why all the time we have problem. The Pakistan Government is not really, really honest regarding—regard Afghanistan. I need your answer: What is

the new policy of United States to solve this problem?

And next question from President Karzai, I want to ask my question in Dari, and I want to answer it in Dari too.

[*At this point, the reporter spoke in Dari, and no translation was provided.*]

Thank you.

President Obama. Okay. I know you're going to translate that for us. [*Laughter*] He's very good at—[*laughter*].

Q. Yes. Civilian casualty.

President Obama. President Karzai and I have in the past met with Pakistan's President, President Zardari, as well as their intelligence officers, their military, their teams, and emphasized to Pakistan the fact that our security is intertwined.

I think there has been in the past a view on the part of Pakistan that their primary rival, India, was their only concern. I think what you've seen over the last several months is a growing recognition that they have a cancer in their midst, that the extremist organizations that have been allowed to congregate and use as a base the frontier areas to then go into Afghanistan, that that now threatens Pakistan's sovereignty.

Our goal is to break down some of the old suspicions and the old bad habits and continue to work with the Pakistani Government to see their interest in a stable Afghanistan which is free from foreign meddling and that Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States, the international community should all be working to reduce the influence of extremists in those regions. And I am actually encouraged by what I've seen from the Pakistani Government over the last several months.

But just as it's going to take some time for Afghanistan's economy, for example, to fully recover from 30 years of war, it's going to take some time for Pakistan, even where there is a will, to find a way in order to effectively deal with these extremists in areas that are fairly loosely governed from Islamabad.

Part of what I've been encouraged by is Pakistan's willingness to start asserting more control over some of these areas. But it's not going to happen overnight. And they have been taking enormous casualties; the Pakistani military has been going in fairly aggressively. But this will be a ongoing project.

And President Karzai and I both discussed the fact that the only way ultimately that Pakistan is secure is if Afghanistan is secure. And the only way that Afghanistan is secure is if the sovereignty, the territorial integrity, the Afghan Constitution, the Afghan people are respected by their neighbors. We think that that message is starting to get through, but it's one that we have to continue to promote.

President Karzai. Ma'am, we did discuss civilian casualties, the protection of civilians. I must report to you, ma'am, that since the arrival of General McChrystal in Afghanistan, there has been considerable progress achieved in this regard. There is a very open and frank attitude about that now.

The President expressed in fundamentally human terms his concern about civilian casualties, not only as a political issue but as a human issue, that President Obama remarked about, to which I have my respects to the President on this issue.

We not only discussed the ways and means of how to reduce civilian casualties—rather not have them at all—nitrates were discussed, and detentions were discussed, the way I made a remark about in my opening remarks. And you will see the agreements between us on this reflected in the joint communique that I hope is coming up or is already issued.

Mr. President.

U.S. Troop Levels and Progress in Afghanistan/ Afghan Civilian Casualties/Iran

President Obama. Suzanne Malveaux [CNN].

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. With the thousands of U.S. troops and billions of dollars in aid that still pour into Afghanistan, can you talk to the American people and give us a sense of where we stand, how close we are to winning this war in Afghanistan, and whether or not you'll be able to meet your goal of pulling out the majority of U.S. troops by July of 2011?

And to President Karzai, is there anything that you can do, your Government or your peo-

ple, to maintain that deadline, that endgame of July 2011?

And have you found your meetings with Iran's President, Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad, to be helpful or hurtful in your relationship with the Obama administration? Thank you.

President Obama. Well, Suzanne, first of all let's be clear about what July 2011 represents. What I have said is, is that having put in more troops over the last several months in order to break the momentum of the Taliban, that beginning in 2011, July, we will start bringing those troops down and turning over more and more responsibility to Afghan security forces that we are building up.

But we are not suddenly, as of July 2011, finished with Afghanistan. In fact, to the contrary, part of what I've tried to emphasize to President Karzai and the Afghan people, but also to the American people, is this is a long-term partnership that is not simply defined by our military presence.

I am confident that we're going to be able to reduce our troop strength in Afghanistan starting in July 2011, and I am in constant discussions with General McChrystal, as well as Ambassador Eikenberry, about the execution of that timeframe. But after July 2011, we are still going to have an interest in making sure that Afghanistan is secure, that economic development is taking place, that good governance is being promoted. And so we're going to still be putting in resources and we're still going to be a friend to the Afghan people in their efforts to stabilize. So that's something I want to make absolutely clear.

Now, to the American people, I think what they should know is, is that we are steadily making progress. It's not overnight, it's not going to be instant, but the sacrifices of those young people that President Karzai visited in Walter Reed, those sacrifices result over time in more and more of Afghanistan being under the control of the Afghan Government and our friend and ally, President Karzai, and less and less under the control of the Taliban.

As I indicated in my opening remarks, this is not just going to be a military solution. And so through the peace jirga that President Karzai is organizing, through the Kabul conference that sends a strong message about the Afghan Government's commitment to rule of law and good governance and human rights and women's rights, through all those mechanisms, more and more, the Afghan people start feeling confident in the Afghan Government. And as their confidence in the Afghan Government grows, their fear of the Taliban weakens.

And we are confident that that approach that has a strong military component to it, that is mindful of the enormous sacrifices that our troops and their families are making, that component is critical, but these other components are going to be critical as well. And if we marry those two approaches, then we are optimistic about success.

But there are going to be ups and downs. And one thing that I've tried to emphasize is the fact that there's going to be some hard fighting over the next several months. The fact that we are engaging—you look at a place like Marja; the Taliban controlled that area. And when you move in and you say, you're not controlling this area anymore, they're going to fight back. And they're tough, and they're going to fight. But what you're seeing, not only have we succeeded in driving the Taliban out of Marja, but it also is a model of the partnership between U.S. forces and Afghan forces.

And so you're starting to see Afghan Government forces, battle-ready, toughened, getting more experience. That then helps us to execute a transition so that more and more Afghan forces are able to take the lead. But this is going to be taking some time.

One last point I want to make—because President Karzai referred to the issue of civilian casualties, the Afghan journalist asked about it—let me be very clear about what I told President Karzai. When there is a civilian casualty, that is not just a political problem for me. I am ultimately accountable, just as General McChrystal is accountable, for somebody who is not on the battlefield who got killed. And that is something that I have to carry with me and that anybody who is involved in a military operation has to carry with them.

And so we do not take that lightly. We have an interest in reducing civilian casualties not because it's a problem for President Karzai,

we have an interest in reducing civilian casualties because I don't want civilians killed.

President Karzai. Exactly.

President Obama. And we are going to do everything we can to prevent that.

Now, war is tough and difficult, and mistakes are going to be made. And our troops put themselves at risk oftentimes in order to reduce civilian casualties. They will take a chance often in a field of battle where they're trying to deal with uncertain information, and they're not sure whether that's an attack coming or not, or which house these shots are being fired from. And because of General McChrystal's direction, oftentimes they're holding fire, they're hesitating, they're being cautious about how they operate, even though it would be safer for them to go ahead and just take these locations out, because part of what the American military stands for is that we distinguish between civilians and combatants, something, by the way, that our enemies do not do. And that puts us more at risk, and it makes it more difficult, but that's a burden that we're willing to bear.

But I want everybody to be clear, especially the Afghan people: I take no pleasure in hearing a report that a civilian has been killed. That's not why I ran for President. That's not why I'm Commander in Chief. That's not why our young men and women sign up. That's not why they sacrifice in the ways that President Karzai saw they sacrifice when they're in Walter Reed. And we are going to work together as assiduously as we can to make sure that those civilian casualties are reduced, even as we try to accomplish a mission and even as we are reminding ourselves constantly that the overwhelming majority of civilian casualties in Afghanistan are as a consequence of terrorist acts by the Taliban.

President Karzai.

President Karzai. Ma'am, on the July 2011, Afghanistan's Army and police are progressing steadily towards strengthening and towards institutionalizing. We plan to be conducting—providing security for our country in major parts of that country where we have the ability within the next 2 years.

And by the time my term of office completes in 4 years, 4½ years from today, Afghanistan is working hard to provide security for the whole of the country through the Afghan means and Afghan security institutions. On the overall picture, President Obama spoke for both of us on the issue of July 2011.

On the question of Iran and my meeting with President Ahmadi-nejad in Tehran and his visit to Kabul, Afghanistan's position there is very clear from the very first day. And we have been clear with our brothers and counterparts in Iran on that as well and with our other neighbors. Afghanistan is a partner and a friend with the United States.

The United States is our greatest contributor to stability and reconstruction, as the provider of nearly 80 percent of the support that Afghanistan receives. And Afghanistan's desire to engage in a strong, steady, long-term relationship with America is one that we have expressed clearly and publicly and repeatedly.

We've also spoken with our American counterparts from the very beginning that Iran is our neighbor and a brother and we want to have the best of relations with them. They've had contributions to Afghanistan's reconstruction. We wish that Afghanistan remains friendly to both and is not a place where we are seen as a playground by our neighbors in any way.

So the United States has been very clear and supportive and understanding of Afghan position. And this has been reflected in the discussions between us. And in the declaration, the joint communique, there was a reference to Afghanistan having friendly relations with its neighbors, and Iran is one of our neighbors. But we are distinct and clear on our relation with America and with Iran as well. We wish both countries the best. And if there anything we can do to make things better, call us. [*Laughter*]

Ma'am.

Reconciliation Efforts With Taliban in Afghanistan

Q. I am Lina Rozbih, Afghanistan Service, Voice of America. I will ask President Karzai a question and then President Obama. One of the——

President Karzai. Voice of America's Afghanistan Service?

Q. Yes.

President Karzai. Good, good.

Q. Thank you. One of the purposes of your trip here is to gain the support of U.S. Government for reconciliation and reintegration of Taliban in Afghanistan. When you first initiated this strategy or plan, you were interested into talks with lower to middle level of Taliban. But you have increasingly shown interest into bringing Taliban leaders into the negotiations, while Taliban made it very clear that the only way for them to talk to the Afghan Government is the complete withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan and the creation of a sharia-based government in that country. Are you sure that this strategy, after all the support that you will gain from international community, will be a successful one and it will not be yet another failed strategy in Afghanistan?

And my question for President Obama would be that Secretary Clinton yesterday mentioned in a gathering that U.S. support this initiative only if the Taliban put their weapons down, respect the Afghan Constitution, and cut all ties with Al Qaida. And we all know that Taliban, Al Qaida, are pretty much fighting for the ideology, not material gains. And it's very hard to differentiate between the two in Pakistan and Afghanistan since they are fighting as a united force in those countries. Do you think it's a doable strategy for Afghanistan? Thank you.

President Karzai. Ma'am——

[*President Karzai coughed.*]

Excuse me. Ma'am, exactly the last part of your question is my answer. [*Laughter*] Afghanistan is seeking peace because through military means alone we are not going to get our objectives of bringing stability and peace to Afghanistan and the defeat of terrorism.

Now, there are thousands of the Taliban who are not ideologically oriented, who are not part of Al Qaida or other terrorist networks or controlled from outside in any manner troublesome to us. There are thousands of them who are country boys who have been driven by intimidation or fear caused by, at times, misconduct by us or circumstances beyond their control or our control.

It is these thousands of Taliban who are not against Afghanistan or against the Afghan people or their country, who are not against America either or the rest of the world, and who want to come back to Afghanistan if given an opportunity and provided the political means. It's this group of the Taliban that we are addressing in the peace jirga. It is this group that has our intention.

Those within the Taliban leadership structure who, again, are not part of Al Qaida or the terrorist networks or ideologically against Afghanistan's progress and rights and Constitution, democracy, the place of women in the Afghan society, the progress that they've made, and are willing to march ahead with the rest of their people and their country towards a better future for Afghanistan, are welcome. And the jirga—the peace consultative jirga is intended for consulting the Afghan people, taking their advice on how and through which means and which speed should the Afghan Government proceed in the quest for peace.

President Obama. Well, I think President Karzai summed it up well. We've been very clear that we need ultimately a political component to our overarching strategy in Afghanistan. And as President Karzai described, the Taliban is a loose term for a wide range of different networks, groups, fighters with different motivations.

What we've said is that so long as there's a respect for the Afghan Constitution, rule of law, human rights, so long as they are willing to renounce violence and ties to Al Qaida and other extremist networks, that President Karzai should be able to work to reintegrate those individuals into Afghan society.

This has to be an Afghan-led effort, though. It's not one that's dictated by the United States or any other outside power. And I think that the peace jirga will allow for a framework to then move forward.

One of the things I emphasized to President Karzai, however, is, is that the incentives for the Taliban to lay down arms, or at least portions of the Taliban to lay down arms, and make peace with the Afghan Government in part depends on our effectiveness in breaking their momentum militarily. And that's why we

put in the additional U.S. troops. That's why General McChrystal is working so hard to clear out key population centers from Taliban control.

And so the timing, how the reconciliation process works, at what point do the Taliban start making different calculations about what's in their interests, and how the Afghan people feel about these issues, is in part going to be dependent on our success in terms of carrying out our mission there. So we are a very, I think, important partner in facilitating this potential reconciliation and effectively empowering the Afghan Government so that it is in the strongest possible position as these talks move forward.

Let me just say in conclusion, again, Mr. President, I am grateful for your visit. This is a reaffirmation of the friendship between the American people and the Afghan people.

When I came into office, I made it very clear that after years of some drift in the relationship, that I saw this as a critical priority. I also said to the American people that this was going to take some time and it was going to be hard, that we weren't going to see magical transformations immediately, but with slow, steady, persistent work on the part of both the United States and the Afghan Government, that I was confident that, in fact, we could achieve peace and stability and security there and that that ultimately would make the American people more safe and more secure.

I am more convinced than ever that we have found a difficult, but appropriate strategy for pursuing those goals. And I'm confident that we're going to be able to achieve our mission. There are going to be setbacks. There are going to be times where the Afghan Government and the U.S. Government disagree tactically. But I think our overarching approach is unified. And I think the visit by President Karzai to the United States and his willingness to listen to our concerns, even as we listen to his, as he indicated, only makes the relationship stronger.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:40 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan; and U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl W. Eikenberry.

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama and President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan

May 12, 2010

U.S. President Barack Obama and Afghan President Hamid Karzai, accompanied by senior-level delegations, convened wide-ranging discussions on May 11–12, 2010, aimed at deepening cooperation on the shared and mutual priorities of the United States and Afghanistan. These discussions on governance, security, economic and social development, and regional issues built on past sessions of the United States-Afghanistan Strategic Dialogue.

President Obama and President Karzai reaffirmed their growing cooperation and their commitment to the solid, broad, and enduring strategic partnership between the governments and peoples of the United States and Afghanistan. This partnership is based on shared interests and objectives, as well as mutual respect. The two sides declared that a sovereign, stable, secure, peaceful, and economically viable Afghanistan that has friendly relations with all its neighbors and countries in the region is vital to regional stability and global security.

Securing Afghanistan's Future

President Obama recognized the courage and determination of the Afghan people to resist violent extremists and to ensure that their country does not once again become a safe haven for terrorists, including al-Qaeda. President Karzai expressed deep appreciation for the vital support of the 46 troop-contributing countries to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) International Security Assistance Force, including ongoing stabilization efforts.

He paid special tribute to the American men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice alongside Afghan and international forces to secure a better future for the Afghan people. Additionally, both countries expressed regret over the tragic loss of civilian lives and committed to redouble efforts to prevent civilian casualties.

President Obama and President Karzai recognized the Afghan Government's deep resolve to assume increasing responsibility for security. They welcomed NATO's intent, endorsed by foreign ministers in Tallinn on April 22–23, to develop with Afghanistan a joint security transition framework that can be announced later this summer. Additionally, President Karzai noted his determination to see the Afghan National Security Forces conduct the majority of operations in the remaining insecure areas of Afghanistan and to take full responsibility for Afghanistan's physical security.

The Presidents further recognized that developing the Afghan National Security Forces' capabilities is necessary to facilitate implementation of an orderly, conditions-based security transition process. Towards that end, the Afghan Government welcomed the United States' pledge of continued support to train, equip, and sustain the Afghan National Security Forces, so they can increasingly take the lead in securing and defending their country against internal and external threats. President Karzai joined President Obama in reiterating the need for continued international military assistance to train and equip the Afghan National Security Forces.

Additionally, the United States reaffirmed its commitment to transitioning responsibility for detention facilities to the Afghan Government. This process will begin at the Parwan detention facility in January 2011. Both Presidents recognized that a successful transition will be an important milestone toward achieving President Karzai's inaugural pledge of having the Afghan Government assume full responsibility over detention operations. As part of this transition process, President Karzai welcomed continued U.S. assistance to build a safe, secure, and humane corrections system. Underscoring the United States' respect for Afghanistan's sovereignty, President Obama also emphasized his strong desire to see all search, arrest, and detention operations be carried out by the Afghan National Security Forces. He and President Karzai directed their senior defense advisors to accelerate and further clarify the timeline for the transition process, and also to consider additional steps to address this Afghan Government priority.

President Obama and President Karzai recognized the importance of Afghan-led peace and reconciliation efforts. Towards that end, the United States pledged its support for Afghanistan's reintegration and reconciliation processes, which allow an honorable place in society to those who cut ties with al-Qaeda, cease violence against the Afghan state, and accept the Afghan Constitution, including its protections of human rights and women's equality. The United States also welcomed planning towards the Consultative Peace Jirga and expressed support for an inclusive process that includes broad representation from across all of Afghan society—both men and women—and takes into account their concerns and priorities.

Strengthening Governance and Expanding Economic Opportunity

The United States reiterated its commitment to helping ensure that the Afghan Government is able to meet the needs of its people through developing its own institutions and resources. President Karzai expressed deep appreciation for the United States' long-term civilian commitment to supporting the Afghan people. President Obama pledged continued reconstruction and economic assistance, and he commended Afghanistan's commitment to develop a plan for more effective and accountable civilian government institutions at the national and sub-national levels. He emphasized the joint efforts by both governments to build Afghan Government capacity and pledged continued technical assistance to improve the accountability, professionalism, financial management, and oversight capacity of key Afghan ministries and institutions so that they can assume greater responsibility for Afghanistan's economic development. In this regard, the

United States supports the Afghan Government's intention to launch a number of key infrastructure projects, which are vital for sustainable economic growth and private sector development. Both Presidents also reaffirmed the need for continued progress toward the United States goal of directing at least 50 percent of U.S. assistance through the Afghan Government and for additional mechanisms to enhance coordination of U.S. assistance not yet flowing through the Afghan Government. Additionally, the United States pledged to expand efforts to hire local staff and procure an increasing percentage of supplies from Afghan sources.

Countering Corruption and Enhancing Accountability

Both countries recognized that fighting against corruption emanating from any source in Afghanistan remains a top priority. President Obama noted his commitment to improving oversight of all U.S. government contracting procedures. President Karzai reaffirmed his inaugural pledge to bring to justice those involved in corrupt activities. Towards that end, the two countries resolved to work jointly to improve accountability in Afghanistan by strengthening key judicial and oversight mechanisms. The United States pledged technical and financial assistance to support President Karzai's efforts to strengthen the powers and authorities of the Major Crimes Task Force and the High Office of Oversight. President Karzai underscored the important roles of the Independent Directorate for Local Governance and Civil Service Commission in appointing competent sub-national officials. He also recognized efforts to expedite reforms aimed at improving and expanding access to the formal justice sector by increasing capacity and reducing corruption in state justice institutions.

Sustaining Afghanistan's Democratic Progress

President Obama welcomed recent steps and commitments undertaken by the Afghan Government to strengthen Afghanistan's electoral institutions. He and President Karzai recognized the importance of holding transparent and credible Parliamentary elections in 2010. The United States welcomed the leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in coordinating international assistance in support of the further strengthening of Afghanistan's electoral process. It pledged additional technical and financial support to Afghanistan's democratic institutions.

President Karzai and President Obama reiterated the need to respect and defend fundamental human and civil rights set out in the Afghan Constitution, the United Nations Charter, and international agreements and conventions to which Afghanistan is a party. Towards that end, they underscored the importance of empowering Afghan men and women from all backgrounds to contribute peacefully to the development of Afghanistan. Recognizing that Afghanistan cannot prosper if half of its citizens cannot contribute fully, President Karzai and President Obama stressed the vital role Afghan women play in rebuilding their society and decided that additional measures must be taken to safeguard their rights. The two leaders reaffirmed that women's empowerment and civic participation are critical to Afghanistan's economic stability, security, good governance, and development.

Role of Regional Cooperation and the International Community

President Obama joined President Karzai in calling on the international community to sustain its long-term support for Afghanistan. Both Presidents stressed the importance of a robust and effective United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, and pledged to cooperate with UN-led efforts to coordinate the efforts of international donors.

Towards that end, President Obama announced that Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton is to head the U.S. delegation to the Kabul Conference, to be hosted by the Afghan Government on July 20. He reiterated that the U.S. delegation looks forward to joining other international donors in discussing and supporting the Afghan Government's concrete implementation plans for accelerating efforts to build its capacity to provide its citizens with economic opportunity, security, and good gov-

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 Declaration 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 families, 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 Nation'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 containment 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

to this spill as well as changes to current law to better prepare the Nation for any future spills.

The people of the Gulf region—the hard-working individuals, families, and business owners—have already begun to incur significant economic losses due to this disaster. They face the prospect of greater losses as the full impact becomes clear, in large part because of the unique relationship between their traditional livelihoods and the fragile environment. The Gulf coast is one of the richest and most beautiful ecosystems on the planet, and for centuries, its residents have enjoyed and made a living from the fish that swim in these waters and the wildlife that inhabit these shores. We will do everything in our power to support those who are affected by the spill, protect our natural resources, demand reimbursement from the responsible parties for costs incurred, rebuild what has been damaged, and help this region persevere as it has done so many times before.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Stabilization of Iraq
May 12, 2010

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, continuing the national emergency with respect to the stabilization of Iraq. This notice states that the national emergency with respect to the stabilization of Iraq declared in Executive Order 13303 of May 22, 2003, as modified in scope and relied upon for additional steps taken in Executive Order 13315 of August 28, 2003, Executive Order 13350 of July 29, 2004, Executive Order 13364 of November 29, 2004, and Executive Order 13438 of July 17, 2007, is to continue in effect beyond May 22, 2010.

Obstacles to the orderly reconstruction of Iraq, the restoration and maintenance of peace and security in the country, and the development of political, administrative, and economic institutions in Iraq continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Accordingly, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to this threat and maintain in force the measures taken to deal with that national emergency.

The Iraqi government continues to take steps to resolve debts and settle claims arising from the actions of the previous regime. Before the end of the year, my Administration will review the Iraqi government's progress on resolving these outstanding debts and claims, as well as other relevant circumstances, in order to determine whether the prohibitions contained in Executive Order 13303 of May 22, 2003, as amended by Executive Order 13364 of November 29, 2004, on any attachment, judgment, decree, lien, execution, garnishment, or other judicial process with respect to the Development Fund for Iraq, the accounts, assets, and property held by the Central Bank of Iraq, and Iraqi petroleum-related products, should continue in effect beyond December 31, 2010, which are in addition to the sovereign immunity ordinarily provided to Iraq as a sovereign nation under otherwise applicable law.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 12, 2010.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at Industrial Support Inc. and a Question-and-Answer Session in Buffalo, New York

May 13, 2010

The President. Thank you, everybody. Hello, hello, hello. Hey! It's good to be in Buffalo. Everybody, please have a seat, have a seat. Get comfortable.

I'm sorry for the delay. I—this was a secret; I only told Dave, but then I thought I probably should tell all of you that I had to go out and try those wings before I came out. [*Laughter*] So if you see some of the sauce—[*laughter*]—that's why. And I can vouch for Duff's crispy medium; that's what I had. Very nice. Outstanding.

Couple of acknowledgments I want to make. First of all, Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown is here. Where is he? Byron, stand up. Congresswoman Louise Slaughter is here. Your own Congressman from this district, Brian Higgins, is here. Congressman Chris Lee is here. And I brought one of my outstanding members of my Cabinet, who is working hard every day with businesses like this to help grow the economy, Karen Mills, my Small Business Administrator, is here. Please give her a big round of applause.

So this is my first visit to western New York as President. And so it is just a thrill to be here. I'm glad that it's not snowing. Thank you. [*Laughter*] Last Sunday, right? You guys still got snow? Sheesh. [*Laughter*] I thought Chicago was bad. This is worse.

But I'm really thrilled to be here, partly because it gives me a chance to get out of Washington. And I've been trying to make a habit of that. About once a week or so, I try to take a trip outside of Washington. Now, don't get me wrong, Washington is a beautiful city. I've got a really nice office. [*Laughter*] And I live above the store, so the commute is really short. [*Laughter*]

But you've heard of being in the bubble. When you're in Washington, sometimes it's just hard to hear anything else except the clamor of politics. And that clamor can drown out the voices of the American people. So I'm not going to give a long speech today. I actually want to take some time to take a few questions from you, hear about your concerns, your hopes, what opportunities you see out there.

But before I do, I do want to say a few words about the thing that I know is in the front and center of everybody's mind, and that's the state of our economy.

Now, I don't need to tell all of you that we're still emerging from one of the worst recessions in our history. And it's been tough everywhere, but cities like Buffalo have been especially hard hit. Now, even before the most recent downturn began—years before—you were seeing jobs disappear and factories shut their doors. Costs, family expenses went up, but wages, they flatlined, they didn't go up. And that's tough on families, and that's devastating on communities.

So breaking our economic freefall was job number one when I took office. I want everybody to remember, because sometimes we've got a selective memory here, when I took office, we were losing 750,000 jobs a month. Our economy had shrunk, the quarter I came in, 6 percent. Experts of all political stripes were warning of another great depression. That wasn't that long ago, but it's easy to forget just how fragile things are and how scared people were. And so we had to take immediate steps to stop the crisis. And some of those steps weren't particularly popular.

I had just inherited a $1.3 trillion deficit from the previous administration, so the last thing I wanted to do was to spend money on a recovery package or help the American auto industry keep its doors open or prevent the collapse of Wall Street banks whose irresponsibility had helped cause this crisis. But what I knew was if I didn't act boldly and I didn't act quickly, if we didn't defy the politics of the moment and do what was necessary, we could have risked an even greater disaster.

And the other thing we weren't going to do is give in to the partisan posturing in Washington, because half the time up there, all everybody is worried about is what does the poll say and making calculations based on what's good for the next election instead of what is good for the next generation.

And frankly, I had one side of the aisle just sit on the sidelines as the crisis unfolded. And if we had taken that position, just thinking about what was good for my politics, millions more Americans would have lost their jobs and their businesses and their homes.

But, Buffalo, I did not run for President to preside over America's decline. I didn't run for President to watch the erosion of the middle class continue. I ran for President to keep the American Dream alive in our time, for our kids and our grandkids and the next generation.

So we met our responsibilities; we did what the moment required. And I won't stand here and pretend that we've climbed all the way out of the hole. There are too many folks right here in Buffalo and all across the country who are still hurting.

I read too many letters each night from folks who are still hurting, they're still out of work, so I know things are still tough out there for a lot of folks. And you know, economists have all kinds of fancy formulas and mathematical equations to measure the exact moment that the recession ended. And it's great that the stock market's bounced back, but if you're still looking for a job out there, it's still a recession. If you can't pay your bills or your mortgage, it's still a recession. No matter what the economists say, it's not a real recovery until people feel it in their own lives, until Americans who want work can find it and until families can afford to pay their bills and send their kids to college.

So that's what we're working for. That's our goal. But I want to just say to Buffalo, I want to say to all of you and I want to say to America, we can say beyond a shadow of a doubt, today, we are headed in the right direction. We are headed in the right direction.

All those tough steps we took, they're working. Despite all the naysayers who were predicting failure a year ago, our economy is growing again. Last month, we had the strongest job growth that we had seen in years. And by the way, almost all of it was in the private sector, and a bunch of it was manufacturing. So this month was better than last month. Next month's going to be stronger than this month. And next year's going to be better than this year. Last month, we gained 290,000 jobs; that was the largest increase in 4 years. We've now gained jobs 4 months in a row right here in the United States. Last month brought the largest increase in manufacturing employment since 1998—strongest growth in manufacturing in 12 years. That's a good sign for companies like this one.

I was talking to Dave. Dave was telling me about the rebound in orders that we've seen here, right here at this company. The question is, now, how do we keep that momentum going? How do we keep adding more and more jobs?

Now, we know that the Government has to play a role in meeting this goal, but we also know that role is limited. Government is not the true engine of job creation and economic growth in this country, businesses are, especially small businesses like this one.

So America's small-business owners, people like Dave Sullivan, have always been the backbone of America's economy. These entrepreneurial pioneers, they embody the spirit of possibility, tireless work ethic, simple hope for something better that lies at the heart of the American ideal. These are the men and women willing to take a chance on their dream. They've got good ideas, and then they've got the drive to follow through. They've started mom-and-pop stores, and they've got garages they open up, and they start tinkering, and suddenly, that leads to some of America's biggest, most successful businesses. Ordinary Americans with a dream to start their own business, they create most of the jobs that keep our workers employed. In fact, over the past decade and a half, America's small businesses have created 65 percent of all new jobs in this country.

Now, the problem is, is that our small businesses have also been some of the hardest hit

by this recession. From the middle of 2007 through the end of 2008, small businesses lost 2.4 million jobs. And because banks shrunk from lending in the midst of the financial crisis, it's been difficult for entrepreneurs to take out the loans that they need to start a business. And for those who do own a small business, it's difficult to finance inventories and make payroll or expand if things are going well.

So government can't create jobs, but it can create the conditions for small businesses to grow and thrive and hire more workers. Government can't guarantee a company's success, but it can knock down the barriers that prevent small-business owners from getting loans or investing in the future. And that's exactly what we've been doing.

When Dave wanted to expand this company last year, he received a loan from the Small Business Administration that was part of the Recovery Act, part of the stimulus. It's a loan that allowed him to pay the bills and purchase new equipment. Last fall, he was even able to increase his workforce. And today, he feels optimistic that he'll be able to hire more workers in the near future.

Bill Puglisi and his brother Rick are also here with us today. Where are Bill and Rick? Where are they? There they are right there. All right. They run—good to see you guys. They run a small business called Imperial Textile. And thanks to the SBA loan that they received, they didn't have to lay any workers off last year. In fact, they were able—they were even able to purchase a new building. Is that right? So today, they're starting to look to hire again. You guys can sit down. [*Laughter*]

All across America, we've taken steps like these to help companies grow and add jobs. Last year, we enacted seven tax cuts for America's small businesses, as well as what we call the Making Work Pay tax credit that goes to the vast majority of small-business owners. So so far, the Recovery Act has supported over 63,000 loans to small businesses; that's more than $26 billion in new lending. More than 1,200 banks and credit unions that had stopped issuing SBA loans when the financial crisis hit are lending again today. More than $7.5 billion in Federal Recovery Act contracts are now going to small businesses.

Right now a series of additional tax incentives and other steps to promote hiring are going to take effect. Because of a bill that I signed into law a few weeks ago, businesses are now eligible for tax cuts for hiring unemployed workers. Companies are able to write off more of their investments in new equipment. And as part of health care reform, 4 million small businesses recently received a postcard in their mailbox telling them that they could be eligible for a health care tax cut this year. That's worth maybe tens of thousands of dollars for some companies. And it's going to provide welcome relief to small-business owners who too often have to choose between health care and hiring.

As—when we stopped over at Duff's to get our wings, one of the customers there was a woman who was a small-business owner. She had a courier service. And I asked her, "What's the biggest challenge you've got?" She said, "Trying to keep up health care for me and my workers." And she was appreciative that she's going to get a 35-percent tax break on her health care costs this year. And I told her that—[*applause*]—and over the next several years, we're setting up an exchange where she, as a small-business owner, is going to be able to buy into a big pool that all these Members of Congress are a part of, so with millions of members, that's going to give her more leverage with the insurance companies; that's going to drive down her costs. She offered me to have some of her wings as a consequence. [*Laughter*] I said I had already put in an order.

So all these steps have helped; they're going to help. But I believe we've got to do even more to give our small businesses a boost. And maybe the single most important thing we can do right now is to help ensure that creditworthy small-business owners can get the capital that they need.

So in my State of the Union Address, I called for a $30 billion small-business lending fund that would help increase the flow of credit to small companies that were hit hard by the decline in lending that followed the financial crisis. And last week, I sent Congress this legislation, which now includes a new State small-

business credit initiative, an initiative that will help expand lending for small businesses and manufacturers at a time when budget shortfalls are leading a lot of States to cut back on vitally important lending programs. And I've also asked Congress to work with us to extend and enhance SBA programs that have helped small-business owners get loans so they can create more jobs.

That's our small-business agenda, that's our jobs agenda: empowering small businesses so they can hire. Now, I hear a lot of noise from some of our friends out there that say, this is nothing more than big government. Now, I want everybody here to understand, I don't understand—I personally don't think that giving tax cuts to businesses is big government. I don't understand how helping businesses get loans so they can grow and hire more workers is big government.

I'm not interested in another debate about big government versus small government. I care about whether government's meeting its responsibilities to the people it represents. And I want to unleash the great power of our economy so Americans who are looking for work can find it. And I'm hopeful that our small-business agenda doesn't fall victim to the same partisanship that we've seen over the last year. Helping businesses to create jobs should be something that both parties can agree to.

Now, since this company was founded more than a decade ago, you've done all that's asked of Americans who hope to pursue the dream of owning their own business. I mean, you can just tell Dave's just got a lot of energy. You can tell the guy loves his business, he loves his employees. And what he did was he took a risk on a good idea, and then he worked hard for that success.

He's met his responsibilities to his employees and to his customers. Millions of small-business owners and workers across the country have met those same responsibilities. And now it's time that responsibility—that same responsibility, that same success is rewarded with the opportunity to keep growing, keep hiring, keep contributing to the success of your communities and your country. That's the opportunity that we're providing today. That's the opportunity I will continue to fight for as your President in the weeks and the months ahead.

I want everybody here to know, in Buffalo and all across the country, we are on a course that is working. This company makes me want to double down and work even harder, because I'm absolutely confident that if we continue to take responsibility to invest in our future, that our brightest days are still ahead of us.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. So thank you. So thank you, guys. Everybody can have a seat. So I've got time for a couple of questions. Yankees fan, right here.

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Well, hold on a second. We got a mike so everybody can hear you, even though I can tell you've got a decent voice. [*Laughter*] Introduce yourself, sir.

Mass Transit Infrastructure Improvements/ High-Speed Rail System

Q. Frank Caparazzo, Depew, New York.

The President. Good to see you.

Q. Good to see you, sir. My question is, during your term of office, will Buffalo see the transit system improvement for this country arrive here in Buffalo?

The President. Well, it's a great question. And I know that the issue of infrastructure and transit, transportation is big here, but it's big all across the country. The Recovery Act that we put forward had one of the biggest investments in infrastructure since Eisenhower started the Interstate Highway System. But the backlog of work and projects that need to be done is so big that it's going to be a multi-year process that we've got to embark on.

My hope is that Democrats and Republicans working together are going to be able to find a long-term financing mechanism and that we start investing not just in highways, but also in mass transit, high-speed rail, and—especially along the eastern corridor, and, say, where I'm from, Chicago, where you've got Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, St. Louis, Indianapolis, you've got all these cities that are pretty close by, that are a half-hour, 45-minute flight, but if you had a high-speed rail system,

a lot of people would end up using the rail system instead of flying. It would be more convenient for a lot of folks, and you wouldn't have to take off your shoes. [*Laughter*]

It would be good for businesses, because if we're building infrastructure, that means companies like Dave potentially have new sources of business. It would be good for our environment, because one of the things, obviously, that we have to recognize is, is that no matter what we do, oil prices are going to be going up over the long term. I mean, year to year, they may vary. Sometimes it's four bucks a gallon at the pump, sometimes it drops back down to two and a half.

You're not always clear what's going on, but the long-term trend is up, just because countries like China, they're starting to buy cars, and countries like India are starting to buy cars, and so the demand on petroleum and fossil fuels are going to be greater and greater. We've got to get a first-class transit system. And we don't have one right now. We used to be at the top. Now you've got China, they're building multiple high-speed rail lines all across the country, leaving us behind.

But it's not just transit. It's our ports, our airports, our sewer systems, our water systems. We're going to have to figure out how do we make those kinds of long-term investments, but do so in a way that doesn't increase our deficit. And that's going to be a challenge, but I think it's going to be a priority.

Good question. And Yankees are doing pretty good right now, but you know I'm a White Sox fan, and we're going to come after you. [*Laughter*] We got started a little slow.

All right, I'm going to go boy, girl, boy, girl here. I want to make sure that folks know I'm fair.

Okay, hold on a second. Let's get the mike.

Health Care Reform

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President. About a month ago, Senator Hatch visited Buffalo, and it was right after the health care bill was passed, and he called it the "Europeanization of America," using it as a derogatory term. What do you make of this?

The President. Well, you know, first of all, Orrin Hatch is a gentleman. He was just visiting with me in the Oval Office, and I enjoy his company. This is sort of a reporter question, though, isn't it? This is a budding reporter. [*Laughter*]

There's been a lot of rhetoric floating around on this health care bill, so I'll just explain very simply what's in the bill, and then you can make your own judgments instead of us slapping labels on it. Here's what the health care bill does.

Number one, it's an insurance reform bill. And some of these insurance reforms are starting to take effect this year. So, for example, one of the reforms ensures that all insurance companies have to let you keep your child on your health insurance up until 26 years old, because, as a lot of you know, when you leave college, sometimes getting that first job, you may not be able to get health insurance right away. And so we want to be able to make sure that those young people can stay insured until they get a job that has health insurance.

Another insurance reform is making sure that insurance companies can't drop you when you get sick, which is a practice, unfortunately, that happens to a lot of people.

Another insurance reform is making sure that you don't find yourself, after you've gotten sick, having hit what's called the lifetime limit, where, heaven forbid, you've got an illness that is really expensive, and you didn't—you missed the fine print that said at a certain point, the insurance companies stop paying. And so you go bankrupt anyway, even though you've been paying premiums all these years.

So a big chunk of health care reform is just insurance reform. That's number one.

Number two is what I mentioned already, which is tax credits to small businesses so that they can afford to either keep their employees' health insurance or they can start providing health insurance to employees that don't already have it. And for most small businesses, they're going to get up to a 35-percent tax break on their health insurance bills. And if you talk to small businesses, that's a big deal.

Number three, for people who don't have health insurance—and by the way, the majority of people who don't have health insurance are working people. Really poor folks who don't

work, they're on Medicaid; they already have health insurance. It's working families and middle class families and a lot of sole proprietors and small-business owners who don't have health insurance.

So what we're saying to them is, we are going to set up an exchange, which is basically a marketplace where you can buy your health insurance through this big exchange, and you'll be part of a big pool, which gives you better negotiating power with the insurance companies. That'll drive down your premiums. And if even with a better rate you still can't afford it, we are going to give you a tax credit to help you afford it. All right?

And finally—now, there are all kinds of other aspects of it in terms of encouraging prevention and funding prevention, but the other big piece of this is we want to work through the Medicare and the Medicaid system to figure out how do we start controlling costs. Because even if you tell the insurance companies, "You have to insure people with preexisting conditions, and you can't drop people when they get sick," and even if you allow people to buy through this exchange so it drives down their costs, if the underlying costs of health care keep on going up, then our costs are still going to go up. And so we've got to try to encourage the overall health care system to be smarter and use its money more effectively.

And I'll just give you one example that probably a lot of you have. Have you ever noticed that doctor's office is the only place where you still have to fill out forms, like, three, four times in a row? Well, part of it is just because every other part of our economy is computerized, but somehow, that's not true in our health care system.

So what we want to do, for example, is provide the incentives for hospitals and doctors and so forth to get electronic medical records. And we want to tell the doctors, you know what, instead of us reimbursing you every time you take a test—so you end up going to a—because of something wrong, you go to the doctor. You get one test, then he sends you to the specialist; you get another test. Then you go to the hospital; you get a third test. We want to—we're going to pay you for one test, and then e-mail it to everybody else. Those are the kinds of things that help to save money over the long term.

Now, we've got to try a bunch of different things in order for us to save money, but that is our basic approach.

So here's the bottom line to your question: If you've got health insurance that you're happy with, then you're going to keep it. Nothing—you don't have to do anything. The only thing that you're getting is the insurance company can't drop you if, for example, your child turns out to have a chronic condition. So it's giving you more security. If you don't have health insurance, we're building off the free market, off the existing system of private, employer-based insurance, and we're saying, this is going to give you a chance to get health insurance that's a little bit cheaper. I don't know what that's called. I just think it's a good idea. All right?

Okay, gentleman here had a question.

Tax Reform

Q. I'm going to cheat with a two-part question here. What, if anything, I guess, other than political talk, is being done to eliminate the Alternative Minimum Tax? And what's the argument, if any, to just completely do away with the IRS and have a flat tax that's equitable for everyone?

The President. The—for those of you who don't know, the Alternative Minimum Tax is something that was instituted a while ago. And basically what happens is—the original concept was that people were using all these loopholes, and so some of the wealthiest Americans were paying no taxes. And so the idea was, you know what, you get all these deductions, and as long as you're not abusing them for your home or your business expenses or what have you, you can take these itemized deductions. But if at a certain point, it leads somebody who's making a million dollars a year to pay no taxes at all, that's a problem. So we're going to have this alternative way of calculating your taxes to make sure that you at least pay the same thing as your secretary does or your receptionist does—a portion of your taxes.

Here's the problem: They didn't index it, meaning that they didn't make sure that the amount got adjusted each year so that it would take into account inflation. And so each year, what's happened is as inflation goes up, what—$250,000 today obviously buys—doesn't buy the same thing as it bought 20 or 30 years ago, and so more and more families, first in the upper middle class, but starting to creep into the middle class, are being affected by this Alternative Minimum Tax.

To eliminate it, though, would create this huge hole in the budget. So what happens is each year, Congress slaps on what's called a patch to make sure that it doesn't affect too many middle class people. And so they appropriate $50 billion a year at a time to close the hole. That was, by the way—part of the Recovery Act this year was—$70 billion of the Recovery Act was just designed to make sure that the AMT didn't affect more people. But I think the point you're making is, why aren't we just solving this over the long term?

Now, that's true for a whole bunch of things in our tax system. And the truth of the matter is, is that we're going to have to spend the next couple of years making some very hard decisions in terms of getting our deficit and our debt under control. It's not going to be any fun. It's not going to be as painful as it will be if we put it off, but it's still going to be a little bit uncomfortable. It's like going through the family budget; you know, you started getting too many things you couldn't afford, and then you're going to have to start making some decisions.

We've—what I've done is I've put together a fiscal commission made up of Democrats and Republicans, as well as private sector folks, so that we've got some objective people on it. It's chaired by a former Senator, Alan Simpson, and Clinton's former Chief of Staff, Erskine Bowles. And their job is to report back to me and to Congress over the next—in the next 5, 6 months to give us a package of solutions to start getting the deficit more effectively under control. One of the things, I think, is going to be tax reform that they'll recommend. And that should include simplification, and it's got to make sure that it's more fair.

The main argument—and the last point I'll make on this—on the fair tax, the main argument that people make against the fair tax is right now we've got a progressive income tax. I made a lot of money last year because my book sold a lot, and so I wrote a really big check to Uncle Sam. My rate was higher than somebody who made $40,000 a year. So we've got a progressive income tax, meaning that the more you make, the higher your tax rate goes, up until a certain amount.

Now, if you have a flat tax and everybody is—let's say everybody was—had a—was paying 10 percent. That means Warren Buffett's paying 10 percent. It means the construction worker's paying 10 percent. It means somebody who's got a minimum wage job is paying 10 percent. And the question is, does that 10 percent take a bigger bite out of the cashier at the supermarket than it does out of Warren Buffett? Because she's paying more of her income in food and rent and just basic necessities, and so does it make sense for Warren Buffett to be paying a little bit more?

In order to have a flat tax that was revenue-neutral, that didn't add to the deficit, it'd have to be a pretty substantial tax, but it would mean a huge tax break for Warren Buffett. And so the question is, is there a way of achieving simplification, but still having some element of progressivity and some element of fairness in the tax system? That's part of what makes it complicated.

I'll be honest with you, though, a lot of the complications in the IRS Tax Code, it just has to do with lobbying in Washington. And that aspect of it we've just got to eliminate. We've got to kind of clean house. We've got to take out a hose and just eliminate a lot of these tax loopholes that are out there. And I think we can do that.

All right, young lady right there.

Small-Business Owner Outreach/Small Business Administration/Education

Q. Mr. President, thank you for your leadership. My name is Sundra Ryce, and I'm the President and CEO of SLR Contracting & Service Company in Buffalo. We're general contractors. And I'm an 8(a) graduate of the SBA

program. Thank you for bringing Ms. Mills with you today.

My question is for small businesses. Besides the tax cuts and the health care reform, are—is your administration looking to allocate any monies or any resources to the education for small-business owners? Because it's so important that we have the tools to become profitable businesses and also effective businesses, but education, I believe, is a key component, in addition to all of the wonderful things that your administration is doing now.

The President. Well, I think it's a great question. Let me break up the question into two parts. Number one is education for people who either want to start a business or have already started a business, because even if you've got a great idea, if you haven't started a business before, you might make mistakes, and it would be helpful if somebody was able to kind of show you the ropes. So part of what we want to do is to make sure that the SBA is providing effective technical training and help and advice to small businesses, even if they've already been pretty successful, maybe in order—they want to take it to the next level.

And Karen, I think, can share with you a whole host of technical assistance programs that the SBA has tried to set up on inventory controls and marketing and a whole host of other issues.

One of the things that—and I've talked to Karen about this—one of the things I want to do, though, is to get some of those good programs out into the community and a little more proactive. Because sometimes, all Federal Government agencies, they just kind of sit behind a desk waiting for you to find them. And I want them to find you. I want them to be going out and canvassing businesses and saying, you know what, here's what SBA can do for you. And then you can make a decision, is this something that would be helpful to you or not.

Now, the other issue, though, has to do with just our education system generally. I have to tell you that the economy is growing and we are moving, but if we are not able to train our people effectively over the next 10, 20, 30, 50 years, we will fall behind.

We used to have the best education system in the world, bar none. The truth of the matter is, is that these days, we can't really make that claim. We still have the best universities in the world. We've still got some of the best schools in the world. But if you look at our young people's average scores on math, on science, the critical subjects that are going to be key in order for us to be at the cutting-edge technologically, we're kind of in the middle. In some cases, we're kind of down at the bottom of the pack when it comes to developed countries, advanced countries.

And some of it's just numbers. I mean, look, we still produce more engineers per capita than China does. But China has over a billion people. So they can produce so much more in terms of engineers, Ph.D.'s, computer scientists than we can. We've got to keep up. We've got to work.

That's why we've initiated—one of my top priorities as President has been to make sure that we're initiating education reform from top to bottom. It's not just money. So what we said to States was, you want some additional help for your schools? First of all, one of the things that the Recovery Act did was it prevented layoffs of teachers, including right here in Buffalo, because we helped plug State budgets and municipal budgets.

But then what we also said was, you want some extra money? Show us that you've got a reform plan that's going to work. Show us that you're keeping track of what your students are doing and you're setting high standards and you're making sure that those teachers are trained to meet—to help the students meet those standards and that you're looking after all children, not just those at the top, but those that are struggling as well. And we call it the Race to the Top. Instead of the race to the bottom, we want a race to the top. You got to show us that you're building excellence in your school system.

And then at the college level, what we've done is we've made student loans much more accessible. It used to be that student loans were going through banks and financial intermediaries, and they were taking out billions of dollars in profits. We cut out the middleman.

We said, let's take that extra money and give it directly to students. And so we've hugely expanded Pell grants, lowered student loan rates, made them more accessible for young people all across Buffalo, all across America.

We've focused a lot on community colleges because—I'm looking at these great workers at this company, but if I wanted to get a job right now—I'll tell you a secret. You wouldn't want me on one of those machines in there. I'd cut off one of my fingers, and it'd make a mess, but let's say I wanted to get a job as a machine operator. Well, if I'm trying to transition into a new career, community colleges are a huge resource for us to be able to train young people to get the jobs that exist right now. And that saves Dave money so that he doesn't have to train somebody on the job. Dave can hook up with the community college, tell them, I will hire 5 guys or 10 guys, or he can work with other companies around the area and design a training program so that young people who go through it, they know there's a job out there when they get it. So we've been working a lot and putting more money into community colleges as a bridge.

Here's the point, though: We've got to make sure that our young people are trained and prepared for the future. I know Buffalo's a big hockey town, and I know that Gretzky wasn't your guy. But Gretzky—they used to say something wonderful about why Gretzky was so good, and it was because he didn't think about where the puck was, he thought about where the puck was going to be, right? And the same thing is true when it comes to our economy. We've got to be thinking, where are the jobs of the future? What are the needs of the future, whether it's in terms of transit, whether it's in terms of health care, whether it's in terms of education, business? What does—where is America going to be 10 years from now, 20 years from now?

We want to have the most efficient, cutting-edge private sector. And we want a Government that is lean and mean, but working effectively with you, not wasting your tax dollars, but investing in those things that are going to be absolutely necessary for us to be competitive. And if we keep that vision in mind, even as we're making some tough decisions about the budget, even as we're making tough decisions around how to deal with our deficits, I'm confident that we're going to be able to come out with a stronger competitive posture, a better future than we've ever had before. All right? And that's going to be true right here in Buffalo as well.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:22 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to David P. Sullivan, founder and president, Industrial Support Inc.; Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc.; and former National Hockey League player Wayne Gretzky.

Remarks at the Real Time Crime Center in New York City
May 13, 2010

Well, everybody, look, I know you folks are busy, but I just wanted to come by and say thank you. I was telling the mayor and the commissioner that the work that the NYPD does in coordination with State, local, and Federal officials when it comes to counterterrorism is a model for the country. It has been for some time. And I don't think I need to tell you that given the potential for attack everywhere in the country, we've got a lot to learn from what is taking place here.

Number one, you guys do a great job coordinating with other law enforcement. Number two, you are just professional and exhibit excellence at all times when carrying out your job. Number three, and what we saw in Times Square, is you know how to get the community involved, and raising community awareness is absolutely critical. And as a consequence, you have saved an awful lot of lives.

And so my main message to you is that the country is proud of you. I know your mayor and your commissioner are proud of you. Your President is proud of you. And we want to make sure that we continue to work with you to get the resources that are needed for you to contin-

ue to be effective and to make sure that Federal agencies are consistently working with you with—working on all cylinders, because we want to make sure that you are getting the support you need to protect this great city.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:21 p.m. at One Police Plaza. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York City; and Raymond W. Kelly, commissioner, New York Police Department. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on the United States Nuclear Weapons Stockpile

May 13, 2010

Dear _____:

I am pleased to transmit to the Congress, pursuant to section 1251 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 (Public Law 111–84) the report on the plan to enhance the safety, security, and reliability of the nuclear weapons stockpile of the United States; modernize the nuclear weapons complex; and maintain the delivery platforms for nuclear weapons, along with the estimate of budget requirements over a 10-year period.

My Administration is dedicated to seeking the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons, and we are taking concrete steps toward that goal. As long as nuclear weapons still exist, I am firmly committed to maintaining a safe, secure, and effective nuclear arsenal to deter adversaries and reassure U.S. allies and other security partners.

As we reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy, it remains increasingly important that we ensure the safety, security, and effectiveness of our nuclear weapons stockpile. This report, and the plan it contains, is an important element of our assurance that the U.S. deterrent remains strong.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Daniel K. Inouye, chairman, and W. Thad Cochran, vice chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Carl Levin, chairman, and John S. McCain III, ranking member, Senate Committee on Armed Services; John F. Kerry, chairman, and Richard G. Lugar, ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; David R. Obey, chairman, and Jerry Lewis, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations; Isaac N. "Ike" Skelton IV, chairman, and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, ranking member, House Committee on Armed Services; and Howard L. Berman, chairman, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, ranking member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Message on the Senate Transmitting the Treaty Between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms

May 13, 2010

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, signed in Prague on April 8, 2010, with Protocol. The Protocol is an integral part of the Treaty and contains three Annexes. I also transmit, for the information of the Senate, the report of the

Department of State and three unilateral statements associated with the Treaty. These unilateral statements are not legally binding and are not integral parts of the Treaty. The Department of State report includes a detailed article-by-article analysis of the Treaty, as well as an analysis of the unilateral statements.

The Treaty will enhance the national security of the United States. It mandates mutual reductions and limitations on the world's two largest nuclear arsenals. The Treaty will promote transparency and predictability in the strategic relationship between the United States and the Russian Federation and will enable each Party to verify that the other Party is complying with its obligations through a regime that includes on-site inspections, notifications, a comprehensive and continuing exchange of data regarding strategic offensive arms, and provisions for the use of national technical means of verification. The Treaty further includes detailed procedures for the conversion or elimination of Treaty-accountable items, and provides for the exchange of certain telemetric information on selected ballistic missile launches for increased transparency.

Additionally, the Treaty creates a Bilateral Consultative Commission that will meet regularly to promote effective implementation of the Treaty regime. This Commission will provide an important channel for communication between the United States and the Russian Federation regarding the Treaty's implementation.

The United States will continue to maintain a strong nuclear deterrent under this Treaty, as validated by the Department of Defense through rigorous analysis in the Nuclear Posture Review. The Treaty preserves our ability to determine for ourselves the composition and structure of our strategic forces within the Treaty's overall limits, and to modernize those forces. The Treaty does not contain any constraints on testing, development, or deployment of current or planned U.S. missile defense programs or current or planned U.S. long-range conventional strike capabilities.

The Treaty, upon its entry into force, will supersede the Treaty Between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Strategic Offensive Reductions, signed in Moscow on May 24, 2002.

I urge the Senate to give early and favorable consideration to the Treaty, including its Protocol, and to give its advice and consent to ratification.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 13, 2010.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Dinner in New York City

May 13, 2010

Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. It is good to be back in New York City. Love New York City.

I want to thank, first of all, Congressman Chris Van Hollen, who has one of the tougher jobs around. Let's face it: Whenever you are the chairman of the DCCC, the demands on your time, in addition to being a Member of Congress, all your committee assignments, and then you also have to go out there and help campaign for everybody, it is a tough job. And Chris is handling it with unbelievable class. And we are so grateful to him. Thank you, Chris.

To Congressman Steve Israel, thank you for the outstanding work that you've done as chair of recruiting. To all the distinguished Members of Congress, including the dean of the New York delegation, Charlie Rangel, and everybody else who is here, thank you for not only helping to organize the event tonight, but also for your incredible dedication and courage during the course of the past year and a half.

It is good to be back in New York City, and it is good to be following Nancy Pelosi. [*Laughter*] New York is a tough town, but Nancy Pelosi, that's one tough lady. [*Laughter*] That is one

tough lady. And she's so elegant, even as she's ripping your heart out—[*laughter*]—if you mess with her.

You need to be tough to put up with all the criticism and griping that she deals with on a daily basis. And that's from the Democrats. [*Laughter*] But her toughness, her extraordinary leadership, is why she's not just going to go down in history as the first woman Speaker, she is going to go down as one of the greatest Speakers of all time. She has been unbelievable in her leadership in Congress.

Now, I also want to thank all of you, not just for your financial contributions, but for your time, your energy, your faith that America can move forward in the right direction. Your support has made an incredible difference, because 16 months ago, when we took office, we knew this wouldn't be easy. At least I hope you knew, because I told you. [*Laughter*] If you didn't know, you weren't paying attention at my Inauguration Address. [*Laughter*] Remember that? Washington, couple million people, really cold? [*Laughter*] We came in here with a whole host of challenges in our inbox, challenges the likes of which we hadn't seen in this country for decades.

Abroad, we were confronting a war in Iraq that needed to come to a responsible end and a war in Afghanistan that demanded greater attention and focus and a host of new threats and new dangers and new opportunities in a new world.

And here at home, we were facing a financial crisis that had the potential to plunge us into another great depression. We had a deficit crisis saddling our children with a mountain of debt, an economic crisis that was pounding families and small businesses all across the country, a lot of families who had already endured an awful lot during the previous decade. And even though we didn't cause these crises, we took the responsibility to end them.

That's why we asked the American people for the chance to lead in the first place. That's why Nancy Pelosi and all the Members of Congress here, the reason they ran wasn't to put off problems, but to solve problems. That was the reason I ran for President. And that meant we had to make some tough decisions.

Trust me, when I walked into the door of the Oval Office and found a $1.3 trillion deficit after the previous administration had inherited a surplus, the last thing I wanted to do was spend money on a recovery package or become involved in the auto industry or prevent the collapse of Wall Street banks, particularly those whose irresponsibility had helped to cause this crisis. That wasn't on my campaign to-do list. You don't remember me campaigning on those items. [*Laughter*]

And they certainly weren't popular. We knew that. Sometimes these folks—I listen to these pundits, and they're saying, aw, the President's made this decision and his—these are unpopular decisions. I've got pollsters. [*Laughter*] I know when what we're about to do is politically unpopular. [*Laughter*] But what I also knew was that if we wanted to break the back of our recession and get our economy moving again, then the steps we took were absolutely necessary. And while we still have a long road ahead of us, we're beginning to see signs of progress all across America—all across America.

The economy that was shrinking a year ago, it's growing today. The economy that was bleeding jobs at a historic pace a year ago—750,000 jobs a month when I came in—now we're creating jobs again. Our economic heartbeat keeps growing stronger. These are good things, even if our friends on the other side of the aisle fall all over themselves to argue otherwise.

But here's the thing: The steady progress we're seeing, it didn't happen by accident. We're starting to see in public opinion surveys that people start thinking that the economy's getting better, but there seems to be a disconnect as to why it's getting better. The reason the economy's getting better is because Nancy Pelosi and every Democrat here embraced the responsibility to lead. It happened because they embraced the responsibility to stand up to special interests, stand up even against the prevailing political winds, stand up for the American people's interests. It happened because we embraced the responsibility to finally take on problems that Washington had talked about for years, sometimes decades, and put

off over and over and over again. That's what this Congress has been doing. And it hasn't been easy. These guys have taken more tough votes in the last 16 months than Congress had taken in the previous 16 years. And that's the truth.

Think about it. For years, Washington had talked about how credit card companies were ripping off American families. Well, this was the Congress that passed the credit card bill of rights. For years, Washington talked about protecting our kids from tobacco companies. This was the Congress that stepped up and delivered and put a stop to those practices.

For years, Washington had talked about making sure our veterans got the care and benefits that was promised them. This was the Congress that increased funding for our veterans by more than we had done in a generation and guaranteed that it would arrive on time every year.

For years, Washington had talked about fixing the student loan system that favored financial interests over students and families. This was the Congress that finally made it happen. Over $60 billion of funding that is now going to students to help them go to school happened because of the courageous votes that were taken by these Members of Congress.

For years, Washington talked about the need to transition to a clean and independent energy future. This was the Congress that made the biggest investment in clean energy in our history. And that investment is already reopening factories and rehiring workers to build wind turbines and solar panels and effectively create an advanced battery industry right here in America.

For nearly half—for nearly a century, we had been talking about the need for health insurance reform in America. And this was the Congress that delivered it for the American people.

So I want everyone in this room to be clear—I'm glad I got pictures with you, it was nice to schmooze with you a little bit, but the bottom line is, is that I could not have gotten done any of the things we got done had it not been for this team right here. And they did it despite all the gridlock, despite all the partisanship. This has been one of the most productive legislative sessions in history, in the midst of crisis.

If we just stopped now, in fact, if we had stopped last year, it would have already been one of the most productive legislative sessions in history. And that's tempting, stopping. [*Laughter*] Everybody's kind of pooped, but—particularly because it would've been nice to get a little help from the other side of the aisle, just once in a while. You would have thought at a time of historic crisis that Republican leaders would have been more willing to help us find a way out of this mess, particularly since they created the mess. [*Laughter*]

We all have a stake in cleaning it up. We're not Democrats or Republicans first; we're Americans first. I tell the story about—you know, sometimes you got a feeling Nancy and I are sitting—Charlie and Steve, everybody—Jerry, we're—got our mops and our brooms out, we're cleaning stuff out, and they're sitting there saying, "Hold the broom better." [*Laughter*] "That's not how you mop." [*Laughter*] Don't tell me how to mop. Pick up a mop. [*Laughter*] Do some work on behalf of the American people to solve some of these problems. [*Laughter*]

But that wasn't their strategy; it was not their strategy from day one. And I'm not making this up. This is public record. They've said in interviews: "We made a political decision. We stood nothing to gain from cooperating. We knew things were going to be bad. And we figured, if we didn't do anything and if it didn't work out so well, maybe the other side would take the blame."

They've done their best to gum up the works, to make things look broken, to say no to every single thing. That was the attitude they had when it came to pulling our economy out of a crisis. That was the attitude they had when it came to making sure that families and businesses finally got the security of health care in this country. That's been the attitude on any number of challenges that we faced. Their basic attitude's been, "If Democrats lose, we win."

So after they drove the car into the ditch, made it as difficult as possible for us to pull it back, now they want the keys back. [*Laughter*] No! [*Laughter*] You can't drive. We don't want

to have to go back into the ditch. We just got the car out. We just got the car out. [*Laughter*]

Look, I just came from Buffalo. I spent some time with workers and families; they're still facing very tough economic times. A couple weeks ago, I spent time with folks in the Midwest. I've been trying to make it a habit of getting out of Washington as often as the job allows. And when I do, you know what's fascinating? None of the people you meet—and I'm not just seeing folks who have signed up to see me. We're stopping in diners, and we're talking to folks on the streets and on the farm, and they don't care which party puts points on the board. They're not talking about who's positioned better for November. They're not keeping track of what's going on with the red team and the blue team. And they're not watching cable network news. They just want to know that somebody is looking out for them in Washington, that somebody's working hard. They want to see progress. They expect us to respond to our challenges with the same sense of urgency that they feel in their own lives. That's all they're looking for. They want to know that we're trying hard and that we've got their interests in mind.

And what I believe is when we win—we win when the American people win, that good policy is good politics. People wonder sometimes why it is that I stay calm. I stay calm because if I feel like I'm making the best decision possible that's good for the American people, then ultimately the American people are going to figure that out. And Nancy Pelosi and this caucus has the same attitude, because if they didn't, we would have made a whole bunch of different decisions.

And the American people are going to have a clear choice when they head into the polls in November. They're going to have a choice about whether they want somebody who has the courage to stand up in a time of need or would prefer somebody who sits on the sidelines and tries to cast blame. They're going to have a choice about whether you're going to make decisions that strengthen our country for the long term or that just serve your short-term political purposes. The American people will have a choice about whether or not we're going to keep rebuilding America that is stronger and more prosperous and more competitive than before, and that means making some tough choices now for our children and our grandchildren, or going back to the policies that got us into this mess in the first place.

And I am proud that for the past year and a half, under the leadership of the folks sitting in this room, the Democratic Party has taken the right path. It's cut taxes for 95 percent of America's working families, cut taxes for small businesses, for making college more affordable, for families buying their first home. Not just to reward those at the top, but instead to give a little bit of lift to folks on the bottom at a time when they were really in trouble. That's what Democrats were for, and the other side was against it.

We took on the special interests and fixed the broken student loan system that gave tens of billions of dollars to financial systems, unnecessary middlemen, and we put that money to work helping students all across America go to college and get the skills they need to win the race in this 21st-century economy. That's what Democrats are for. You know what? The other side, it was against it.

We thought it was unfair to deny health insurance to Americans with preexisting conditions. We thought it was wrong to let hard-working families go bankrupt because somebody in their family gets sick. And so we did something about it that no Congress had done in American history. That's what we were for, and the other side was against it.

We fought for the principle that all of us ought to have a sense of security when it comes to our health care. And I truly believe that, and so does everybody in this room. And now they are talking about repealing it if they take over in November. They'd actually tell uninsured Americans with preexisting conditions, you know what, it's a mistake to ensure that you get coverage. They'd tell seniors, you know what, give back that help that you're getting when it comes to paying for your prescription drugs. They'd tell millions of small-business owners who today qualify for new tax credits to help them cover their workers and the millions of young Americans who can now

stay on their parent's plan until they turn 26 years old, you know what, tough luck, you're on your own.

I'm not going to let that happen, Nancy's not going to let that happen, and I'm confident, as long as we're able to get our message out, with your help, the American people aren't going to let that happen.

Now, I'm not saying Democrats and Republicans ought to agree on everything. There are going to be some things we don't see eye to eye on, and a good, serious debate is good for our democracy. That's what this is all about. But the fact is, the problems that we face are too great for us to be playing politics all the time. And all of us, Democrats and Republicans, need to come together to solve problems. And that is what Nancy Pelosi and the Democratic Caucus has done. They have not played politics.

And now—[*applause*]—and frankly, that is not always politically convenient. We're engaged in a debate right now about commonsense Wall Street reform. Now, I was in Wall Street just a few weeks ago, and I said, I believe in the power of the free market; I believe in a strong financial system. When it's working right, our financial institutions are an enormous source of strength and dynamism in our economy. It helps families buy homes and businesses grow and ideas to take flight. There are a lot of good people who work in the financial industry who do things the right way. It's in our best interest to make sure those firms are strong and healthy.

But when these institutions operate irresponsibly, they don't just threaten themselves. As we've seen, they threaten the entire economy, along with the dreams of millions of Americans who worked so hard to make a life for themselves.

So we need reform that would ensure they operate in a honest, fair, open way. And we'll see who can stand up to the lobbyists and special interests who are trying to weaken this reform, even as we speak. We'll see who wants to get it done. Because all of us, Democrats and Republicans, have a responsibility to make sure the American people don't have to endure a crisis like this ever again.

All of us are going to have to tackle our exploding deficits. And I got to say, Washington, it's got a short-term memory, so people don't remember that it wasn't that long ago, under a Democratic President, that America enjoyed the hard-won budget surpluses. And yet it only took a few years of Republican Congresses, these same budget hawks, being in charge to turn that surplus into a massive deficit, passing a tax cut for the richest Americans, creating an expensive, new entitlement program, and authorizing two wars without paying for a single dime of it. And now suddenly we're in charge, and they say, "Hey, where did this deficit come from?" [*Laughter*]

Well, we will help clean up that mess too. That's why I've gone through our budget line by line to cut what we don't need so we can pay for what we do need. That's why I set up a bipartisan fiscal commission to look at our structural deficit, our long-term deficit, set a clear goal to cut our deficit in half over the next 3 years, because I don't want to kick our problems down the road. I don't want our children to have to deal with it.

And that's what all this comes down to. That's what Democrats have been about over the course of this last year and a half: What kind of future are we going to build and leave for the next generation? And I know this is a party fundraiser, this may be blasphemy to say so, but all of us has to ask ourselves one question: What is more important, doing what is easy to get through the next election or doing what's right for the next generation?

And the Democratic Party this year has answered that question. We chose to lead. We chose to make tough decisions. We chose not to spend all our time looking at the polls.

I remember the conversation Nancy and I had about health care at the beginning of the debate. And I told her, I said, I want to get this done, even if it meant that I was going to be a one-term President. I think it's that important. And Nancy—when everybody got all nervous after Massachusetts, she said, you know what, we're still going to get it done.

And we did what was necessary to rescue our economy. We've done what's necessary to resuscitate our economy and to rebuild it on a

new foundation of growth and to turn this country around and point it in the right direction.

And yes, we're going to take some lumps. But we can now see the contours of what's a more prosperous, more secure future for America, where new jobs and new industries in areas like clean energy and clean tech come back to within our borders, and you've got a highly trained, highly educated workforce that can compete for those jobs with any other workers in the world; and where more families and businesses are free to chase their dreams backed up by the security of health care; and where the future of the American Dream is once again within the reach of every American; and we've got a Government that works and is competent and has restored science to its rightful place and believes in civil liberties, and we have some folks on the Supreme Court who believe in the Constitution.

I—[*applause*]—that is the future that was—is within our sight. We've gone through a stormy time. And I know sometimes it's made you guys a little seasick—[*laughter*]—but right now the waters are calming, right there at the horizon, we can see our destination. So now's not the time to lose heart. Now's not the time to get complacent. Now's the time to remind ourselves of what America's all about and make sure we are working as hard as we can to return Democrats to the House of Representatives.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:59 p.m. at the St. Regis New York Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Jerrold L. Nadler.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Burma

May 13, 2010

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the Burma emergency is to continue in effect beyond May 20, 2010.

The crisis between the United States and Burma arising from the actions and policies of the Government of Burma, including its engaging in large-scale repression of the democratic opposition in Burma, that led to the declaration of a national emergency in Executive Order 13047 of May 20, 1997, as modified in scope and relied upon for additional steps taken in Executive Order 13310 of July 28, 2003, Executive Order 13448 of October 18, 2007, and Executive Order 13464 of April 30, 2008, has not been resolved. These actions and policies are hostile to U.S. interests and pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to Burma and maintain in force the sanctions against Burma to respond to this threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 13, 2010.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 14. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Ceremony Honoring the National Association of Police Organizations TOP COPS

May 14, 2010

Good morning, everybody. Please have a seat. Well, it is wonderful to see all of you. To Tom, to Attorney General Holder, and to the outstanding officers standing behind me, as well as their families, welcome to the Rose Garden. It is my privilege to welcome the TOP COPS back to the White House, men and women who stand as shining examples of the bravery, persistence, and good judgment that so many members of our law enforcement community display each and every day.

I think that Eric Holder has done an outstanding job at Justice Department, but part of the reason he's here is because one of his key jobs is supporting local law enforcement. And he truly appreciates the extraordinary service that local law enforcement does each and every day.

We also have a couple Members of Congress here who I want to recognize, Representative Tim Ryan and Senator Max Baucus, who have been extremely supportive of local law enforcement efforts.

To Tommy Nee and the other officers and board members from the National Association of Police Organizations, thank you for coming and thanks for the great work that you do every day.

And finally, I want to congratulate this year's TOP COPS and their families. I think it's fair to say that the folks behind me never imagined they would be here today. If you asked them, these officers would say they were just professionals doing their jobs as best they could. And they'll tell you that there are thousands of law enforcement officers in every corner of this Nation who are just as brave, just as dedicated, and just as capable as they are and who would do the same thing if given the opportunity.

And that's all true. But that's exactly what makes these officers and all of our men and women in uniform real heroes. It's the ability to put on a badge and go to work knowing that danger could be waiting right around the corner. It's the understanding that the next call could be the one that changes everything. And it's the knowledge that, at any moment, they could be called upon to stop a robbery, to participate in a high-speed chase, or to save a life.

Some people haven't faced their moment yet. But whether it's by chance or by the hand of fate, these officers were tested. And when the moment came, they did what they were trained to do. The men and women here today have jumped into cars to rescue victims held at knifepoint. They've pulled trapped children from a burning car seconds before it was engulfed in flames. They've leapt in front of hijacked buses, faced armed suspects, led 6-hour manhunts through the dark, and saved countless lives by risking their own.

And in the moments when these officers were under fire or choking on smoke, they weren't thinking about themselves. They weren't thinking about the medals or commendations. I'm pretty sure they weren't thinking about being honored at the White House. Instead, they were focused on their partners, on the face of the child who was in harm's way, on the victim and the innocent bystander who desperately needed their help.

And that's why we honor them. Because while these officers may think of themselves as ordinary, as just another sheriff or trooper or patrolman doing their job, their actions were extraordinary. And for that we owe them our undying gratitude.

But honoring TOP COPS means doing more than just saying thank you. It means supporting our entire law enforcement community so that no matter what the challenges we face in the months and years ahead, our men and women in uniform will be prepared to answer the call.

And that's why, from the very beginning, my administration has been dedicated to giving State and local law enforcement the resources they need to get the job done. So far, $3.5 billion of the Recovery Act has gone to support local law enforcement, $1 billion for the COPS program alone. That money has helped to create or preserve almost 4,700 law enforcement jobs for 3 years and made progress towards our

goal of putting 50,000 new police officers on the street.

Next year's budget would more than double the previous request for the COPS program. And at a time when our Nation is emerging from the worst economic recession in generations, we'll maintain strong funding for Justice Assistance Grants, known as the Byrne/JAG grants, and bulletproof vests to keep our communities and our men and women in uniform safe.

We'll make sure you continue to have the resources and support that you need, because we've seen the results of that work. In the first half of 2009, crime fell to the lowest level since the 1960s. Homicides dropped by 10 percent. Car thefts were down nearly 20 percent. And property crimes declined by over 6 percent.

Much of this is due to the men and women and their counterparts all across the country that are doing outstanding work. But it's also a reflection of the role that ordinary Americans are playing, taking back their neighborhoods from violent gangs and open-air drug markets, educating their children, being vigilant.

Of course, the most recent example and most visible example of this partnership between citizens and police happened 2 weeks ago in Times Square. Alerted by two street vendors that smoke was coming out of a suspicious vehicle, NYPD Officer Wayne Rhatigan immediately realized the potential danger and, along with other officers on the scene, helped clear the area quickly and safely. The NYPD's elite bomb squad unit then spent over 5 hours defusing the device. And just 2 days after the attempted terrorist attack, thanks to the outstanding work of local, State, and Federal officials, a suspect was in custody.

And yesterday I had the privilege of visiting the NYPD Real Time Crime Center and meeting Officer Rhatigan and other officers whose quick thinking and cooperation may have saved hundreds of lives. Like the folks behind me, they succeeded because they were well trained, they were vigilant, and they were ready.

So being a hero isn't always easy. As Officer Ryan Jacobsen, who is being honored here today, said of his own experience, "It's one of those things in your life you can never prepare for fully and that you hope never happens again."

So we are incredibly proud of the courage that all of you have shown in the conditions that we can only imagine. It's a distinction that none of you asked for, but all of you accepted. And I promise that we will stand by you and everyone who wears the badge as you continue to keep us safe.

So thank you all. Tom, thanks for the outstanding work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas J. Nee, president, National Association of Police Organizations; Times Square street vendors Duane Jackson and Lance Orton; Faisal Shahzad, suspect in the May 1 attempted terrorist attack in Times Square; and Officer Ryan Jacobsen, Colorado Springs Police Department, CO. The related proclamation of May 7 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on the Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico
May 14, 2010

Good afternoon, everybody. I just finished meeting with some of my Cabinet and administration officials about the ongoing efforts to stop the BP oil spill. And I want to give the American people an update on these efforts, but I also want to underscore the seriousness and urgency of this crisis.

The potential devastation to the Gulf Coast, its economy, and its people require us to continue our relentless efforts to stop the leak and contain the damage. There's already been a loss of life, damage to our coastline, to fish and wildlife, and to the livelihoods of everyone from fishermen to restaurant and hotel owners. I saw firsthand the anger and frustration felt by our neighbors in the Gulf. And let me tell you, it is an anger and frustration that I share as President. And I'm not going to rest

or be satisfied until the leak is stopped at the source, the oil in the Gulf is contained and cleaned up, and the people of the Gulf are able to go back to their lives and their livelihoods.

Now, the most important order of business is to stop the leak. I know there have been varying reports over the last few days about how large the leak is, but since no one can get down there in person, we know there is a level of uncertainty. But as Admiral Thad Allen said today, our mobilization and response efforts have always been geared toward the possibility of a catastrophic event. And what really matters is this: There's oil leaking, and we need to stop it, and we need to stop it as soon as possible. With that source being 5,000 feet under the ocean's surface, this has been extremely difficult. But scientists and engineers are currently using the best, most advanced technology that exists to try to stop the flow of oil as quickly as possible.

Our second task has been to contain the spill and protect the Gulf Coast and the people who live there. We are using every available resource to stop the oil from coming ashore. Over 1 million feet of barrier boom have been deployed to hold the oil back. Hundreds of thousands of gallons of dispersant have helped to break up the oil, and about 4 million gallons of oily water have been recovered. Thirteen thousand people have been mobilized to protect the shoreline and its wildlife, as has the National Guard.

This week, we also sent to Congress legislation that would provide us with the additional resources to mitigate the damage caused by this spill. And I ask for prompt action on this legislation. Now, it would help with cleanup efforts, it would provide unemployment assistance and job training to folks whose jobs are affected by this crisis, and it would help with the region's economic recovery. That's why this legislation is important.

It would also help ensure that companies like BP that are responsible for oil spills are the ones that pay for the harm caused by these oil spills, not the taxpayers. This is in addition to the low-interest loans that we've made available to small businesses that are suffering financial losses from the spill.

Let me also say, by the way, a word here about BP and the other companies involved in this mess. I know BP has committed to pay for the response effort, and we will hold them to their obligation. I have to say, though, I did not appreciate what I considered to be a ridiculous spectacle during the congressional hearings into this matter. You had executives of BP and Transocean and Halliburton falling over each other to point the finger of blame at somebody else. The American people could not have been impressed with that display, and I certainly wasn't.

I understand that there are legal and financial issues involved, and a full investigation will tell us exactly what happened. But it is pretty clear that the system failed and it failed badly. And for that, there is enough responsibility to go around. And all parties should be willing to accept it.

That includes, by the way, the Federal Government. For too long, for a decade or more, there has been a cozy relationship between the oil companies and the Federal agency that permits them to drill. It seems as if permits were too often issued based on little more than assurances of safety from the oil companies. That cannot and will not happen anymore. To borrow an old phrase, we will trust, but we will verify.

Now, from the day he took office as Interior Secretary, Ken Salazar has recognized these problems, and he's worked to solve them. Oftentimes, he has been slammed by the industry, suggesting that somehow these necessary reforms would impede economic growth. Well, as I just told Ken, we are going to keep on going to do what needs to be done.

And so I've asked Secretary Salazar to conduct a top-to-bottom reform of the Minerals Management Service. This week, he announced that the part of the agency which permits oil and gas drilling and collects royalties will be separated from the part of the agency in charge of inspecting the safety of oil rigs and platforms and enforcing the law. That way, there's no conflict of interest, real or perceived.

We've also ordered immediate inspections of all deepwater operations in the Gulf of Mexico. And we've announced that no permits for drill-

ing new wells will go forward until the 30-day safety and environmental review that I requested is completed. We're also closing the loophole that has allowed some oil companies to bypass some critical environmental reviews, and today we're announcing a new examination of the environmental procedures for oil and gas exploration and development.

Now, as I've said before, domestic oil drilling continues to be one part of an overall energy strategy that now includes more clean, renewable energy and energy efficiency than at any other time in our history. But it's absolutely essential that going forward we put in place every necessary safeguard and protection so that a tragedy like this oil spill does not happen again. This is a responsibility that all of us share. The oil companies share it; the manufacturers of this equipment share it; the agencies in the Federal Government in charge of oversight share that responsibility. I will not tolerate more finger-pointing or irresponsibility.

The people of the Gulf Coast need our help, and they deserve nothing less than for us to stand up and do whatever is necessary to stop this spill, prevent further damage, and compensate all those who've been harmed already. That's our job.

It's also our job to make sure this kind of mess doesn't happen again. It's a job we've been doing. It's a job we will keep doing until the well is capped and the spill is cleaned up and all claims are paid.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:13 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

The President's Weekly Address
May 15, 2010

On Thursday, I paid a visit to a small business in Buffalo, New York, a town that's been hard hit in recent decades. I heard from folks about the struggles they've been facing for longer than they care to remember. And I talked with them about what my administration is doing to help our families, our small businesses, and our economy rebound from this recession.

Jump-starting job creation in the private sector and fostering a climate that encourages businesses to hire again is vitally important, and I'll continue working hard to make sure that happens. But my responsibility as President isn't just to help our economy rebound from this recession; it's to make sure an economic crisis like the one that helped trigger this recession never happens again.

That's what Wall Street reform will help us do. In recent weeks, there's been a lot of back and forth about the reform bill currently making its way through Congress. There's been a lot of discussion about technical aspects of the bill and a lot of heated and, frankly, sometimes misleading rhetoric coming from opponents of reform.

All of this has helped obscure what reform would actually mean for you, the American people. So I just wanted to take a few minutes to talk about why every American has a stake in Wall Street reform.

First and foremost, you have a stake in it if you've ever been treated unfairly by a credit card company, misled by pages and pages of fine print, or ended up paying fees and penalties you'd never heard of before. And you have a stake in it if you've ever tried to take out a home loan, a car loan, or a student loan, and been targeted by the predatory practices of unscrupulous lenders.

The Wall Street reform bill in Congress represents the strongest consumer financial protections in history. You'll be empowered with the clear and concise information you need to make the choices that are best for you. We'll help stop predatory practices and curb unscrupulous lenders, helping secure your family's financial future. That's why families have a stake in it.

And our community banks also have a stake in reform. These are banks we count on to provide the capital that lets our small businesses hire and grow. The way the system is cur-

rently set up, these banks are at a disadvantage because while they are often playing by the rules, many of their less scrupulous competitors are not. So what reform will do is help level the playing field by making sure all our lenders, not just community banks, are subject to tough oversight. That's good news for our community banks, which is why we've received letters from some of these banks in support of reform.

What's true for our community banks is also true for small-business men and women like the ones I met in Buffalo. These small businesses were some of the worst victims of the excessive risk-taking on Wall Street that led to this crisis. Their credit dried up. They had to let people go. Some even shut their doors altogether. And unless we put in place real safeguards, we could see it happen all over again.

That's why Wall Street reform is so important. With reform, we'll make our financial system more transparent by bringing the kinds of complex, backroom deals that helped trigger this crisis into the light of day. We'll prevent banks from taking on so much risk that could collapse and threaten our whole economy. And we'll give shareholders more of a say on pay to help change the perverse incentives that encouraged reckless risk-taking in the first place. Put simply, Wall Street reform will bring greater security to folks on Main Street.

The stories I heard in Buffalo this week were a reminder that despite the progress we've made, we need to keep working hard so we can build on that progress and rebound from this recession in the short term. But even as we do, we also need to lay a new foundation for growth and shared prosperity over the long term.

Next week, we have a chance to help lay a cornerstone in that foundation. The reform bill being debated in the Senate will not solve every problem in our financial system; no bill could. But what this strong bill will do is important, and I urge the Senate to pass it as soon as possible so we can secure America's economic future in the 21st century.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 12:35 p.m. on May 14 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on May 15. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 14, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 15. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the National Peace Officers Memorial Service
May 15, 2010

Thank you, Chuck, for that warm introduction and for your outstanding leadership as national president of the Fraternal Order of Police. I also want to commend the entire Fraternal Order of Police and all its leaders, including Jim Pasco, for the work you do on behalf of America's peace officers. Let me also recognize FOP Auxiliary President Beverly Crump, members of the FOP Auxiliary, Members of Congress and my administration, including Attorney General Eric Holder, and distinguished guests who are here today.

To the survivors of fallen law enforcement officers, our hearts go out to you for your loss. The husbands and wives, mothers and fathers you loved, they protected us all. And all Americans are grateful for the lives that they gave in the line of duty.

To the active duty law enforcement officers who traveled from all over the country to be here, let me simply say, thank you. Thank you for the service you are rendering to our Nation, and thank you for the sacrifices you are making on behalf of our people.

Every day in America, families go about their lives. They wake up, sit down for breakfast, send their kids off to school, then they head into the office or onto the factory floor. And after putting in a honest day's work, they return home, ready to do it all over again in the morning.

We often take it for granted, this cycle of life. We know, of course, that chance can change everything overnight. But we also rely on a certain order in our lives, a certain sense of security that lets us sleep safely in our beds and walk around our neighborhoods free from fear and

go about our daily lives without being the victims of crime.

That sense of security doesn't come on its own. What makes it possible, what makes freedom possible, are the law enforcement officers that we honor today. It's men and women like so many of you. It's anyone who's ever put on a uniform or worn a badge in the name of law, in the name of order, in the name of protecting and defending the United States of America.

What led you to live such a life? What leads a person to put on that uniform, to wear that badge, to enter the law enforcement profession? Part of it, of course, is what leads any of us to pursue a profession, a responsibility to provide for our wives and our husbands, to give our children and grandchildren a better life. For some, there's also a family legacy to honor, a proud inheritance an officer may aspire to uphold.

But there's also another reason, a higher calling that led the men and women we honor today, like so many of you, to become peace officers, a calling to serve our neighbors, a calling to serve our neighborhoods, a calling to live a life in service of others.

It's a calling that carries immense risk. You don't know what dangers you'll confront each time you put on that uniform or step outside in plain clothes. Whether you're a beat patrolman or a road deputy, you don't know what the next dispatch will bring. All you know is your duty to keep us safe, to keep our communities safe, to keep America safe. It is a duty you fulfill every single day.

Today we honor Americans who lost their lives in pursuit of that duty, in pursuit of that calling. We honor Traffic Sergeant Mark Dunakin, a 17-year veteran of Oakland's Police Department. "A big teddy bear," his friends called him, who loved his Buckeyes and Steelers. The kind of guy you could always count on to get you to do the right thing. Mark was killed on March 21, 2009, during a traffic stop at 74th Avenue and MacArthur Boulevard. And he leaves behind his wife Angela and three children.

We honor Deputy Burt Lopez, a 6-year veteran of Okaloosa County Sheriff Office in Florida. Big-hearted, Burt once delayed serving a minor warrant until a Sunday so that the defendant, a father of six, could earn one more day's pay for his family. On April 25, 2009, Burt and Deputy Skip York were killed attempting to arrest a domestic assault suspect they had tracked down at a gun club in Crestville [Crestview].* Burt is survived by his wife Michelle and five children.

We honor Trooper Joshua Miller, a veteran of both the Pennsylvania State Police and the United States Marine Corps. Josh, it's been said, was a trooper's trooper. The only thing he loved more than stopping drunk drivers and hunting was spending time with his wife Angela and their three daughters. His face lit up when you mentioned them. Josh was killed on June 7, 2009, during an operation that ultimately rescued a 9-year-old boy who'd been kidnaped by his father.

We honor these Americans and each of the law enforcement officers who lost their lives in the line of duty last year. Each loved, each is missed, each is among America's finest. These men and women join nearly 19,000 Americans who've made such a sacrifice since Deputy Isaac Smith was shot investigating a disturbance at a New York tavern in 1792. Such a sacrifice, such an honor roll, is what makes it possible for us to go on about our lives, to pursue our dreams, to enjoy America's freedoms.

It is an honor roll engraved in stone not far from here, at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial. Guarding over the park and the memories of Americans memorialized there are four bronze lions. Beneath one is a verse from the Book of Proverbs I impart to you as a prayer: "The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are as bold as a lion."

May God's face shine upon the lions that we have lost, may He watch over the ones that guard us still, and may He bless now and forever the United States of America.

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* White House correction.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:58 a.m. at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Chuck Canterbury, national president, and James O. Pasco, Jr., executive director, Fraternal Order of Police. The related proclamation of May 7 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Signing the Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act of 2009 and an Exchange With Reporters

May 17, 2010

The President. Well, hello, everybody. I am very proud to be able to sign the Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act, a piece of legislation that sends a strong signal about our core values when it comes to the freedom of the press.

All around the world there are enormously courageous journalists and bloggers who, at great risk to themselves, are trying to shine a light on the critical issues that the people of their countries face, who are the frontlines against tyranny and oppression. And obviously, the loss of Daniel Pearl was one of those moments that captured the world's imagination, because it reminded us of how valuable a free press is and it reminded us that there are those who would go to any length in order to silence journalists around the world.

What this act does is it sends a strong message from the United States Government and from the State Department that we are paying attention to how other governments are operating when it comes to the press. It has the State Department each year chronicling how press freedom is operating, as one component of our human rights assessment, but it also looks at countries that are—governments that are specifically condoning or facilitating this kind of press repression, singles them out and subjects them to the gaze of world opinion in ways that I think are extraordinarily important.

Oftentimes without this kind of attention, countries and governments feel that they can operate against the press with impunity. And we want to send a message that they can't.

So this legislation, in a very modest way, I think, puts us clearly on the side of journalistic freedom. I want to thank Adam Schiff in the House and Senator Chris Dodd in the Senate for their leadership. And I particularly want to thank the Pearl family, who have been so outspoken and so courageous in sending a clear message that despite Daniel's death, his vision of a well-informed citizenry that is able to make choices and hold governments accountable, that that legacy lives on.

So we are very grateful to them. I'm grateful to the legislative leaders who helped to pass this. It is something that I intend to make sure our State Department carries out with vigor. And with that, I'm going to sign the bill.

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

The President. There you go. Thank you, everybody. Appreciate it.

Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico

Q. Mr. President, speaking of press freedom, could you answer a couple of questions on BP?

The President. You're certainly free to ask them, Chip [Chip Reid, CBS News].

Iran

Q. Will you answer them? How about a question on Iran?

The President. We won't be answering—I'm not doing a press conference today, but we'll be seeing you guys during the course of this week. Okay?

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:32 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. H.R. 3714, approved May 17, was assigned Public Law No. 111–166.

Remarks Honoring the NCAA Women's Basketball Champion University of Connecticut Huskies

May 17, 2010

Hello, everybody. Please have a seat. Well, welcome to the White House, everybody. Congratulations to the UConn Huskies on your second straight undefeated season and your second straight NCAA championship. I want to point out this team has not lost a game since I was elected President. [*Laughter*] I'm just saying. [*Laughter*]

I want to acknowledge a few UConn fans who've made the trek from the other side of Pennsylvania Avenue. We've got Senators Chris Dodd and Joe Lieberman in the house, and Congressmen John Larson and Joe Courtney are here as well.

Now, when this team came to the White House last year, I was just pointing out to Maya, we went out back—I've got a little court—we shot a little bit. I'm not going to say who won. [*Laughter*] But I noticed then there were people who were saying, you know, these Huskies, they've got a little too much swagger, because they said that they'd be back in 2010. They said that at the time. I'm not sure anybody believed them. I believed them, listening to them, and that confidence was well deserved.

This team has had an unbelievable run. I think most of you know the statistics: 7 of the last 16 NCAA titles, 6 undefeated regular seasons, 4 undefeated championship seasons.

And last year, Coach Geno promised you guys would go 40–0 this year. It's not your fault that he can't do math very well; there were only 39 games. [*Laughter*] So, Coach, you can't win 40 if there are only 39 games. But 39–0—[*laughter*]—is pretty good. These women beat their own NCAA record to become the first women's basketball team in history to win 78 games in a row over the past 2 years, which is just a staggering achievement.

And I was telling them Michelle and I work out in the morning. We've got a little gym here in the White House. And we just watch "SportsCenter." I know you'll be surprised that we don't watch the news shows. [*Laughter*] But this is really true. During the entire season, I just kept on repeating, and I truly believed, this was the best team in all of sports, any sport, any gender, by far. And it was just something that made us all very proud.

I want to point out that Coach Geno's teams have had a 100-percent graduation rate over the past 25 years. And that's true again this year, because these players work as hard in the classroom as they do on the court. I want to congratulate the seniors that graduated last week. If I'm not mistaken, number-one WNBA draft pick Tina Charles is going to be graduating—Jacquie Fernandes, Meghan Gardler, Kalana Greene, and Kaili McLaren. Give them all a big round of applause.

Congratulations to Tina for winning the Naismith Trophy as player of the year, for graduating as UConn's alltime scoring leader. I do have to say, though, Maya has her sights set on that record. [*Laughter*] She's coming after it. And, Maya, congratulations on being named the Final Four's most valuable—most outstanding player. When you consider that Maya says she approaches her academics as she does her basketball, it's no surprise that she was named first team Academic All-American for the third year in a row. That is worth an applause.

So obviously, this team was under enormous pressure this season. Everyone was watching and waiting for them to stumble, figuring out—figuring there was no way for them to go undefeated again. When your toughest test came in this year's national championship game—you trailed the longest that you had all year—you came out swinging in the second half and brought that championship home yet again to the Storrs community that loves and believes in you so deeply.

And when you're at home in Storrs, you apply the same winning attitude off the court. You read with elementary children, spend time with cancer patients. Today you brought that sense of service to Washington, visiting wounded warriors in Walter Reed, and I know they were thrilled to see you.

Whether it's winning a national championship, balancing practice with schoolwork, or serving others, these young women made it all look easy, despite the fact that we all know they put in enormous amounts of work. It's that perseverance and dedication and that will to succeed that makes them so special.

And that's why every single one of these young women sets a terrific example for girls and women today, as athletes, as scholars, and as leaders. And I think, Coach, you have just been an extraordinary leader, and I think all of us are extremely proud of the example that you've set.

So, as your President, I commend you for setting that example. As the father of two tall girls—[*laughter*]—who are also very cute and—[*laughter*]—also do great work in the classroom, I'm just so glad that they've got all of you to look up to, and I thank you for it. I will say, I will be very impressed if you make it here a third time in a row. [*Laughter*]

Congratulations to all of you. Give them a big round of applause.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:15 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Geno Auriemma, head coach, Maya A. Moore, Meghan E. Gardler, and Kaili E. McLaren, forwards, Jacquelyn A. Fernandes and Kalana L. Greene, guards, and Tina Charles, center, University of Connecticut women's basketball team.

Remarks at V&M STAR Ohio in Youngstown, Ohio
May 18, 2010

The President. Hello, hello, hello. Hey! It's good to see you. Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Everybody, please have a seat.

Let me first of all just say thank you to some people who are doing outstanding work, beginning with somebody who I think is one of the best Governors we've got in this country and just a great guy, give it up for Ted Strickland, your Governor. You've got a outstanding young mayor, Mayor Jay Williams. The mayor of Girard, Jim Melfi, is here as well; Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner; and three terrific Members of Congress: Tim Ryan, Charlie Wilson, John Boccieri. Give them all a big round of applause.

It is good to be back in Ohio, and it is good to be back in Mahoning Valley. I appreciate the chance to tour this unbelievable facility. You know, sometimes when you're President, you get kind of jaded. You know, you've seen a lot of stuff, you go through these factories. This one, when you walk through, is just unbelievable. It's like off of a movie set. And so it was exciting to see, but what was especially exciting was to see all the people who are working here and to see the work that you're doing here.

So I saw the 85-ton electric arc furnace. I didn't see any evidence, but I know that you're building Iron Man's suits somewhere in here. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate the time that I've had to spend with all of you, partly because it's just nice to get out of Washington. Washington's a wonderful place, beautiful, nice monuments. I have this nice home office, live right above the store, so I don't have a commute. But sometimes in Washington, everybody's spending all their time arguing about politics, and you lose track of the folks who sent you there in the first place. And so it's important for me to meet you directly and hear your concerns and your hopes and your dreams. And I've been trying to make a habit out of doing this. About once a week, I try to take a trip like this just to talk to folks who are working in various parts of our economy and to find out what's going on in communities. And obviously, the issue that's front and center on everybody's minds is the state of our economy.

In the 2 years I was running for President, I wasn't any stranger to this State. These guys know I came here an awful lot. And I saw firsthand what years of failed policies had done to working families, and I saw how hard these guys were working to put Ohio back to work. And the Mahoning Valley is a place that doesn't need an economist to tell you when a recession begins or when a recession ends, because plenty

of folks here have known their own private recessions for 10, 20, 30 years. Now, they may not have seen one like the one we just had, with an unemployment rate here that's at 14 percent and families having a tougher time than they'd ever imagined. And a lot of people—let's just be blunt—aren't always real impressed when a Governor or a President comes swooping in and talking about the economy, because the only headline they want to see is the headline that says "You're Hired."

But I do want to talk about a piece of encouraging news for a change—something concrete, not just a lot of talk—because for a lot of the last 2 years, you didn't always get a lot of good news.

A year ago, we took significant action to jump-start economic growth and job creation. That action included making investments in sectors with the greatest potential for private sector job growth, areas like clean energy and infrastructure.

And one of those investments is going towards revitalizing the site right next door, preparing it for new construction, and building a rail spur that connects to the Norfolk Southern line that runs through town. So as a result of this investment, V&M STAR's parent company decided to invest $650 million of its own money—its own money to build a new 1-million-square-foot mill right here in Youngstown, the largest industrial plant built in the valley since GM built its plant over in Lordstown in the 1960s. Think about that: biggest investment since the 1960s—50 years. So right here, in the heart of the old steel corridor, where some never thought we'd see an investment like this again, they're placing a bet on American manufacturing and on this community.

And that bet's going to pay off for 400 construction jobs once they break ground this summer, 350 new manufacturing jobs once the mill comes on line, which doubles the current workforce. And as everybody here knows, every time a new factory or plant opens or expands in America, it doesn't just employ the people who are working at the plant; everybody here, suddenly, they've got a little more money to go buy lunch somewhere or buy a computer for their kids or do something else. And so the—it becomes an economic lifeline for the whole community, capable of supporting hundreds, even thousands of jobs indirectly. And so that's a success story that all of you are part of.

Now, I don't want to suggest that this one plant and the jobs it'll create are going to make the difference for the entire community. I mean, it took us decades to get to where we are; it's going to take some time to get to the point where we need to be. But just think about where we were a year ago: Our economy was collapsing, our businesses were losing 750,000 jobs every month, economists across the spectrum were warning very seriously of the possibility of another great depression. And all of this was on top of one of the toughest decades for America's middle class that we've ever seen.

So that was the situation just a year ago. Everybody's got a—kind of a selective memory here, but nobody was sure whether the economy was going to hold up. So we had to make a choice: We could sit back, do nothing, make a bunch of excuses, play politics, and watch America's decline, or we could stand up and fight for our future.

And I ran for President, Youngstown, because I believe that we're at a defining moment in our history. And if we're going to keep the American Dream alive—not just for us, but for the next generation—then we couldn't just sit back and put off solving these big problems. We had to tackle them head on.

Job one was rescuing our economy. And that required some steps that were, frankly, unpopular, steps like stabilizing a financial system that was on the brink of collapse and intervening in an auto industry that was on the brink of extinction. I knew those steps would be unpopular. Even in Ohio, even in Michigan, even in automaking States, if you polled, people said, "Don't do anything about the auto companies." And I knew, politics being what it is, that some people would try to score political points off our decisions.

But I think it's fair to say—any fairminded person would say that if we hadn't acted, more people in the valley, more people in Ohio,

more people across America would be out of work today. And I mean, I can just give you a very concrete example: The GM plant over in Lordstown would not be there, because GM would have liquidated.

Instead, GM's paying back its debts, turned a profit for the first time in 3 years, and a third shift is about to come back to work in Lordstown, putting that plant at maximum capacity—[*applause*]—right next door. And by the way, it was in part because of the decisions that these three guys made in Congress. That's not easy. They've been knocked around; they got lumps all over the backs of their heads—some on top. [*Laughter*] But it was the right thing to do.

Today my administration is announcing a landmark agreement to help dozens of communities like Youngstown revitalize and redevelop old, shuttered GM facilities, preparing them for new industries and new jobs and new opportunity.

These steps were the right thing to do. And it was the right thing to do to give tax relief to small businesses and working families right in the middle of this enormous recession; 4.5 million working families in Ohio alone got tax breaks. Most of you guys didn't know it, didn't notice it in your paycheck. We didn't go around advertising it. But each paycheck was a little bit bigger because of the steps that we took, and that meant that you could recirculate that money into the economy and keep demand up, which helped avert a depression. That was the right thing to do.

It was the right thing to do to give loans to small businesses to keep their doors open. More than 2,400 right here in Ohio got small-business loans because of the Recovery Act, because of the work that these guys did.

It was the right thing to do to extend unemployment benefits and make COBRA cheaper for people caught up in the recession until they could get back on their feet. There's probably not a single person here who doesn't know somebody who either got unemployment benefits or used COBRA to make sure they could keep health insurance for their families when they lost their job. That was the right thing to do.

It was the right thing to do to help Governors like Ted avoid massive cuts to Medicaid and layoffs to teachers and police officers.

And it was the right thing to do to invest in this town's infrastructure. We put all of that stuff in the recovery package because it was the right thing to do.

Now, we've got a long way to go before this recovery is felt in the lives of our neighbors and in all the communities that have lost so much ground in this recession and in years before.

But despite that sobering reality, despite all the naysayers in Washington, who are always looking for the cloud in every silver lining, the fact is, our economy's growing again. Last month, we gained 290,000 jobs. So think about this: We gained more jobs last month than any time in 4 years. And it was the fourth month in a row that we've added jobs, and almost all those jobs are in the private sector. Everybody talks about Government was doing this, Government was doing that. No, what we did was we encouraged the private sector, gave them the funding, the financing, the support, the infrastructure support in order to invest and get the economy moving again.

And last month also brought the largest increase in manufacturing employment since 1998—1998, because I believe in manufacturing, and I believe in manufacturing right here in the United States of America. We can compete against anybody. Youngstown can compete against anybody—got the best workers. There's no reason why we can't compete with anybody if you guys have the support that you need.

And you know what? I think those critics who have been trying to badmouth these efforts, they know it's working. These folks who opposed us every step of the way, predicting nothing but failure, they know it's working, because—this always puts a smile on my face—even as they've tried to score political points attacking these Members of Congress, a lot of them go home and then they claim credit for the very things they voted against. They'll show up at the—to cut the ribbons. They'll put out a press release. They'll send the mailings touting the very projects that they were opposing in Washington. They're trying to have it both ways.

I know that's hard to imagine in politics, that a politician might try to have it both ways, but here's the fact: If the "just say no" crowd had won out, if we had done things the way they wanted to go, we'd be in a deeper world of hurt than we are right now. Families wouldn't have seen those tax cuts. Small businesses wouldn't have gotten those loans or those health care tax credits that they're now eligible for. Insurance companies would still be deciding who they want to cover and when they want to cover them and dropping your health care coverage whenever they felt like it.

The steady progress we're beginning to see across America would not exist, and neither would the plant that you're about to build. So I invite anybody who thinks we shouldn't have taken those actions that we took last year, or made those investments, to come to Youngstown and explain to us why that plant shouldn't be built.

Come talk to Ted Strickland and the mayor. Come tell us why companies like this in towns like Youngstown shouldn't be given every chance to expand and add new jobs. Tell us why small businesses shouldn't receive tax credits so they can help purchase health insurance for their employees. Explain why seniors shouldn't get help paying for their medications when they hit that gap called the doughnut hole. Explain why we should tell families that children with preexisting conditions aren't going to be able to get health insurance because we decided that insurance companies should be able to do whatever they wanted.

They need to explain why they would be nothing to make—doing nothing to solve some of these problems that have been plaguing America for years now, decades.

So I'm here to say, that's not how we deal with crisis. That's not what America's about. We did not become the greatest economic power that the world has ever known by avoiding problems. The United States of America does not play for second place. We step up, we face our challenges, we compete, and we win. And that's something we should all agree on.

But everybody should be able to agree on that. For all the things we've gotten done, despite the unified, determined opposition of one party, imagine how much further we could have gotten if I'd gotten a little help, if people decided to step up. It doesn't mean they have to agree with me on everything, but step up, take responsibility, don't just play political games.

Audience member. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. You're welcome.

Audience member. We got your back.

The President. I truly—it is not too late to work together, not when there's so much progress to make, so many more success stories like this one to write. Because we're not Democrats first or Republicans first, we are Americans first. That's what we're about.

So I know it's still tough. I know a lot of times the future still feels uncertain. And I'm not going to stand here and pretend that things are back to normal or even close to where they need to be. I read too many letters each night from people who are hurting, who are still out of work. So I know things are still tough out there.

But I will tell you one thing: It's people like you, people in towns like Youngstown all across America that I'm thinking about every single day when I go to the Oval Office. I ran for office to make sure not just you, but your kids and your grandkids have a shot at the American Dream, because I wouldn't be in office if somebody hadn't worked hard to give me a shot at the American Dream. I didn't come from money. I didn't come from a powerful family. I got a name nobody could pronounce. [*Laughter*] But somebody gave me a shot. Somebody made an investment in me.

That's why I ran for President. That's why I wake up every morning insisting to everybody who works for me that we're not going to rest until the future brightens for middle class Americans all across this country, hard-working people. And I'm absolutely convinced that the steps that we're taking are going to help us bring about a better future for America.

I believe that seeking new markets for our exports is the right thing to do and that enforcing the rules of free and fair trade is the right

thing to do for our workers and for our companies. I believe that investing in a clean energy economy to create good jobs of the future, building pipe for natural gas, but also building windmills and steel—and turbines and advanced batteries for the new generation of electric cars, that's the right thing to do for our economy and for our environment. I believe that raising standards in our schools and making college more affordable and upgrading our community colleges is the right thing to do so that every child has a chance to live out their dreams. I believe that reforming our health care system to crack down on the worst practices of the insurance companies and giving everybody a decent shot at getting health insurance is the right thing to do. And trying to control costs on premiums is the right thing to do. It's the right thing to do for families, and it's the right thing to do for businesses.

So we're going to keep up every effort to rebuild our economy and restore some security for the middle class, a middle class forged in plants just like this one, so that places like Youngstown don't just survive year after year, but they are thriving year after year. And as long as I have the privilege of being your President, I'm going to keep fighting for a future that is brighter for this community and for Ohio and for the United States of America, the country that we love.

God bless you. God bless all the work here. God bless the United States of America. Appreciate you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:30 p.m.

Statement on Senate Action on Oil Pollution Liability Legislation
May 18, 2010

I am disappointed that an effort to ensure that oil companies pay fully for disasters they cause has stalled in the United States Senate on a partisan basis. This maneuver threatens to leave taxpayers, rather than the oil companies, on the hook for future disasters like the BP oil spill. I urge the Senate Republicans to stop playing special interest politics and join in a bipartisan effort to protect taxpayers and demand accountability from the oil companies.

Statement on Haitian Flag Day
May 18, 2010

On behalf of the American people, I send my congratulations to all those who celebrate Haitian Flag Day here in America, in Haiti, and around the world. Over 200 years ago, freedmen from what is now the Republic of Haiti came to the aid of American patriots fighting for freedom at the Siege of Savannah. Then, in 1803, Haiti declared their independence, and this day celebrates the flying of that first Haitian flag. The bonds between our nations have been strong and vibrant since that day.

But as we observe this day of celebration, let us also remember the ongoing efforts in Haiti to rebuild and recover from that tragic earthquake. We stand with the international community in our support for the Government of Haiti and the Haitian people as they continue to create a foundation for a brighter future. On this Haitian Flag Day, the people of Haiti should remember that they have a friend and partner in America.

Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony for President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico
May 19, 2010

The President. Good morning.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. *Buenos dias*.

Audience members. *Buenos dias*.

The President. On behalf of Michelle, myself, and the American people, it is my great honor to welcome our neighbor, friend, and partner, President Calderon, along with First Lady Margarita Zavala and members of the Mexican delegation. Welcome to the United States. *Bienvenidos*.

President Calderon was the first foreign leader that I met after my election. And this visit is an opportunity to return the extraordinary warmth and hospitality that the President, the First Lady, and the people of Mexico have shown me during my visits to Mexico, as well as to Michelle during her first solo international trip as First Lady.

Mr. President, it is fitting that your visit comes during this year of celebration, the bicentennial of Mexican independence and the centennial of the Mexican revolution. And you and the Mexican people draw strength from your proud past to forge your future. We recall the words of the great Octavio Paz, who said, "Between tradition and modernity, there is a bridge." With this visit, we can also strengthen the many bridges that bind our two nations.

The United States and Mexico are not simply neighbors bound by geography and history; we are, by choice, friends and partners. We are bound by our business partners, workers, and tourists who fuel our prosperity, by our students and educators who broaden our horizons, and by our men and women in uniform who serve and sacrifice to keep us safe.

In the United States, we're also proud of another bond: the ties of family. Mexican American families have been here for centuries, as well as those who continue to—our proud tradition as a nation of immigrants, all of whom strengthen our American family and who join us today.

Mr. President, working together, we have built upon these bridges. We forged a new era of cooperation and partnership between our countries based on mutual interest, mutual respect, and mutual responsibility. And with your visit, we can advance our partnership even further.

Together, we can help create jobs and prosperity for our people. We can ensure that our common border is secure, modern, and efficient, including immigration that is orderly and safe. We can stand firm and deepen our cooperation against the drug cartels that threaten our people. And given Mexico's global leadership, we can stand together for the opportunity and security of all people, in our hemisphere and beyond.

Finally, Mr. President, your visit speaks to a truth of our time, in North America and the world. In the 21st century, we are defined not by our borders, but by our bonds. So I say to you and to the Mexican people, let us stand together. Let us face the future together. Let us work together. *Trabajemos juntos*.

President Calderon, Senora Zavala, welcome to the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:44 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, where President Calderon was accorded a formal welcome with full military honors. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

The President's News Conference With President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico

May 19, 2010

President Obama. Good afternoon. *Buenas tardes*. I want to again welcome President Calderon to the White House. And Michelle and I are delighted to be hosting the President and First Lady Margarita Zavala and their delegation for this state visit, and we're looking forward to returning the hospitality—the wonderful hospitality that we received in Mexico when we have our state dinner this evening.

I've often said that in our interconnected world, where nations and peoples are linked like never before, both the promise and perils of our time are shared. Nowhere is this clearer than among the neighbors the United States and Mexico.

The trade and tourism between us creates jobs and prosperity for both our peoples. When a flu spreads, or an earthquake strikes, or cartels threaten innocent people, it affects lives on both sides of our common border. When our neighbors are in need, whether in Honduras or in Haiti, we respond together. And when we expand partnerships between our people, it forges connections that leads to greater prosperity and opportunity for decades to come.

In pursuit of our shared future, I have a true partner in President Calderon. We've worked together in Mexico City and Guadalajara, in Washington and Pittsburgh, in London and L'Aquila. And when he speaks before a joint session of Congress tomorrow, I believe the American people will see what I see: They'll see a leader who is guiding his country through very difficult times with vision and with courage, and he has been an outstanding partner to me and an outstanding partner to the United States.

Indeed, our progress today marks another step forward in a new era of cooperation and partnership between our countries, a partnership based on mutual interests, mutual respect, and mutual responsibility.

We agreed to continue working aggressively on our highest economic priority, which is creating jobs for our people. Mexico is one of our largest trading partners, with trade that supports countless jobs here in America and in Mexico. And because 80 percent of the trade passes over our land border, we reaffirmed our commitment to a 21st-century border that is modern, secure, and efficient. And we're directing our Governments to develop an action plan to move in this direction, because our shared border must be an engine, and not a brake, on our economic growth.

To create jobs and increase our competitiveness in the global economy, we agreed to streamline regulations and strengthen the protection of intellectual property. We agreed to continue working with our G–20 partners to encourage that global economic growth is balanced and sustained, especially as we approach next month's Toronto summit. And as the United States works to increase our exports and the jobs that come with it, we'll be working closely with our partners in Mexico, which is one of the largest markets for American exports.

To create clean energy jobs and industries of the future, we're building on a partnership we launched last year with new initiatives to promote regional renewable energy markets, green buildings, and smart grid technology. These initiatives will also help us implement the commitments we made at Copenhagen, especially as we work toward the climate conference in Cancun later this year. And let me say that, as a leader in cutting greenhouse gas emissions and in helping developing countries do the same, Mexico's leadership under President Calderon has been and will be critical.

For the sake of our shared prosperity and security, we discussed the need for immigration that is orderly and safe, and we acknowledged that both our countries have responsibilities. President Calderon is working hard to create jobs so that more Mexicans see a future of opportunity in their country.

To fix our broken immigration system, I reaffirmed my deep commitment to working with Congress in a bipartisan way to pass comprehensive immigration reform. And comprehensive reform means accountability for everybody: Government that is accountable for securing

the border, businesses being held accountable when they exploit workers, people who break the law by breaching our borders being held accountable by paying taxes and a penalty and getting right with the law before they can earn their citizenship. We've been working hard to get this done. There's a strong proposal in the Senate, based on a bipartisan framework, and it can and should move forward.

Now, we also discussed the new law in Arizona, which is a misdirected effort, a misdirected expression of frustration over our broken immigration system, and which has raised concerns in both our countries. Today I want every American to know my administration has devoted unprecedented resources in personnel and technology to securing our border. Illegal immigration is down, not up, and we will continue to do what's necessary to secure our shared border.

And I want everyone, American and Mexican, to know my administration is taking a very close look at the Arizona law. We're examining any implications, especially for civil rights, because in the United States of America, no law-abiding person—be they an American citizen, a legal immigrant, or a visitor or tourist from Mexico—should ever be subject to suspicion simply because of what they look like.

President Calderon and I also reaffirmed our commitment to stand together against the drug cartels that have unleashed horrific violence in so many communities. Mr. President, you and the Mexican people have shown great resolve in a fight for the security and safety of your country. And as I've pledged to you before, Mexico can count on the United States as a full partner in this effort.

As your partner, we'll give you the support you need to prevail. Through increased law enforcement on our side of the border, we're putting unprecedented pressure on those who traffic in drugs, guns, and people. We're working to stem the southbound flow of American guns and money, which is why, for the first time, we are now screening 100 percent of southbound rail cargo. And guided by our new National Drug Control Strategy, we're bringing new approaches to reducing the demand for drugs in our country.

As regional partners, the President and I discussed the situation in Honduras and the need for continued cooperation to support the people of Haiti as they recover and they rebuild. And as global partners, and given Mexico's seat on the U.N. Security Council, we agreed on the need for Iran to uphold its international obligations or face increased sanctions and pressure, including U.N. sanctions. And I'm pleased that we've reached an agreement with our P–5-plus-1 partners on a strong resolution that we now have shared with our Security Council partners.

Finally, I'm proud that we're expanding exchanges between our college and university students and launching a new exchange program for our high school students. I'd note that it was a Mexican student at an American university who went on to become the President who stands next to me today. And with these exchanges we'll bring together the next generation of American and Mexican leaders.

This is the progress that we've made today. It's progress that calls to mind a Mexican proverb that I am told says, "Tell me who you walk with, and I will tell you who you are." Mr. President, the United States is proud to walk with Mexico. And through our work, we're reminded again of who we are, which is two neighbors, two partners bound by a common vision of prosperity and security for both our people.

President Calderon.

President Calderon. Thank you, President.

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the media, good afternoon. First of all, I would like to thank the kind invitation of the people and the Government of the United States to carry out this visit. And I am the bearer of a respectful and affectionate greeting of the Mexican people to this Nation, which is our neighbor and friend. I would like to thank the words and the hospitality of President Barack Obama.

The United States and Mexico are nations that trade, dialogue, and complement each other economically and mutually. We are nations that have a political understanding of the highest level. And we are also countries with a fruitful dynamic and ties between people, communities, public and private institutions

throughout 3,000 kilometers of border. Our relationship is characterized by an honest and open dialogue based on trust, respect, and coresponsibility.

As it has been stated by President Obama, this morning we held a broad and fruitful dialogue. We've reviewed our bilateral relationships: the problems, the challenges, and also the many opportunities that we face. We analyzed different proposals and visions on the side of Mexico and the United States to strengthen North America as a region.

We talked about the relevance of solving our differences and trade problems in the fastest possible way. We covered the border topics, such as security, migration, and we also examined initiatives to consolidate our cooperation in global scenarios and global interests.

I can highlight here that the areas where we agree are broader than our differences. There's a broad convergence of interest. And this is not only given to the fact that we share common goals, but there is a will in both of us to turn the fact of being neighbors into a partnership that will act as a leveler for shared development.

Fortunately, the serious economic global crisis is giving up. This opens up a window of opportunity for Canada, the United States, and Mexico to reposition Mexico and North America as a vigorous region, competitive and prosperous, capable of generating more and better jobs, a region that will be attractive for investments, trade exchange, and tourism, with great perspectives facing the future.

Together, we should increase our exporting capacity in a contest of growing competitiveness among different regions of the world. We talked about the different obstacles that are there for complying with transportation obligations that have been established at NAFTA, a situation that impacts jobs, companies, and consumers in Mexico and in the United States. And we shall work in order to achieve a quick solution, with a constructive, creative solution in the long term, in this and many other areas.

As the President has stated, we gave special attention to the border matters. The border is not only a place of encounter for both our nations, but it's also an area of opportunity for our aspirations that we share regarding development. For this we will allocate more resources for the border infrastructure in order that it will be at the height of the needs of our economies and communities, and that it will benefit both sides of the border. We will strengthen the coordination among the government officials on both sides of the border to reinforce security.

We want to make this quite clear: We, both countries, want to have a safe border, a safe border for our people. We agreed upon the urgency of reinforce the actions to stop the flow of drugs, weapons, and cash. And for this we will work with full abidance to the legislations and jurisdictions of each country in a coresponsible way.

In reference to the migratory issue, I acknowledge the sensitivity and the commitment of President Obama to look for a comprehensive solution that will be respectful of the rights of the individuals and will be adjusting itself in a realistic way to the needs of both our economies. We talked openly about this and other issues.

We identified that the economies of our countries are clearly complementing each other, and when we—integrating them, they are a powerful tool to bring productivity and competitiveness up within the whole region. Greater competitiveness in North America means more jobs and better living conditions for the people of the United States and for the people of Mexico.

In Mexico, we are and will continue being respectful of the internal policies of the United States and its legitimate right to establish, in accordance to its Constitution, whatever laws it approves. But we will retain our firm rejection to criminalize migration so that people that work and provide things to this Nation will be treated as criminals. And we oppose firmly the S.B. 1070 Arizona law given in fair principles that are partial and discriminatory.

This and other issues were covered during this meeting, which I will dare to say that it's historic given the level of understanding and trust that we have reached.

For the meantime, I would just like to highlight this open and honest and constructive dialogue that we keep and hold with the President of—with the Government of President Obama

and these two countries that allows me to see the strength and leadership of the President of the United States.

Thank you, President Obama, for your hospitality. I want to thank all of you for your kind attention.

President Obama. Okay, we've got time for one question each. I'm going to call on Lourdes [Lourdes Meluza] from Univision.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

President Obama. Why don't you wait for the microphone so we can hear you.

Arizona's Illegal Immigration Enforcement Legislation/Immigration Reform/U.S. Border Security

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. President Calderon called again the Arizona law discriminatory; you have called it misdirected. Do you agree with him? What impact do you think that this law could have on the U.S.-Mexico relations, the prospect for immigration reform, and the lives of millions of Mexican Americans in this country? And what actions did you tell President Calderon that you would follow in the following days and weeks.

President Obama. I think the Arizona law has the potential of being applied in a discriminatory fashion. Now, after it was initially passed, the Arizona legislature amended it and said that this should not be carried out in a discriminatory way. But I think a fair reading of the language of the statute indicates that it gives the possibility of individuals who are deemed suspicious of being illegal immigrants from being harassed or arrested. And the judgments that are going to be made in applying this law are troublesome.

Now, what I've directed my Justice Department to do is to look very carefully at the language of this law to see whether it comports both with our core values and existing legal standards, as well as the fact that the Federal Government is ultimately the one charged with immigration policy. And I expect to get a final report back from the Justice Department soon, at which point we'll make some decisions in terms of how we are going to address that law.

Now, what I've also said, though, is that the Arizona law, I think, expresses some of the frustrations that the American people have had in not fixing a broken immigration system and, frankly, the failures of the Federal Government to get this done. I'm sympathetic to those frustrations. I share those frustrations, which is why, from the time that I was a U.S. Senator through the time that I ran for President, until now, I have consistently said that I'm supportive of a comprehensive immigration reform approach.

And I think the majority of American people are open to a comprehensive immigration reform approach, which would say the following things: Number one, that the Federal Government takes its responsibilities for securing our border seriously. And as I just stated in my opening remarks, we have actually put more resources, more personnel on the borders, and illegal immigration is actually down on the borders, not up. I know that's not the perception out there, but that's the fact.

But we haven't done enough. So we've got a responsibility to create an orderly border, and that's something that we have to do not unilaterally, but also working with the Mexican Government, because there are enormous flows of trade and tourists and people along the border region. The economies are interdependent, and we've got to control the borders, but do so in a way that does not have an adverse impact on the economies of those regions.

The second thing we've got to do is we've got to make sure that businesses are following the rules and are not actively recruiting undocumented workers so that they don't have to abide by overtime laws, they don't have to abide by minimum wage laws, they don't have to abide by worker safety laws and otherwise undercut basic worker protections that exist. And they have to be held accountable and responsible.

The third thing we have to do is to make sure that those who have come to this country illegally are held accountable. And that means they need to pay a fine, they need to pay back taxes. I believe they should learn English. I believe that it is important for them to get to the back of the line and not in the front, but that

we create a pathway so that they have an opportunity, if they are following the rules, following the law, to become legal residents and ultimately citizens of this country.

Now, that kind of package in which everybody has responsibilities I think is one that can pass. And it is one that I am fully supportive of. And I've said this again and again. And I think if we get that done, then you will be less likely to see the kinds of measures that we saw in Arizona.

Here's the challenge that we have politically. The political challenge is, is that I have confidence that I can get the majority of Democrats, both in the House and the Senate, to support a piece of legislation of the sort that I just described. But I don't have 60 votes in the Senate. I've got to have some support from Republicans. When we made an effort of this sort a few years ago, it was under the leadership of John McCain and Ted Kennedy. And because there was a bipartisan effort, we were actually able to generate a majority of votes in the Senate. And we just missed being able to get it done in the House.

If we can recreate that atmosphere—I don't expect to get every Republican vote, but I need some help in order to get it done. And there have been people who have expressed an interest. But if they're willing to come forward and get a working group and get this moving, I'm actually confident that we can get it done. And the American people, including the people of Arizona, are going to prefer that the Federal Government takes responsibility and does what it's supposed to do.

And it's my job to work with Members of Congress to see that happen. And it's also my job to work with the Mexican Government to make sure that it happens, because President Calderon recognizes that he has responsibilities on his side of the border as well.

And the last point I'll make on this topic is this: I think all of us recognize that some of the pressures with respect to immigration just arise out of economics. People in Mexico are looking for opportunity, and they feel that they can make more money here in the United States. What we also have to recognize—and I talked about this with President Calderon—is every nation also has the right to secure its borders and make orderly decisions about who comes in and who comes out.

And the key here is for us to keep both principles in mind, that people want to find a better life where they can, and if they have opportunity in America, they're going to want to come here. We can't just try to use force to prevent that. On the other hand, the United States has to be able to make determinations about who comes in and who comes out in an orderly fashion. And if we are both a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants, then I think we will not only be true to our core values, but we're also going to be creating a more prosperous future for everybody.

Okay.

President Calderon. Radio Formula. Israel has a question.

U.S. Border Security/Mexico-U.S. Drug Control Cooperation

Q. President Obama, there's several issues, but not to detour from this same topic, I would like to know if you have already a strategy planned in regards to the Arizona law, because it is violating the fundamental rights of people. How are you going to turn around this trend, President Obama, that is being shown in different States of the United States against migrants—this migratory reform that you're talking about, to know when it will be taken to Congress and what's the scope that it will have?

The second area regarding security, President Obama, I would like to know, how do you value the battle against organized crime that President Calderon is having? Has this been a success? What is it missing? And following this issue, to know if you have seen that the weapons that illegally cross from the United States to Mexico are the ones that are used by the organized crime people in Mexico? Shouldn't there be an initiative that will regulate guns as they are sold? Is there going to be a ban?

President Obama. [*Inaudible*]—a pretty comprehensive answer earlier, so I'm just going to take your second question, and that is the issue of security. This is obviously a shared concern and is going to require shared effort on the part of both of our nations. I said the first time I

met President Calderon and have said ever since that I greatly admire his courage, his dedication, his tenacity in trying to deal with the drug traffickers and cartels that have created such a public safety crisis in many communities within Mexico.

As we pointed out, this is not just an issue of the drug trade, this is an issue of how is it affecting people's day-to-day lives within Mexico. And the Mexican people have an interest in dealing with this. And he has stood up consistently because he recognizes that his foremost job, his most important task as President is to keep the Mexican people safe.

So we are fully supportive of the efforts that he's been making. We have had extensive collaboration over the last several years in making sure that, in a way that respects Mexico's sovereignty, we are responsive to whatever requests are made by the Calderon administration. To the extent that we can help through the Merida Initiative—provide equipment, provide training, provide technologies that can help in these efforts—we have done so. And we will continue to coordinate as effectively as we can with the Calderon administration to make sure that we deal with this problem.

Now, as you point out, this is not just a problem in Mexico. It is a problem that the United States has to address. And the two things that we have to address—and I said this when I was in Mexico, and I will repeat here—it is absolutely true that U.S. demand for drugs helps to drive this public safety crisis within Mexico. And so we've got an obligation not to drive the demand side of the equation. And so most recently we've put forward our new strategy that emphasizes not just enforcement, but also prevention, also treatment so that we can drive down demand and weaken the grip that these drug cartels have.

The second aspect of this that we have to deal with is the southbound flows from the United States of both weapons and cash that helps to empower these drug cartels. And so what I've directed my Department of Homeland Security, ATF, all our various agencies that have responsibilities in these areas to do is to ramp up our efforts at interdicting these southern flows.

And I already mentioned to you, for example, we've now instituted a policy where we are searching 100 percent of rail cargo that's going south. That is a significant investment of law enforcement resources on our part, but it's the right thing to do. We want to crack down on illegal gun dealers who are selling weapons into Mexico. All those are steps that we are doing in coordination with the Calderon Government. And we will continue to emphasize the importance not only to Mexico, but also the United States of tackling this problem.

Okay. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:20 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. President Calderon and a reporter spoke in Spanish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama and President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico

May 19, 2010

President Felipe Calderon and President Barack Obama today reaffirmed the strategic partnership between the United States and Mexico and underscored their commitment to improve the lives of all citizens in both our countries, building upon our deep ties, and working with mutual respect and mutual responsibility across a broad arc of issues.

The Presidents discussed the wide range of bilateral, hemispheric, and global issues that affect our two countries and reaffirmed the shared values that guide our approaches to

economic competitiveness, environmental conservation, clean energy, climate change, nuclear non proliferation, and the safety, social and economic well-being, and security of our citizens.

Enhancing Mutual Economic Growth

Mexico and the United States enjoy a vital economic and trading partnership that the Presidents vowed to enhance, reinforcing efforts to create jobs, promote economic recovery and expansion, and shared inclusive prosperity across all levels of society in both countries.

A key component of our global competitiveness is creating a border for the Twenty-First Century. The Presidents recognize that our border offers singular opportunities for both countries. We must develop it and manage it in a holistic fashion and in ways that facilitate the secure, efficient, and rapid flows of goods and people and reduce the costs of doing business between our two countries. Both the United States and Mexico benefit from expediting legitimate travel through and between our two countries, especially by those who live in the border region.

The Presidents took note of the progress underway in building that Twenty-First Century Border, including the opening of three new border crossings this year, initiation of three additional binational bridge projects, and significant modernization projects at existing border facilities. To spur further advancements in creating a modern, secure, and efficient border, the Presidents directed their respective cabinets to form a bilateral Executive Steering Committee, with appropriate representatives from each government, to implement a Declaration on Twenty-First Century Border Management, that will be released later today, to help make the Twenty-First Century Border a reality. It will include a first-ever binational 24-month plan of action to improve cross-border trade and travel.

The Presidents agreed that safe, efficient, secure, and compatible transportation is a prerequisite for mutual economic growth. They committed to continuing their countries' cooperation in system planning, operational coordination, and technical cooperation in key modes of transportation.

The Presidents also committed to significantly enhance the economic competitiveness and the economic well-being of both the United States and Mexico through improved regulatory cooperation. Such cooperation can increase economic growth in each country; lower costs for consumers, businesses, producers, and governments; increase trade in goods and services across our borders; and improve our ability to protect the environment, health and safety of our citizens. To increase regulatory transparency; provide early warning of regulations with potential bilateral effects; strengthen the analytic basis of regulations; and help make regulations more compatible, the Presidents directed the creation of a High-Level Regulatory Cooperation Council, which will be comprised of senior-level regulatory, trade, and foreign affairs officials from both countries.

Innovation and investment in technology and human capital are keys to sustained economic growth and competitiveness in both Mexico and the United States. The protection of intellectual property rights is essential to promote such innovation and investment. With this in mind, the Presidents charged their administrations to work together to formalize and expand the efforts of the existing bilateral Intellectual Property Rights Working Group. These efforts will include industry training (including of small and medium size enterprises); work between Mexican Institute of Industrial Property (IMPI) and the United States Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) to streamline patent reviews; and collaboration, training and increased intelligence sharing among law enforcement agencies to enforce intellectual property rights more effectively. The Presidents also reaffirmed their commitment to the negotiation of the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement and charged their administrations to conclude these negotiations soon.

Reflecting on the progress made in the commercial relationship, the two Presidents noted that Mexico and Mexican companies are among the largest customers in the world for the U.S. Export-Import Bank (EXIM). Mexico is poised to be first country in the world where EXIM exceeds $10 billion in financing to support U.S.

exports, in turn supporting investments and the transfer of new technology to Mexico.

The Presidents also discussed ongoing differences that inevitably arise from a mature and comprehensive trading relationship, and committed to renew efforts to resolve these pending issues in a cooperative fashion.

Meeting Energy Needs and Protecting the Environment

The Presidents recognize the close link between economic growth, competitiveness, and sustainable development and their bilateral clean energy and environment agenda. They reaffirmed that the United States and Mexico share a common goal of achieving strong economic growth while addressing the climate change challenge and increasing the reliability of our energy infrastructure. The Leaders reviewed the efforts both countries are undertaking to limit greenhouse gas emissions, promote green energy, and improve energy reliability in the context of the Bilateral Framework for Clean Energy and Climate Change announced during President Obama's April 2009 visit to Mexico City.

To build on that progress, the Presidents resolved to create a Cross-Border Electricity Task Force to promote regional renewable energy markets between our two countries. The Task Force will review opportunities and obstacles to cross border trade in renewable energy, advancing options on standards, electricity transmission, grid connections, and other policy measures that create market incentives for investment and trade in renewable energy technologies. The leaders also committed to increasing grid reliability and resiliency, including collaboration on smart grid standards and technology to make energy use more efficient and reliable in both Mexico and the United States.

Recognizing that the cleanest source of energy is more efficient energy use, the Presidents committed the relevant agencies in each government to hold joint workshops this fall to accelerate energy efficiency improvements in the building and transportation sectors, including green building certification, enhanced trade in green building materials, and best practices in light-duty vehicle mileage regulation.

In the context of discussing a shared clean energy future, the Presidents recognized the increasing interplay of trade and climate policies and the importance of engaging directly on these. Both committed to direct their trade authorities to commence a dialogue with other countries on these issues. In particular, the Presidents committed to explore the possibility of early action to liberalize tariffs on climate-friendly technologies as a first step towards encouraging mutually supportive trade and climate policies.

The two Leaders reaffirmed their shared commitment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and stressed the importance of reaching a successful outcome in Cancun. President Obama supported Mexico's leadership role as chair of the 16th Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC and expressed readiness to work with Mexico. Both leaders also underscored their commitment to the Copenhagen Accord and its implementation.

The Presidents noted the long history of bilateral cooperation in the conservation of natural and cultural resources. They recognized that Big Bend National Park and Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River in the United States and the Protected Areas of Maderas del Carmen, Canon de Santa Elena, Ocampo, and Rio Bravo del Norte in Mexico together comprise one of the largest and most significant ecological complexes in North America. In doing so, they recognized that increased cooperation in these protected areas would restrict development and enhance security in the region and within this fragile desert ecosystem. To preserve this region of extraordinary biological diversity, they expressed their support for the United States Department of Interior and the Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources of the United Mexican States to work through appropriate national processes to recognize and designate Big Bend-Rio Bravo as a natural area of binational interest. The Presidents underscored their commitment to manage the region in a way that enhances security and protects these areas for wildlife preserva-

tion, ecosystem restoration, climate change adaptation, wildland fire management, and invasive species control.

Both Presidents expressed their commitment to ensure energy security in North America and to the safe, efficient and equitable exploitation of transboundary reservoirs with the highest degree of safety and environmental standards, and instructed their teams to take steps, consistent with the findings of key investigations into the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, toward advancing that shared commitment. In this regard, they instructed their teams to seek a moratorium on exploitation activities along the maritime boundary in the Western Gap in the Gulf of Mexico. President Obama thanked President Calderon for the offers of assistance Mexico has provided with regard to on-going efforts related to the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in accordance with the United States-Mexico Joint Contingency Plan for Maritime Pollution.

Cooperating Against Transnational Organized Crime

The Presidents highlighted the abiding importance of safeguarding communities on both sides of our shared border and reaffirmed their mutual commitment to confront criminal organizations that represent a serious threat to the security and well-being of Mexicans and Americans. They recognized that the United States and Mexico share responsibility for defeating and dismantling the illicit criminal networks that traffic drugs into the United States, and illegal weapons and illicit revenues into Mexico, and that these transnational networks are associated with much of the crime and violence occurring in Mexico today. Both Presidents evaluated on-going efforts to stem the illegal flow of weapons and bulk cash into Mexico and will seek to reinforce cooperation and efforts in this critical area.

The Presidents recognized that the Twenty-First Century Border must ensure the safety and security of residents in communities along both sides of the border and affirmed the mutual interest of Mexico and the United States to prevent entry into our countries of people who pose a threat to the national security of both nations. The Presidents affirmed their commitment to close, continuing, and constant bilateral cooperation and coordination to combat illicit activities and transnational criminal organizations. They pledged to work together to prevent human smuggling and trafficking.

The Presidents reviewed and endorsed the work of the U.S.-Mexico Merida Initiative High-Level Group, which met in March, 2010, in Mexico City to lay out a shared vision for on-going and future security cooperation between the United States and Mexico. Consistent with that vision, the Presidents directed that cooperation focus on four elements: disrupting the capacity of criminal organizations that act in both countries by weakening their operational, logistical, and financial capabilities; supporting efforts to strengthen public institutions responsible for combating organized crime, including the promotion of the full observance of rule of law, human rights, and active civil society participation; developing a secure and competitive Twenty-First Century Border; and, building strong and resilient communities in both countries by supporting efforts to address the root causes of crime and violence, especially concerning youth, promoting the culture of lawfulness, reducing illicit drug use, and stemming the flow of potential recruits for the cartels by promoting constructive, legal alternatives for young people.

The Presidents recognized the particular importance of these four elements, and of robust bilateral cooperation to act upon them, in border communities that unite our two countries, such as Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, and El Paso, Texas. From the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific, communities on both sides of the border share deep economic and social ties, and an interest in their own safety and welfare as well as that of their neighbors. The Presidents committed to work together against organized criminal groups in the border region and to cooperate to promote public safety and social resiliency, and to bring people and institutions together across our shared border.

They also received a progress report and took stock of the on-going efforts to define a bilateral implementation plan that includes a roadmap of

next steps and the benchmarking necessary to measure success.

President Obama discussed with President Calderon a number of enhancements to U.S. civilian law enforcement efforts in the Southwest Border region to ensure that the United States is doing all that it can to safeguard the population there and deter illegal flows in both directions across that border, including the deployment of increased resources and personnel from the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice.

Both Presidents reviewed the implementation status of the Merida Initiative and the steps taken to expedite delivery of security-related resources under the Initiative to Mexico. As a follow up to discussions at the recent High-Level Group meeting in Mexico, President Calderon welcomed President Obama's commitment to deliver, earlier than planned, a number of fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft that will complement the Government of Mexico's efforts against transnational organized criminal organizations.

The Presidents recognized that illicit drugs take a heavy toll on the health of our citizens and our communities and acknowledged that we must work to reduce drug use and minimize the consequences of such use, emphasizing both treatment and prevention. They endorsed the shared priorities established at the Binational Conference on Drug Demand Reduction in February, 2010, and at the meeting of the Mérida Initiative High-Level Group. These priorities include the development of a Bilateral Assessment on Drug Demand and Prevalence of Use; making addiction treatment a part of mainstream medical practice; implementing broadly drug screening, intervention, and referral for treatment techniques; expanding drug prevention efforts in the schools and the wider community; implementing accreditation standards for drug treatment providers; and expanding the role of the criminal justice system in ending drug abuse and reducing recidivism.

Enhancing Social Well-Being and Ties between Our People

Both Presidents underscored that human capital is one of the most important assets that our two countries share.

President Obama underscored his commitment to comprehensive immigration reform in the United States and detailed his Administration's extensive work to engage partners in the United States Congress from both political parties to create a modern immigration system that honors our tradition as a nation of laws, and a nation of immigrants. President Calderon reaffirmed his vision for creating a Mexico where all Mexicans have an opportunity to work and educate their children, while reiterating the importance that all immigrants be treated with full respect of their civil and human rights and acknowledging their significant contributions to the economic, social and cultural vitality of the United States. Both acknowledged the importance of fixing the broken immigration system, securing the common border and dismantling human trafficking groups, and to set clear rules and priorities for future immigration that level the playing field for American workers while providing a mechanism to fill labor demand in the United States in excess of domestic capacity.

The Presidents also took note of the strong educational ties and close academic collaboration that the people of the United States and Mexico have enjoyed for many years. They looked forward to expanding these programs by initiating a new exchange program for high school students to promote mutual understanding. The Presidents committed their governments to build upon this pilot program, cofinanced with the private sector, to help bring together the next generation of leaders from the United States and Mexico.

The Presidents acknowledged the contributions of the Peace Corps to the bilateral relationship and directed their respective authorities to work together to expand the presence of Peace Corps volunteers in Mexico, increasing cooperation with civil society organizations and promoting community development and volunteerism. Since 2004, hundreds of Peace

Corps volunteers have worked with Mexicans to transfer technologies, create business opportunities, and promote conservation and sustainable livelihoods.

Engaging in the Hemisphere and Around the Globe

Recognizing the importance of cooperation in various multilateral fora, President Obama and President Calderon reaffirmed their intent to coordinate closely on key issues pending before the Organization of American States, the United Nations, and the G20, among other international, multilateral institutions and fora.

In the Americas, the Presidents reaffirmed the importance of defending the core principles and values of democratic governance, respect for human rights, and self-determination in the Hemisphere and around the world. They stressed the need for regional consensus-building to achieve greater cooperation. The Presidents discussed the importance of working together to help foster more systematic security cooperation, particularly among the United States, Mexico, Colombia, Central America, and the Caribbean, to confront the challenge of transnational illicit networks. They also underscored the important work underway in the context of the Pathways to Prosperity Initiative and the Inter-American Social Protection Network that is promoting greater economic and social inclusion throughout the Americas.

The Presidents reaffirmed the importance of defending the core principles and values of democratic governance, respect for basic human rights, non-intervention, and self-determination in the Americas. In the case of Honduras, President Obama and President Calderon recognized the important strides the country has taken since the elections held in November 2009 to restore the democratic and constitutional order following the June 28, 2009 coup, and expressed their support for the on-going process of national reconciliation and for Honduras' prompt return to full participation in the Organization of American States and in all inter-American institutions. In the case of Haiti, both Presidents reviewed their respective actions as part of the massive international relief effort following the January 12 earthquake. President Calderon commended the United States for the vital role it played in facilitating disaster response and relief actions, and President Obama thanked Mexico for its important contributions to that effort. Both Presidents agreed to continue bilateral consultations and coordination to help consolidate Haiti's reconstruction efforts.

As global partners who share common values, as members of the most relevant international bodies, and as part of their efforts to continue expanding the strategic dialogue between both nations, the Presidents exchanged views on several global issues of common concern. Taking into account the presence of both the United States and Mexico in the United Nations Security Council, they paid special attention to the current situation of the non-proliferation regime and to nuclear disarmament issues in the context of the on-going Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. The two leaders committed to work to achieve a successful Review Conference and in that regard expressed their readiness to cooperate to strengthen the capacity of the international community to enforce this regime and to progress on the full access to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy for countries that comply with their international obligations. In this regard, the Presidents underscored their full determination to decisively support the IAEA and its verification efforts by addressing situations of special concern in the relevant international bodies of the United Nations System and its Security Council, including Iran's continued failure to meet its international obligations on its nuclear program.

President Obama and President Calderon reaffirmed the importance of the G20 as the premier international economic forum, and discussed the need for continued focus on economic recovery and job creation. The Leaders also discussed their efforts to implement the Pittsburgh Summit commitments, and call on all G20 members to make progress on fulfilling G20 commitments in advance of the Toronto Summit.

The bilateral dialogue between Presidents Obama and Calderon underscores their com-

mitment to strengthening the strategic partnership between both countries, and they will continue working closely together in bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral fora over the coming months, as befitting two partners and nations uniquely important for the well-being, prosperity and security of one another.

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

Declaration by the United States of America and the United Mexican States Concerning Twenty-First Century Border Management

May 19, 2010

The Government of the United States of America and the Government of the United Mexican States, hereinafter referred to collectively as the "Participants,"

Acknowledging their shared interest in creating a border that promotes their economic competitiveness and enhances their security through the secure, efficient, rapid, and lawful movement of goods and people;

Expressing a desire to fundamentally restructure the way in which the shared border between Mexico and the United States is managed to enhance public safety, welcome lawful visitors, encourage trade, strengthen cultural ties, and reduce the cost of doing business in North America;

Recognizing the importance of securing and facilitating the lawful flow of goods, services, and people between their countries;

Understanding that joint and collaborative administration of their common border is critical to transforming management of the border to enhance security and efficiency;

Recognizing the potential value, both in terms of enhancing security and reducing congestion, of shifting certain screening and inspection activities, traditionally performed at the immediate border, to geographic departure and transit zones away from the border and of considering other non-traditional border crossing concepts;

Appreciating that enhancing the flow of information needed for effective shared border management requires professionalism in law enforcement, strong institutional capacity, and effective interagency coordination in and between both countries;

Recognizing that transnational criminal organizations threaten the economies and security of both the United States and Mexico and that both countries share responsibility for the conditions that give rise to these criminal organizations and that allow them to endure, as well as shared responsibility for remedying those conditions;

Understanding that law enforcement coordination between the Participants is essential to preventing crime and to disrupting and dismantling transnational criminal organizations;

Sharing an interest in ensuring a legal, orderly system for managing migration between their countries and developing coordinated procedures for managing repatriation and ensuring that it remains safe and humane;

Hereby express their commitment to strengthen cooperation in:

- Enhancing economic competitiveness by expediting lawful trade, while preventing the transit of illegal merchandise between their two countries,
- Facilitating lawful travel in a manner that also prevents the illegal movement of people between their two countries,
- Sharing information that enhances secure flows of goods and people, and
- Disrupting and dismantling transnational criminal organizations and punishing their members and supporters.

I. Areas of Collaboration

In light of these mutual understandings, the Participants expect to work in a collaborative and coordinated fashion across a wide-range of border-related activities, including:

- Programs focused on reducing congestion and delays in cross-border traffic entering both Mexico and the United States, building a foundation for efficient border and expanded economic growth, improving community safety and quality of life, and reducing unhealthy emissions from idling vehicles;
- The creation, expansion, or mutual recognition of "trusted shipper" programs such as FAST and C–TPAT and "trusted traveler" programs such as SENTRI and Global Entry, allowing enforcement authorities to concentrate their efforts where they are most needed to stop illicit border flows;
- Pre-screening, pre-clearance, and pre-inspection of people, goods, and products, particularly where such activities increase the Participants' abilities to intercept dangerous individuals, hazardous goods, and contraband before they cause harm and to alleviate congestion at ports of entry;
- The enhancement of the repatriation processes through the exchange of information and close bilateral cooperation, with special attention to vulnerable people such as unaccompanied minors, pregnant women, and the sick and elderly.
- The improvement of bilateral mechanisms to share information related to aviation security and border security.
- The development of complementary risk management strategies aimed at separating high-risk and low-risk shipments, as well as high-risk and low-risk individuals, including specific procedures for repatriation of individuals with criminal records;
- The standardized collection and single entry of trade data, so that importers and exporters are asked for a given piece of information only once, reducing the administrative burden of compliance and therefore the cost of trade;
- Improved bi-national coordination in planning, financing, permitting, designing, building, and operating ports of entry, as well as optimal staffing of ports of entry;
- Promotion of a closer partnership with the private sector, the trade community, and international partners to secure supply chains;
- Development of shared priorities for public investments in ports of entry along the border, planned in coordination with the infrastructure feeding into them, as well as funding mechanisms for such projects, including private sector participation;
- Joint assessments of threats, development of a common understanding of the operating environment, and joint identification of geographic areas of focus for law enforcement operations;
- Augmentation of their collection, analysis, and sharing of information from interdictions, investigations, and prosecutions to disrupt "criminal flows" and enhance public safety; and
- Bringing together border communities and relevant stakeholders as partners in efforts to protect public safety by integrating law enforcement efforts with other government functions including social assistance, community outreach, and responsiveness to citizen concerns.

II. Implementation and Oversight

To coordinate and facilitate work aimed at furthering the goals noted in this Declaration, the Participants intend to establish a Twenty-First Century Border Bilateral Executive Steering Committee (ESC) composed of representatives from the appropriate federal government departments and offices. For the United States, this includes representatives from the Departments of State, Homeland Security, Justice, Transportation, Agriculture, Commerce, Interior, Defense, and the Office of the United State

Trade Representative, and for Mexico includes representatives from the Secretariats of Foreign Relations, Interior, Finance and Public Credit, Economy, Public Security, Communications and Transportation, Agriculture, and the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic. Each Participant should integrate its own section of the ESC section into the relevant interagency processes to achieve better bilateral coordination.

It is expected that the inaugural meeting of the ESC, to be convened no later than August 19, 2010, will develop a mutually accepted action plan to realize the goals of this Declaration and identify working groups, drawing, where appropriate, upon existing bilateral, border-related groups, to implement the action plan.

III. General Principles

This Declaration represents an understanding between the Participants and does not constitute a legally binding agreement. The Participants understand that activities in support of the goals mentioned in this Declaration are to be carried out in accordance with the laws and regulations of the Participants' countries, and applicable international agreements to which the Participants' countries are parties. The Participants are expected to bear their own costs in engaging in any such activities. All such activities are subject to the availability of funds and human resources.

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

Statement on the House Financial Services Committee Passage of Small-Business Lending Fund Legislation
May 19, 2010

Small businesses are the backbone of the American economy and where most new jobs begin. In March, I signed into law a jobs bill that provides tax cuts to small businesses that hire new workers and have proposed eliminating capital gains taxes on small-business investments and new tax breaks for all businesses to invest in new plants and equipment.

But one of the major challenges facing small-business owners is access to the credit that they need to grow and hire. And so I'm very pleased that the House Financial Services Committee passed legislation including two important Administration proposals, a small-business lending fund that provides incentives for smaller banks to make new loans and a State small-business credit initiative that would spur over $20 billion in new lending through innovative State-based programs at a time when States are being forced to cut back on them due to budget shortfalls.

I want to extend my thanks to Chairman Frank for his leadership in passing the bill and to the members of the Committee that moved so quickly on this important measure. And I urge Congress to continue moving swiftly on more job creation measures until every American who wants work can find it.

Remarks at a State Dinner Honoring President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico
May 19, 2010

President Obama. Michelle and I are extraordinarily honored as we host you, but most importantly as we host President Calderon and First Lady Margarita Zavala. Yes, I'm sorry, please be seated. We welcome them and the Mexican delegation for our second state dinner here at the White House—tonight *la Casa Blanca*. [*Laughter*]

In our visit to Mexico, the President and First Lady have treated me and Michelle to a

celebration of Mexico's rich heritage, including the stunning Anthropology Museum and some wonderful mariachi. Tonight we celebrate the bonds we share as neighbors and as friends.

We celebrate all that Mexico and its ancient civilizations have given the world throughout history, advances in architecture and astronomy, mathematics and medicine, and of course, some very good food—[*laughter*]—including the "food of the gods," chocolate. [*Laughter*]

As Mexico marks the bicentennial of its independence and the centennial of its revolution, we celebrate a proud people who have defined their own destiny, with patriots like Hidalgo and Juarez and giants in the arts and literature and science and, like the United States, a pretty good soccer team. [*Laughter*]

We celebrate all that Mexican Americans have contributed to the United States, leaders in every segment of our society, including many of the guests who are here tonight, and a culture that treasures family and faith. Indeed, America is enriched by *el sabor de Mexico*.

And we celebrate the partnership between our two countries. Mr. President, I must say it again: In the fight for your country's future, you've shown extraordinary courage, extraordinary bravery, and you and the Mexican people have a full and committed partner in the United States.

As we look to the future, I'm reminded of all the young people who've become part of our visits: the children in Mexico City waving American and Mexican flags; the students who shared their dreams with Michelle; and some very excited kids that, along with Michelle and Margarita, did a little exercise today. [*Laughter*] Each of those children has a dream. And yet we know that in life, it's not enough to want your dream. As the extraordinary writer Octavio Paz wrote in one of his poems, you must "deserve your dream."

And so, Mr. President, I propose a toast to the dreams of our children. Together, may we realize those dreams, and together, may we deserve them by going forward in partnership and respect.

Cheers. *Salud*.

[*At this point, President Obama offered a toast.*]

President Calderon. So good evening. Your Excellency, Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, Mrs. Michelle Obama, ladies and gentlemen, I thank President Barack Obama and Michelle and also to the people from the United States of America for your invitation and the generous hospitality with which we have been welcomed during this visit.

Your courtesy, Mr. President, as that that we have received from the First Lady, honor the great friendship and partnership that brings our people together.

Today I have once again seen that we share the hope to turn this relationship between the people from the United States of America and the people from Mexico into an example of how much can be achieved among neighbors when working together under the guidance of common ideals such as peace, security, prosperity, freedom, and democracy.

Today we promote the agreements and the actions of cooperation that our countries need in order to face the new challenges to benefit fully of the enormous advantages as a result of being neighbors and the long borderline that unites us. Today, Mexico and the United States are immersed in a new stage of cooperation, and we based our efforts in the principles of shared responsibility, mutual respect, and trust.

We fully understand that our joint work has a direct impact in both populations in its well-being and happiness. We are neighbors, we are partners, we are allies, and we are also friends.

I have said this, and allow me to repeat it: We work with the certainty of what is good for the United States of America is good for Mexico, and if we understand this, at the same time, what is good for Mexico is good for the United States.

I would like to congratulate the people of the United States of America for having a President like President Barack Obama, with his leadership, which is also very positive and good for us, and at the same time, also congratulate you, Mr. President, for having a wife and a First Lady like Michelle Obama.

Thank you for your hospitality and your friendship.

[*President Calderon continued in English, as follows.*]

Mr. President, I like the phrase of Octavio Paz that one must deserve their dreams—or his dreams. I don't know if you and me deserve of dreams, but I know that both of you—both of us have dreams. Those dreams are related with our people, and we fight every day in order to deserve those dreams. And we will reach them.

[*President Calderon continued in Spanish, and his remarks were translated as follows.*]

I ask you now to raise your glasses in a toast for the happiness of both our great nations.

[*President Calderon offered a toast.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:30 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. President Calderon spoke partly in Spanish, and those portions of his remarks were translated by an interpreter. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on Financial Regulatory Reform and Consumer Protection Legislation

May 20, 2010

Good afternoon, everybody. I want to say a few words about the vote on financial reform in the Senate today.

I've said many times that the recession we're emerging from was primarily caused by a lack of responsibility and accountability from Wall Street to Washington. It's part of the reason our economy nearly collapsed. It's what led to countless home foreclosures, the failure of community banks and small businesses, and a cascade of job losses that have left millions of Americans out of work. And that's why I made passage of Wall Street reform one of my top priorities as President, so that a crisis like this does not happen again.

Over the last year, the financial industry has repeatedly tried to end this reform with hordes of lobbyists and millions of dollars in ads. And when they couldn't kill it, they tried to water it down with special interest loopholes and carve-outs aimed at undermining real change.

Today I think it's fair to say that these efforts have failed. Today Democrats and a handful of Republicans in the Senate have voted to break the filibuster and allow a final debate and vote on financial reform, reform that will protect consumers, protect our economy, and hold Wall Street accountable.

I want to thank Senator Chris Dodd and Majority Leader Reid for their leadership on this legislation, as well as all the Senators who put partisan posturing aside in allowing a vote on this important reform. And I want to thank every American who kept the pressure on Washington to change a system that worked better for banks on Wall Street than it did for families on Main Street.

Now, we've still got some work to do. Soon we're going to have a final vote in the Senate, and then the House and the Senate will have to iron out the differences between the two bills. And there's no doubt that during that time, the financial industry and their lobbyists will keep on fighting. But I will ensure that we arrive at a final product that is both effective and responsible, one that holds Wall Street to high standards of accountability and secures financial stability, while preserving the strength and crucial functions of a financial industry that is central to our prosperity and our ability to innovate and compete in a global economy.

Our goal is not to punish the banks, but to protect the larger economy and the American people from the kind of upheavals that we've seen in the past few years. And today's action was a major step forward in achieving that goal.

Because of Wall Street reform, we'll soon have in place the strongest consumer protections in history. If you've ever applied for a credit card, a student loan, or a mortgage, you know the feeling of signing your name to pages of barely understandable fine print. It's a big step for most families, but one that's often filled with unnecessary confusion and apprehension. As a result, many Americans are simply duped into hidden fees and loans that they can't afford by companies that know exactly what they're doing.

Those days will soon end. From now on, every consumer will be empowered with the clear and concise information that you need to make final—financial decisions that are best for you. This bill will crack down on predatory practices and unscrupulous mortgage lenders. It will enforce the new credit card law we passed banning unfair rate hikes and ensure that folks aren't unwittingly caught by overdraft fees when they sign up for a checking account. It will give students who take out college loans information and make sure lenders don't cheat the system. And it will ensure that every American receives a free credit score if they are denied a loan or insurance because of that score.

Because of financial reform, the American people will never again be asked to foot the bill for Wall Street's mistakes. There will be no more taxpayer-funded bailouts, period. If a large financial institution should ever fail, we will have the tools to wind it down without endangering the broader economy. And there will be new rules to prevent financial institutions from becoming too big to fail in the first place so that we don't have another AIG.

Because of reform, the kinds of complex, backroom deals that helped trigger the financial crisis will finally be brought to the light of day. And from now on, shareholders will have greater say on the pay of CEOs and other executives so that they can reward success instead of failure and help change the perverse incentives that encouraged so much reckless risk-taking in the first place.

So in short, Wall Street reform will bring greater security to folks on Main Street, to families who are looking to buy their first car or their first home, to taxpayers who shouldn't have to pay for somebody else's irresponsibility, to small businesses and community banks who play by the rules, and to shareholders and investors who want to see their companies grow and thrive.

But let me stress that this is not a zero-sum game where Wall Street loses and Main Street wins. As we've learned, in today's economy, we're all connected. When the economy prospers, we all win. When the financial sector operates under sound rules of the road to ensure fairness and stability, we all win. Every American has an interest in a healthy financial sector. But for that reason, it's also imperative that those in Wall Street boardrooms and on trading floors be held accountable for the decisions that they make. For behind every dollar traded or leveraged on Wall Street, there is a family looking to buy a house, pay for an education, open a business, or save for retirement.

And the reform I sign will not stifle the power of the free market, it will simply bring predictable, responsible, sensible rules into the marketplace. Unless your business model is based on bilking your customers and skirting the law, you should have nothing to fear from this legislation.

As we continue to emerge from this recession, this reform is one important step that will strengthen our economy. And despite the ups and downs associated with a recovery, that economy is getting stronger by the day. It's an economy that's growing again. Last month, we added jobs, the fourth straight month of job growth and the largest increase in 4 years. And we're working closely with our G–20 partners around the world to ensure that growth is balanced and sustained.

I also said when I took office that we can't simply rebuild this economy on the same pile of sand, on maxed-out credit cards or housing bubbles or reckless risk-taking on Wall Street. We're going to have to build it on a firmer, stronger foundation for economic growth. That's why we invested in renewable energies that currently have the potential of creating new jobs all across America. That's why we're reforming our education system so that our workers can compete on the global stage. That's why we passed health care reform that will low-

er costs for families and businesses. And that's why we're about to pass financial regulatory reform to protect consumers and ensure that we don't have another crisis caused by the irresponsibility of a few.

Along with the steps we're taking to spur innovation and encourage hiring and rein in our deficits, that is how we will ultimately build an economy that is stronger and more prosperous than it was before.

Thanks very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:33 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Congressional Action on Campaign Finance Legislation
May 20, 2010

Today the House Administration Committee took another important step toward putting in place critical protections to control the flood of special interest money into American elections. The DISCLOSE Act, now moving to debate on the floor of the House of Representatives, would establish the toughest ever disclosure requirements for election-related spending by big oil corporations, Wall Street, and other special interests. It would prohibit foreign entities from manipulating the outcome of U.S. elections, and it would shine an unprecedented light on corporate spending in political campaigns so that the American people can clearly see who is trying to influence campaigns for public office. These changes are particularly urgent in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision, and I encourage the full Congress to give this strong, bipartisan legislation the swift consideration it deserves.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 5175.

Statement on the Resignation of Dennis C. Blair as Director of National Intelligence
May 20, 2010

Dennis Blair has a remarkable record of service to the United States, and I am grateful for his leadership as Director of National Intelligence. Over the course of many decades, Admiral Blair has served with great integrity, intellect, and commitment to our country and the values that we hold dear. During his time as DNI, our intelligence community has performed admirably and effectively at a time of great challenges to our security, and I have valued his sense of purpose and patriotism. He and I both share a deep admiration for the men and women of our intelligence community who are performing extraordinary and indispensable service to our Nation.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

Remarks on Signing a Memorandum Improving Energy Security, American Competitiveness and Job Creation, and Environmental Protection Through a Transformation of Our Nation's Fleet of Cars and Trucks
May 21, 2010

Good morning, everybody. Everybody, please have a seat. It is wonderful to have you all here. Welcome to the White House.

I want to introduce some of the folks who are on stage who have been integral in making today possible. You've already heard about the

wonderful team here at the White House: Carol Browner, Ray LaHood, and Lisa Jackson. But in addition, we have on stage a number of people who were absolutely critical: Martin Daum, the CEO of Daimler Trucks; Mr. Anthony Dunkley, who is a driver for Waste Management; Mr. G. Tommy Hodges, chairman of the board, American Trucking Association; Mr. Alan Reuther, legislative director for the UAW; Mr. Dennis Slagle, CEO of Volvo; Mr. Tim Solso, CEO of Cummins; and Mr. Daniel Ustian, CEO of Navistar. Please give them a big round of applause.

We also have with us some legislative leaders who have been champions of not only the auto industry, but also the environmental movement, and I want to thank them for being here: One of the deans of the House of Representatives, Representative John Dingell, please give him a big round of applause; Representative Ed Markey is here from Massachusetts; Representative Chris Van Hollen is here; and Representative Henry Waxman.

Now, it was 1 year ago today that I stood here in the Rose Garden on a similarly beautiful day with some of the same folks to announce a historic agreement to help break America's dependence on oil, to protect the planet that we'll leave to our children, and to spur jobs and growth in the industries of the future. It was an agreement—the first of its kind—to raise the fuel efficiency and reduce the greenhouse pollution for cars and light trucks sold in the United States of America.

A lot of people thought such an agreement was impossible. After all, for decades, we had made little headway in improving the fuel efficiency of our cars. We'd hear a lot of urgent talk in Washington when oil prices went up, then we'd see politicians rush to the local gas stations—I remember going to gas stations—holding press conferences, announcing new legislation. But the impetus for action would fade when gas prices started to go back down. Meanwhile, progress was mired in a lot of old arguments traded across entrenched political divides: left versus right, management versus labor, business leaders versus environmental advocates.

But what we showed here 1 year ago today is that we could do something different. We proved that these were false choices. We brought together all the stakeholders, including former adversaries, to support a policy that would benefit consumers, workers, and the auto industry, while strengthening the economy and protecting the planet. One year later, we're beginning to see results. Instead of fighting higher standards, auto manufacturers are engaged in a race to meet them. And over the next 5 years, we expect fuel efficiency standards in cars and light trucks to reach an average of 35.5 miles per gallon.

As a result, everybody wins. The typical driver will save roughly $3,000 over the life of the vehicle. We'll reduce our dependence on oil by 1.8 billion barrels and cut nearly a billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions. This is the equivalent of taking 50 million cars off the road, lowering pollution while making our economy more secure. And by setting a single standard in place, rather than a tangle of overlapping and uncertain rules, auto companies will have the clear incentive to develop more efficient vehicles. This in turn will foster innovation and growth in a host of new industries.

So that's what we set in motion 1 year ago. And today we're going even further, proposing the development of a national standard for medium and heavy-duty trucks, just as we did for cars and light trucks. In a few moments, I'm going to sign a Presidential memorandum, coordinated by my chief energy adviser, Carol Browner. It directs my administration, under the leadership of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson, to develop a standard to improve fuel efficiency and reduce harmful emissions for trucks, starting with the model year 2014.

This is the first time we'll have such a standard. And as a sign of the broad support behind this plan, we are joined by the representatives from more than a dozen car and truck manufacturers, as well as fleet operators, autoworkers, labor leaders, environmental groups, and officials from California and other States.

This is going to bring down the costs for transportating—for transporting goods, serving businesses and consumers alike. It will reduce

pollution, given that freight vehicles produce roughly one-fifth of the greenhouse gas emissions related to transportation. We estimate, for example, that we can increase fuel economy by as much as 25 percent in tractor-trailers using technologies that already exist today. And just like the rule concerning cars, this standard will spur growth in the clean energy sector.

We know how important that is. We know that our dependence on foreign oil endangers our security and our economy. We know that climate change poses a threat to our way of life; in fact, we're already seeing some of the profound and costly impacts. And the disaster in the Gulf only underscores that even as we pursue domestic production to reduce our reliance on imported oil, our long-term security depends on the development of alternative sources of fuel and new transportation technologies.

But we also know that our economic future depends on our leadership in the industries of the future. Around the globe, countries are seeking an advantage in the global marketplace by investing in new ways of producing and saving energy. From China to Germany, these countries recognize that the nation that leads in the clean energy economy will lead the global economy. And I want America to be that nation.

And that's why, when we fashioned the Recovery Act to get our economy moving again, we emphasized clean energy. Today, we're supporting the development of advanced battery technologies. We're doubling the capacity to generate renewable electricity. We're building a stronger, smarter electric grid, which will be essential to powering the millions of plug-in hybrids, and cars and trucks that we hope to see on the roads. It's estimated that through these investments, we'll create or save more than 700,000 jobs. And these investments will help businesses develop new technologies that vehicle makers can use to meet higher fuel efficiency standards.

In addition, the standard we set last year for cars and light trucks runs through 2016. I'm proposing we start developing right now a new and higher standard to take effect beginning 2017, so that we can make more and more progress in the years to come.

Through the directive I'm signing, we're also going to work with public and private sectors to develop the advanced infrastructure that will be necessary for plug-in hybrids and electric vehicles. And we're going to continue to work to diversify our fuel mix, including biofuels, natural gas, and other cleaner sources of energy. I believe that it's possible, in the next 20 years, for vehicles to use half the fuel and produce half the pollution that they do today. But that's only going to happen if we are willing to do what's necessary for the sake of our economy, our security, and our environment.

Today's announcement is an essential part of our energy strategy, but it's not a substitute for other necessary steps to ensure our leadership in a new clean energy economy. I'm heartened by the good work that's been done by Senator Kerry and Lieberman on a comprehensive energy and climate bill to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, to prevent the worst consequences of climate change, and foster the millions of new jobs that are possible if we rise to this challenge. And this follows the passage of comprehensive legislation through the House last June.

So as I've said before, I intend to work with members of both parties to pass a bill this year. In the meantime, I'm going to take every sensible, responsible action that I can use—that I can take using my authority as President to move our country in the right direction. That's what we've done today. That's what we're going to continue to do in the days, weeks, and months ahead.

So thank you very much for being here, everybody. And I'm going to now sign this memorandum.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:58 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The memorandum is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Weekly Address
May 22, 2010

One month ago this week, BP's Deepwater Horizon drilling rig exploded off Louisiana's coast, killing 11 people and rupturing an underwater pipe. The resulting oil spill has not only dealt an economic blow to Americans across the Gulf Coast, it also represents an environmental disaster.

In response, we're drawing on America's best minds and using the world's best technology to stop the leak. We've deployed over 1,100 vessels, about 24,000 personnel, and more than 2 million total feet of boom to help contain it. And we're doing all we can to assist struggling fishermen and the small businesses and communities that depend on them.

Folks on the Gulf Coast and across America are rightly demanding swift action to clean up BP's mess and end this ordeal. But they're also demanding to know how this happened in the first place and how we can make sure it never happens again. That's what I'd like to spend a few minutes talking with you about.

First and foremost, what led to this disaster was a breakdown of responsibility on the part of BP and perhaps others, including Transocean and Halliburton. And we'll continue to hold the relevant companies accountable not only for being forthcoming and transparent about the facts surrounding the leak but for shutting it down, repairing the damage it does, and repaying Americans who've suffered a financial loss.

But even as we continue to hold BP accountable, we also need to hold Washington accountable. Now, this catastrophe is unprecedented in its nature, and it presents a host of new challenges we're working to address. But the question is what lessons we can learn from this disaster to make sure it never happens again.

If the laws on our books are inadequate to prevent such an oil spill or if we didn't enforce those laws, I want to know it. I want to know what worked and what didn't work in our response to the disaster and where oversight of the oil and gas industry broke down. We know, for example, that a cozy relationship between oil and gas companies and the agencies that regulate them has long been a source of concern.

Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar has taken steps to address this problem, steps that build on reforms he's been implementing since he took office. But we need to do a lot more to protect the health and safety of our people, to safeguard the quality of our air and water, and to preserve the natural beauty and bounty of America.

In recent weeks, we've taken a number of immediate measures to prevent another spill. We've ordered inspections of all deepwater operations in the Gulf of Mexico. We've announced that no permits for drilling new wells will go forward until the 30-day safety and environmental review I requested is complete. And I've called on Congress to pass a bill that would provide critical funds and tools to respond to this spill and better prepare us to confront any future spills.

But we also need to take a comprehensive look at how the oil and gas industry operates and how we regulate them. That's why on Friday, I signed an Executive order establishing the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling. While there are a number of ongoing investigations, including an independent review by the National Academy of Engineering, the purpose of this Commission is to consider both the root causes of the disaster and offer options on what safety and environmental precautions we need to take to prevent a similar disaster from happening again. This Commission, I'd note, is similar to one proposed by Congresswoman Capps and Senator Whitehouse.

And I've asked Democrat Bob Graham and Republican Bill Reilly to cochair this Commission. Bob served two terms as Florida's Governor and represented Florida as a United States Senator for almost two decades. During that time, he earned a reputation as a champion of the environment, leading the most extensive environmental protection effort in the State's history.

Bill Reilly is chairman emeritus of the board of the World Wildlife Fund, and he also is deeply knowledgeable about the oil and gas in-

dustry. During the Presidency of George H.W. Bush, Bill was Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and his tenure encompassed the Exxon *Valdez* disaster.

I can't think of two people who will bring greater experience or better judgment to the task at hand. In the days to come, I'll appoint five other distinguished Americans, including scientists, engineers, and environmental advocates, to join them on the Commission. And I'm directing them to report back in 6 months with recommendations on how we can prevent and mitigate the impact of any future spills that result from offshore drilling.

One of the reasons I ran for President was to put America on the path to energy independence, and I've not wavered from that commitment. To achieve that goal, we must pursue clean energy and energy efficiency, and we've taken significant steps to do so. And we must also pursue domestic sources of oil and gas. Because it represents 30 percent of our oil production, the Gulf of Mexico can play an important part in securing our energy future. But we can only pursue offshore oil drilling if we have assurances that a disaster like the BP oil spill will not happen again. This Commission will, I hope, help provide those assurances so we can continue to seek a secure energy future for the United States of America.

Thanks so much.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:05 p.m. on May 21 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on May 22. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 21, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 22. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Commencement Address at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York

May 22, 2010

The President. Thank you. Please be seated. Thank you very much. Good morning.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. It is wonderful to be back at the United States Military Academy, the oldest continuously occupied military post in America, as we commission the newest officers in the United States Army.

Thank you, General Hagenbeck, for your introduction, on a day that holds special meaning for you and the dean, General Finnegan. Both of you first came to West Point in the class of 1971 and went on to inspire soldiers under your command. You've led this Academy to a well-observed recognition: best college in America. And today you're both looking forward to a well-deserved retirement from the Army. General Hagenbeck and Judy, General Finnegan and Joan, we thank you for 39 years of remarkable service to the Army and to America.

To the Commandant, General Rapp, the Academy staff and faculty, most of whom are veterans, thank you for your service and for inspiring these cadets to become the "leaders of character" they are today. Let me also acknowledge the presence of General Shinseki, Secretary McHugh, the Members of Congress who are with us here today, including two former soldiers this Academy knows well, Senator Jack Reed and Congressman Patrick Murphy.

To all the families here, especially all the moms and dads, this day is a tribute to you as well. The decision to come to West Point was made by your sons and daughters, but it was you who instilled in them a spirit of service that has led them to this hallowed place in a time of war. So on behalf of the American people, thank you for your example, and thank you for your patriotism.

To the United States Corps of Cadets, and most of all, the class of 2010: It is a singular honor to serve as your Commander in Chief. As your Superintendent indicated, under our constitutional system, my power as President is wisely limited. But there are some areas where my power is absolute. And so, as your Commander in Chief, I hereby absolve all ca-

dets who are on restriction for minor conduct offenses. I will leave the definition of "minor"—[*laughter*]—to those who know better. [*Laughter*]

Class of 2010, today is your day, a day to celebrate all that you've achieved, in the finest tradition of the soldier-scholar, and to look forward to the important service that lies ahead.

You have pushed yourself through the agony of Beast Barracks, the weeks of training in rain and mud, and, I'm told, more inspections and drills than perhaps any class before you. Along the way, I'm sure you faced a few moments when you asked yourself: "What am I doing here?" I have those moments sometimes. [*Laughter*]

You've trained for the complexities of today's missions, knowing that success will be measured not merely by performance on the battlefield, but also by your understanding of the cultures and traditions and languages in the place where you serve.

You've reached out across borders, with more international experience than any class in academy history. You've not only attended foreign academies to forge new friendships, you've welcomed into your ranks cadets from nearly a dozen countries.

You've challenged yourselves intellectually in the sciences and the humanities, in history and technology. You've achieved a standard of academic excellence that is without question, tying the record for the most postgraduate scholarships of any class in West Point history.

This includes your number one overall cadet and your valedictorian, Liz Betterbed and Alex Rosenberg. And by the way, this is the first time in Academy history where your two top awards have been earned by female candidates. This underscores a fact that I've seen in the faces of our troops from Baghdad to Bagram: In the 21st century, our women in uniform play an indispensable role in our national defense. And time and again, they have proven themselves to be role models for our daughters and our sons, as students and as soldiers and as leaders in the United States Armed Forces.

And the faces in this stadium show a simple truth: America's Army represents the full breadth of America's experience. You come from every corner of our country, from privilege and from poverty, from cities and small towns. You worship all of the great religions that enrich the life of our people. You include the vast diversity of race and ethnicity that is fundamental to our Nation's strength.

There is, however, one thing that sets you apart. Here in these quiet hills, you've come together to prepare for the most difficult test of our time. You signed up knowing your service would send you into harm's way, and you did so long after the first drums of war were sounded. In you we see the commitment of our country and timeless virtues that have served our Nation well.

We see your sense of duty, including those who have earned their right shoulder patch, their right shoulder combat patches, like the soldier who suffered a grenade wound in Iraq, yet still helped his fellow soldiers to evacuate, your First Captain of the Corps of Cadets, Tyler Gordy.

We see your sense of honor, in your respect for tradition, knowing that you join a long gray line that stretches through the centuries, and in your reverence for each other, as when the corps stands in silence every time a former cadet makes the ultimate sacrifice for our Nation. Indeed, today we honor the 78 graduates of this academy who have given their lives for our freedom and our security in Iraq and Afghanistan.

And we see your love of country, a devotion to America captured in the motto you chose as a class, a motto which will guide your lives of service: "Loyal 'Til the End."

Duty, honor, love of country; everything you have learned here, all that you've achieved here, has prepared you for today when you raise your right hand, when you take that oath, when your loved one or mentor pins those gold bars on your shoulders, when you become, at long last, commissioned officers in the United States Army.

This is the ninth consecutive commencement that has taken place at West Point with our Nation at war. This time of war began in Afghanistan, a place that may seem as far away from this peaceful bend in the Hudson River as anywhere on Earth. The war began only because our own cities and civilians were attacked by vi-

olent extremists who plotted from a distant place, and it continues only because that plotting persists to this day.

For many years, our focus was on Iraq. And year after year, our troops faced a set of challenges there that were as daunting as they were complex. A lesser Army might have seen its spirit broken. But the American military is more resilient than that. Our troops adapted, they persisted, they partnered with coalition and Iraqi counterparts, and through their competence and creativity and courage, we are poised to end our combat mission in Iraq this summer.

Even as we transition to an Iraqi lead and bring our troops home, our commitment to the Iraqi people endures. We will continue to advise and assist Iraqi security forces, who are already responsible for security in most of the country. And a strong American civilian presence will help Iraqis forge political and economic progress. This will not be a simple task, but this is what success looks like: an Iraq that provides no haven to terrorists, a democratic Iraq that is sovereign and stable and self-reliant.

And as we end the war in Iraq, though, we are pressing forward in Afghanistan. Six months ago, I came to West Point to announce a new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. And I stand here humbled by the knowledge that many of you will soon be serving in harm's way. I assure you, you will go with the full support of a proud and grateful nation.

We face a tough fight in Afghanistan. Any insurgency that is confronted with a direct challenge will turn to new tactics. And from Marja to Kandahar, that is what the Taliban has done through assassination and indiscriminate killing and intimidation. Moreover, any country that has known decades of war will be tested in finding political solutions to its problems and providing governance that can sustain progress and serve the needs of its people.

So this war has changed over the last 9 years, but it's no less important than it was in those days after 9/11. We toppled the Taliban regime, now we must break the momentum of a Taliban insurgency and train Afghan security forces. We have supported the election of a sovereign government, now we must strengthen its capacities. We've brought hope to the Afghan people, now we must see that their country does not fall prey to our common enemies. Cadets, there will be difficult days ahead. We will adapt, we will persist, and I have no doubt that together with our Afghan and international partners, we will succeed in Afghanistan.

Now even as we fight the wars in front of us, we also have to see the horizon beyond these wars, because unlike a terrorist whose goal is to destroy, our future will be defined by what we build. We have to see that horizon and to get there we must pursue a strategy of national renewal and global leadership. We have to build the sources of America's strength and influence and shape a world that's more peaceful and more prosperous.

Time and again, Americans have risen to meet and to shape moments of change. This is one of those moments, an era of economic transformation and individual empowerment, of ancient hatreds and new dangers, of emerging powers and new global challenges. And we're going to need all of you to help meet these challenges. You've answered the call. You, and all who wear America's uniform, remain the cornerstone of our national defense, the anchor of global security. And through a period when too many of our institutions have acted irresponsibly, the American military has set a standard of service and sacrifice that is as great as any in this Nation's history.

Now the rest of us must do our part. And to do so, we must first recognize that our strength and influence abroad begins with steps we take at home. We must educate our children to compete in an age where knowledge is capital and the marketplace is global. We must develop clean energy that can power new industry and unbind us from foreign oil and preserve our planet. We have to pursue science and research that unlocks wonders as unforeseen to us today as the microchip and the surface of the Moon were a century ago.

Simply put, American innovation must be the foundation of American power, because at no time in human history has a nation of diminished economic vitality maintained its mili-

tary and political primacy. And so that means that the civilians among us, as parents and community leaders, elected officials, business leaders, we have a role to play. We cannot simply leave it to those in uniform to defend this country; we have to make sure that America is building on its strengths.

As we build these economic sources of our strength, the second thing we must do is build and integrate the capabilities that can advance our interests and the common interests of human beings around the world. America's Armed Forces are adapting to changing times, but your efforts have to be complemented. We will need the renewed engagement of our diplomats, from grand capitals to dangerous outposts. We need development experts who can support Afghan agriculture and help Africans build the capacity to feed themselves. We need intelligence agencies that work seamlessly with their counterparts to unravel plots that run from the mountains of Pakistan to the streets of our cities. We need law enforcement that can strengthen judicial systems abroad and protect us here at home. And we need first-responders who can act swiftly in the event of earthquakes and storms and disease.

The burdens of this century cannot fall on our soldiers alone. It also cannot fall on American shoulders alone. Our adversaries would like to see America sap its strength by overextending our power. And in the past, we've always had the foresight to avoid acting alone. We were part of the most powerful wartime coalition in human history through World War II. We stitched together a community of free nations and institutions to endure and ultimately prevail during a cold war.

Yes, we are clear eyed about the shortfalls of our international system. But America has not succeeded by stepping out of the currents of cooperation; we have succeeded by steering those currents in the direction of liberty and justice, so nations thrive by meeting their responsibilities and face consequences when they don't.

So we have to shape an international order that can meet the challenges of our generation. We will be steadfast in strengthening those old alliances that have served us so well, including those who will serve by your side in Afghanistan and around the globe. As influence extends to more countries and capitals, we also have to build new partnerships and shape stronger international standards and institutions.

This engagement is not an end in itself. The international order we seek is one that can resolve the challenges of our times: countering violent extremism and insurgency, stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and securing nuclear materials, combating a changing climate and sustaining global growth, helping countries feed themselves and care for their sick, preventing conflict and healing wounds. If we are successful in these tasks, that will lessen conflicts around the world. It will be supportive of our efforts by our military to secure our country.

More than anything else, though, our success will be claimed by who we are as a country. This is more important than ever, given the nature of the challenges that we face. Our campaign to disrupt, dismantle, and to defeat Al Qaida is part of an international effort that is necessary and just.

But this is a different kind of war. There will be no simple moment of surrender to mark the journey's end, no armistice, no banner headline. Though we have had more success in eliminating Al Qaida leaders in recent months than in recent years, they will continue to recruit and plot and exploit our open society. We see that in bombs that go off in Kabul and Karachi. We see it in attempts to blow up an airliner over Detroit or an SUV in Times Square, even as these failed attacks show that pressure on networks like Al Qaida is forcing them to rely on terrorists with less time and space to train. We see the potential duration of this struggle in Al Qaida's gross distortions of Islam, their disrespect for human life, and their attempt to prey upon fear and hatred and prejudice.

So the threat will not go away soon, but let's be clear: Al Qaida and its affiliates are small men on the wrong side of history. They lead no nation; they lead no religion. We need not give in to fear every time a terrorist tries to scare us. We should not discard our freedoms because extremists try to exploit them. We cannot succumb to division because others try to drive us apart. We are the United States of America. [*Applause*] We are the United States of

America, and we have repaired our Union and faced down fascism and outlasted communism. We've gone through turmoil, we've gone through civil war, and we have come out stronger, and we will do so once more.

And I know this to be true because I see the strength and resilience of the American people. Terrorists want to scare us, New Yorkers just go about their lives unafraid. Extremists want a war between America and Islam, but Muslims are part of our national life, including those who serve in our United States Army. Adversaries want to divide us, but we are united by our support for you, soldiers who send a clear message that this country is both the land of the free and the home of the brave.

You know, in an age of instant access to information, a lot of cynicism in the news, it's easy to lose perspective in a flood of pictures and the swirl of political debate. Power and influence can seem to ebb and flow. Wars and grand plans can be deemed won or lost day to day, even hour to hour. As we experience the immediacy of the image of a suffering child or the boasts of a prideful dictator, it's easy to give in to the belief sometimes that human progress has stalled, that events are beyond our control, that change is not possible.

But this Nation was founded upon a different notion. We believe "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." And that truth has bound us together, a nation populated by people from around the globe, enduring hardship and achieving greatness as one people. And that belief is as true today as it was 200 years ago. It is a belief that has been claimed by people of every race and religion in every region of the world. Can anybody doubt that this belief will be any less true, any less powerful, 2 years, two decades, or even two centuries from now?

And so a fundamental part of our strategy for our security has to be America's support for those universal rights that formed the creed of our founding. And we will promote these values above all by living them, through our fidelity to the rule of law and our Constitution, even when it's hard, even when we're being attacked, even when we're in the midst of war.

And we will commit ourselves to forever pursuing a more perfect Union. Together with our friends and allies, America will always seek a world that extends these rights so that when an individual is being silenced, we aim to be her voice. Where ideas are suppressed, we provide space for open debate. Where democratic institutions take hold, we add a wind at their back. When humanitarian disaster strikes, we extend a hand. Where human dignity is denied, America opposes poverty and is a source of opportunity. That is who we are. That is what we do.

We do so with no illusions. We understand change doesn't come quick. We understand that neither America nor any nation can dictate every outcome beyond its borders. We know that a world of mortal men and women will never be rid of oppression or evil. What we can do, what we must do, is work and reach and fight for the world that we seek, all of us, those in uniform and those who are not.

And in preparing for today, I turned to the world—to the words of Oliver Wendell Holmes. And reflecting on his Civil War experience, he said, and I quote: "To fight out a war you must believe in something and want something with all your might. So must you do to carry anything else to an end worth reaching." Holmes went on, "More than that, you must be willing to commit yourself to a course, perhaps a long and hard one, without being able to foresee exactly where you will come out."

America does not fight for the sake of fighting. We abhor war. As one who has never experienced the field of battle—and I say that with humility, knowing, as General MacArthur said, "the soldier, above all others, prays for peace"—we fight because we must. We fight to keep our families and communities safe. We fight for the security of our allies and partners, because America believes that we will be safer when our friends are safer, that we will be stronger when the world is more just.

So, cadets, a long and hard road awaits you. You go abroad because your service is fundamental to our security back home. You go abroad as representatives of the values that

this country was founded upon. And when you inevitably face setbacks, when the fighting is fierce or a village elder is fearful, when the end that you are seeking seems uncertain, think back to West Point.

Here, in this peaceful part of the world, you have drilled and you have studied and come of age in the footsteps of great men and women, Americans who faced times of trial, and who even in victory could not have foreseen the America they helped to build, the world they helped to shape.

George Washington was able to free a band of patriots from the rule of an empire, but he could not have foreseen his country growing to include 50 States connecting two oceans.

Grant was able to save a Union and see the slaves freed, but he could not have foreseen just how much his country would extend full rights and opportunities to citizens of every color.

Eisenhower was able to see Germany surrender and a former enemy grow into an ally, but he could not have foreseen the Berlin Wall coming down without a shot being fired.

Today, it is your generation that has borne a heavy burden: soldiers, graduates of this Academy like John Meyer and Greg Ambrosia, who have braved enemy fire, protected their units, carried out their missions, earned the commendation of this Army and of a grateful nation.

From the birth of our existence, America has had a faith in the future, a belief that where we're going is better than where we've been, even when the path ahead is uncertain. To fulfill that promise, generations of Americans have built upon the foundation of our forefathers, finding opportunity, fighting injustice, forging a more perfect Union. Our achievement would not be possible without the long gray line that has sacrificed for duty, for honor, for country.

And years from now when you return here, when for you the shadows have grown longer, I have no doubt that you will have added your name to the book of history. I have no doubt that we will have prevailed in the struggles of our times. I have no doubt that your legacy will be an America that has emerged stronger and a world that is more just, because we are Americans, and our destiny is never written for us, it is written by us, and we are ready to lead once more.

Thank you. May God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:31 a.m. in Michie Stadium.

Remarks at a Reception Celebrating Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

May 24, 2010

The President. Thank you. Thank you so much. It is wonderful to see all of you. Some of you back for the second time. Some of you work for me, so you're here all the time. [*Laughter*]

I want to, before I start off, acknowledge that we've got just some outstanding Members of Congress who are always fighting the good fight for the AAPI community. It starts at the top, though, and I want to give a huge welcome and big round of applause for somebody who will go down as one of the greatest Speakers in our history, Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

I want to thank Father Vien for his introduction. He's led Mary Queen of Vietnam Church in Louisiana through some pretty hard days. After Katrina, he served not only as a spiritual advisor, but also as a community organizer, making sure his parishioners got the help that they needed. In fact, shortly after returning to New Orleans, when much of the city was dark, he convinced the utility company to divert electricity to the neighborhood around his church. So nobody messes with Father Vien. [*Laughter*] He tends to get what he wants.

Today, as communities in the Gulf face new hardships as the result of this ongoing oil spill, he's once more taken up the cause of his community. He's advocating on behalf of the many Vietnamese and Cambodian Americans and others who make their living shrimping and fishing. And I want him to know that we are going to be tireless in working to do everything we

can to support the community and everybody whose livelihoods have been imperiled down in the region.

I want to not only thank all the Members of Congress who are here, I think Ric Shinseki may be here. Has he made it yet? He may be late. Give Ric Shinseki a round of applause anyway because he's doing a great job as our Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

I want to thank DJ Rekha, who's been spinning a little East Room Bhangra for everybody, mixing a hip-hop beat with the sounds of her heritage—[*laughter*]—making a uniquely American sound that may not have been heard in the White House before. [*Laughter*]

But you know, that speaks to the promise of this country, a nation that welcomes contributions from all peoples, all colors, all creeds. We draw strength from the rich tradition that everybody can call America home, because we all came from somewhere else, except for the first Americans. *E pluribus unum*: Out of many, one. And there's no better example of this than the communities that are represented in this room.

Your role in America's story has not always been given its due, and many Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have known tremendous unfairness and injustice during our history. But we also know that generations of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders helped to build this country, defend this country, and make America what it is today, from the Chinese laborers who scaled cliffs and laid ties to connect our coasts by rail to the members of the 442d Regimental Combat Team who fought and bled overseas while their families were interned back home, from the hundreds of thousands who bore hardship and sacrifice on the journey to Angel Island a century ago to the more than 16 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders whose talents and efforts strengthen our economy and protect our security and enliven our communities each and every day. And obviously, this is personal for me, since you need to look no further than my family—my sister Maya and brother-in-law Konrad and my two mischievous nieces—[*laughter*]—Suhaila and Savita—to know that that is part of America's past, but is also going to be part of America's future.

And for this reason, we are here today to celebrate these contributions. But we're also holding this event because I want to make sure that we are hearing from you so that Government does its part on your behalf, just as you're doing your part on America's behalf.

And that's why I signed an Executive order to reestablish the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. It's chaired by my Commerce Secretary, Gary Locke, and my Education Secretary, Arne Duncan. Are they here? There's Arne. It's easier to spot Arne than Gary. [*Laughter*] That's why we're always welcoming your input, from meetings with Sikh Americans to Native Hawaiians. The goal is to make sure that our Government is successfully working to address disparities in health care, in education, and economic opportunity that exists within various AAPI communities.

Sometimes these disparities don't get the attention they deserve. People get lumped into one category, and obviously, so many Asian Americans are doing so well that the fact of disparity is lost and forgotten. But as you know, beneath the label of AAPI are dozens of communities, and each is facing their own unique challenges. And that's part of what this education effort within Government is all about: to make sure we're not making generalizations, but rather, we're thinking in very particular terms about how we can help to give everyone in this country the opportunity they deserve.

I'm also going to fight, have been fighting, and will keep on fighting for a comprehensive immigration reform that respects our Nation's heritage. We have to respect our heritage as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. And that means that everybody is going to have to take responsibility. Government has a responsibility to secure the border and enforce laws. Washington has an obligation to set clear, commonsense rules, including rules that no longer punish and divide families that are doing the right thing and following the law. That's why addressing the backlogs problem in our immigration system is an important part of

reform. Business has to be held accountable when they exploit undocumented workers. Individuals who are here illegally, they have to take responsibility by paying a fine and back taxes and learning English and going to the back of the line so that they take a legal path towards citizenship.

These are the essential elements of comprehensive reform, and I'm going to work with members of both parties to get it done. It may not be the easiest thing to do politically, but I also know that it is the right thing to do for our country.

In addition, we've sought to honor AAPI heritage, commemorating Hmong New Year, marking——

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Good to see you. [*Laughter*] I know, I remember you. [*Laughter*] How's your kid? She's doing good?

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Good, good, good. [*Laughter*] Didn't know we were going to have that little colloquy, but—[*laughter*].

We've marked Diwali in the White House, which was—[*applause*]. And with my appointments and nominations, I've worked to make sure that we've gotten a Government that is reflective of all America, including Americans of Asian descent and Pacific Islanders.

But I think it's also important to stress that while you confront some specific challenges to AAPI communities, everybody here understands that nobody is immune from the problems that our country is confronted with as a whole.

As small-business owners, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders know how important it is that we continue to spur growth after a long and brutal recession. As parents, everybody here is concerned about the quality of our education system and making college more affordable and accessible. As Americans, we want to make sure that we're giving our children the same opportunities that were given to us. And you know that it's up to each generation of Americans to pass on that legacy, to make sure that America is living up to its promise, a place where all things are possible if you're willing to put in a lot of hard work.

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have helped to fulfill that promise for generations now. And because of the leadership of all of you in this room and people all across the country, I'm confident that that will continue into this century.

So thank you so much, everybody, for being here. God bless you. God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:50 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Father Vien The Nguyen, pastor, Mary Queen of Vietnam Church, New Orleans, LA; and entertainer Rekha "DJ Rekha" Malhotra. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng, her husband Konrad Ng, and their daughters Suhaila and Savita Ng. The related proclamation of April 29 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on Signing the Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act of 2009

May 24, 2010

Today I signed into law the Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act of 2009. The legislation crystallizes the commitment of the United States to help bring an end to the brutality and destruction that have been a hallmark of the LRA across several countries for two decades and to pursue a future of greater security and hope for the people of central Africa.

The Lord's Resistance Army preys on civilians, killing, raping, and mutilating the people of central Africa, stealing and brutalizing their children, and displacing hundreds of thousands of people. Its leadership, indicted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity, has no agenda and no purpose other than its own survival. It fills its ranks of fighters with the young boys and girls it abducts. By any

measure, its actions are an affront to human dignity.

Of the millions affected by the violence, each had an individual story and voice that we must not forget. In northern Uganda, we recall Angelina Atyam's 14-year-old daughter, whom the LRA kidnaped in 1996 and held captive for nearly 8 years, one of 139 girls abducted that day from a boarding school. In southern Sudan, we recall John Loboi, a father, a husband, a brother, a local humanitarian assistance worker killed in an ambush while helping others in 2003. Now in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, the people of Dungu and of Obo too have their stories of loss and pain.

We mourn those killed. We pray for those abducted to be freed and for those wounded to heal. We call on the ranks of the LRA to disarm and surrender. We believe that the leadership of the LRA should be brought to justice.

I signed this bill today recognizing that we must all renew our commitments and strengthen our capabilities to protect and assist civilians caught in the LRA's wake, to receive those that surrender, and to support efforts to bring the LRA leadership to justice. The bill reiterates U.S. policy and our commitment to work toward a comprehensive and lasting resolution to the conflict in northern Uganda and other affected areas, including northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo, southern Sudan, and the Central African Republic. We will do so in partnership with regional governments and multilateral efforts.

I commend the Government of Uganda for its efforts to stabilize the northern part of the country, for actively supporting transitional and development assistance, and for pursuing reintegration programs for those who surrender and escape from the LRA ranks.

I also want the governments of other LRA-affected countries to know that we are aware of the danger the LRA represents and we will continue to support efforts to protect civilians and to end this terrible chapter in central African history. For over a decade, the United States has worked with others to respond to the LRA crisis. We have supported peace process and reconciliation, humanitarian assistance and regional recovery, protection of civilians and reintegration for former combatants, and have supported regional governments as they worked to provide for their people's security. Going forward, we will call on our partners as we all renew our efforts.

I congratulate Congress for seizing on this important issue, and I congratulate the hundreds of thousands of Americans who have mobilized to respond to this unique crisis of conscience. We have heard from the advocacy organizations, nongovernmental organizations, faith-based groups, humanitarian actors who lack access, and those who continue to work on this issue in our own Government. We have seen your reporting, your web sites, your blogs, and your video postcards. You have made the plight of the children visible to us all. Your action represents the very best of American leadership around the world, and we are committed to working with you in pursuit of the future of peace and dignity that the people of who have suffered at the hands of the LRA deserve.

NOTE: S. 1067, approved May 24, was assigned Public Law No. 111–172.

Letter to the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue
May 24, 2010

To the participants of the U.S.-China Strategic & Economic Dialogue,

Last summer, I was proud to welcome many of you to the White House as our two countries launched this Strategic and Economic Dialogue. I want to thank President Hu, Vice Premier Wang, State Councilor Dai, and the entire Chinese delegation for their hospitality in hosting this year's meeting.

I am pleased that our delegation in Beijing is led by two outstanding members of my Cabinet—Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner—and that

they are joined by officials from across my Administration.

As I said when we began this dialogue, the relationship between the United States and China will shape the 21st century, which makes it as important as any bilateral relationship in the world. Together, we set out to build a positive, constructive, and comprehensive relationship, and we pledged to cooperate to advance our shared interests. That is what we have done.

As two of the world's largest economies, we have worked together, and with our G–20 partners, to sustain the global economic recovery. During my visit to China last fall, we forged clean energy partnerships, and at Copenhagen we made important commitments to confront climate change.

To advance our common security interests, we are cooperating to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and regional nuclear arms races that would endanger us all. I was pleased to welcome President Hu to our Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, and I thank China for its commitment to establish a center of excellence on nuclear security, which will help achieve our shared goal of securing vulnerable nuclear materials around the world.

Over the next two days, our two countries have the opportunity to deepen our cooperation even further and advance the prosperity, health and security of our people. Together, we can promote economic growth that is balanced and sustained and trade that is free and fair. We can work to fulfill the commitments we made at Copenhagen. We can address pressing regional and global security challenges, including strengthening the global nonproliferation regime to ensure the rights and responsibilities of all nations. We need to improve communication between our militaries, which promotes mutual understanding and confidence.

Our two nations may not always agree on every issue, but this dialogue also allows us to communicate and understand one another better. This includes America's abiding commitment to those human rights that are universal and to the dignity of all people. Indeed, we welcome our human rights dialogue with China, which we began this month and which I look forward to continuing.

Across all these areas, our relationship with China is guided by the recognition that we live in an interconnected world. As I said during my visit to China while standing beside President Hu in the Great Hall where you gather today, one country's success need not come at the expense of another. Our progress can be shared. Indeed, the United States welcomes China as a strong, prosperous and successful member of the community of nations.

A truly comprehensive relationship, however, cannot be between governments alone. It must also be between our people. That is why my visit to China included a discussion with young men and women in Shanghai, and it is why we are working to deepen the ties between Americans and Chinese through educational and cultural exchanges.

As you meet in Beijing, the people of Shanghai are hosting the World Expo, which reflects the strength and creativity of China and its people. There, at the USA Pavilion, the United States is proud to showcase the spirit that has always defined our country, including our belief that we can join with other nations to build a better life for our children.

This is the spirit that brings our countries together in Beijing and the spirit that must guide our work as we deepen our positive, constructive, and comprehensive relationship. Thank you for participating in this Strategic and Economic Dialogue, and we look forward to welcoming you to the United States for our meeting next year and to continuing our progress.

Sincerely,

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

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

Message to the Congress Transmitting the "Reduce Unnecessary Spending Act of 2010"

May 24, 2010

To the Congress of the United States:

Today, I am pleased to submit to the Congress the enclosed legislative proposal, the "Reduce Unnecessary Spending Act of 2010," along with a section-by-section analysis of the legislation.

This proposal will be another important step in restoring fiscal discipline and making sure that Washington spends taxpayer dollars responsibly. It will provide a new tool to streamline Government programs and operations, cut wasteful Government spending, and enhance transparency and accountability to the American people. The legislation will create an expedited procedure to rescind unnecessary spending and to broadly scale back funding levels if warranted. The legislation would require the Congress to vote up or down on legislation proposed by the President to rescind funding. This new, enhanced rescission authority will not only empower the President and the Congress to eliminate unnecessary spending, but also discourage waste in the first place.

Now more than ever, it's critical that taxpayer dollars are not wasted on programs that are ineffective, duplicative, or out-dated. In a time when American families and small business owners are conscious of every dollar and make sure that they manage their budgets wisely, the Federal Government can do no less. The American people expect and demand that we spend their money with the same discipline. Allowing taxpayer dollars to be wasted is both an irresponsible use of taxpayer funds and an irresponsible abuse of the public trust.

Recently, the Congress has taken welcome steps to curb wasteful spending. In 2007, when I served in the Senate, a bipartisan group worked together to eliminate anonymous earmarks and brought new measures of transparency to the process so Americans can better follow how their tax dollars are being spent. Consequently, we have seen progress—with earmarks declining since these reforms were passed, including during this past fiscal year.

In addition, my Administration undertook a line-by-line review of the Budget, and put forward approximately $20 billion of terminations, reductions, and savings both for Fiscal Year 2010 and 2011. While recent administrations have seen between 15 to 20 percent of their proposed discretionary cuts approved by the Congress, for FY 2010, we worked with the Congress to enact 60 percent of proposed cuts.

Despite the progress we have made to reduce earmarks and other unnecessary spending, there is still more work to be done. The legislation I am sending to you today provides an important tool. The legislation allows the President to target spending policies that do not have a legitimate and worthy public purpose by providing the President with an additional authority to propose the elimination of wasteful or excessive funding. These proposals then receive expedited consideration in the Congress and a guaranteed up-or-down vote. This legislation would also allow the President to delay funding for these projects until the Congress has had the chance to consider the changes. In addition, this proposal has been crafted to preserve the constitutional balance of power between the President and the Congress.

Overall, the "Reduce Unnecessary Spending Act of 2010" provides a new way for the Congress and the President to manage taxpayer dollars wisely. That is why I urge the prompt and favorable consideration of this proposal, and look forward to working with the Congress on this matter in the coming weeks.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 24, 2010.

Remarks Honoring the State Small Business Persons of the Year
May 25, 2010

Good afternoon, everybody. Everybody, please have a seat.

It is wonderful to see all of you. Welcome to the White House. I want to acknowledge a couple folks before we get started. First of all, we've got some special guests who are here from wonderful States. They are doing great work. We're very, very proud of them, Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm and Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle. Please give them a big round of applause. Stand up, guys, so everybody can see you. [*Applause*]

On the stage with me, we've got some—the reason we're here—people who have helped to live out the American Dream and created jobs. And we are extraordinarily proud of them. We've got Trapper Clark and Thomas Sturtevant right over here. We've got Charles Reid right down here. And we've got Tamara Marquez Nugent. These are the outstanding winners of this award, and you're going to be hearing more about them. I also want to introduce somebody who I'm very proud of, who's doing just a great job as our SBA Administrator, Karen Mills. Please give her a round of applause. [*Applause*]

And we've got some wonderful Members of Congress who are here—I love them all dearly. [*Laughter*] And we're going to talk about the role a Congress can play in doing the work that needs to be done right now.

This is the beginning of National Small Business Week, which every President has recognized since John F. Kennedy started the tradition in 1963. With us are some of the most successful, most hard-working entrepreneurs from across America. Each of you has distinguished yourselves as the small-business owner of the year in your State or your region. Later today a national winner will be announced. But all of you should be extremely proud of what you've accomplished this year. I know that I'm extremely proud of what you've accomplished.

Being a successful small-business person isn't just about collecting a profit or outperforming your competition. It's about contributing to the success of this country's economy. It's about contributing to your country's continued growth and prosperity. And it's about securing your piece of the American Dream and helping your employees and your suppliers and all the people you work with secure their piece of the American Dream.

What's always distinguished us as a nation is a belief that it's a place where anybody with a good idea and a willingness to work can succeed. It's the belief that has brought millions of people to our shores and carried us through even the toughest economic times.

It's how small businesses begin. Maybe somebody finally decides to take a chance on his dream; maybe a worker decides it's time to become her own boss; either way, these entrepreneurial pioneers embody the spirit of possibility, the tireless work ethic, and the simple hope for something better that lies at the heart of the American ideal.

Some of you have opened mom-and-pop stores that have led to America's biggest, most successful companies. Some have launched technology companies, software and IT services that have redefined the marketplace. You collectively create two out of every three jobs here in the United States of America—two out of every three jobs. And that's why small businesses aren't just the backbone of this economy; you're also the driving force behind this recovery.

The problem is, is that small-business owners have also been the hardest hit by this recession. From the middle of 2007 through the end of 2008, small businesses lost 2.4 million jobs. And because banks shrunk from lending in the midst of the financial crisis, it's been difficult for small-business owners to take out the loans they need to open up shop or to expand. For those who do own a small business, it's hard to finance inventories, make payrolls, or to do that additional work that could make your business grow.

Now, Government can't create jobs, but it can help create the conditions for small businesses to grow and to thrive and to hire more workers. Government can't guarantee a company's success, but it can knock down the barriers

that prevent small-business owners from getting loans or investing in the future. And that's why so much of our economic agenda has been focused on America's small businesses.

Last year, we enacted seven tax cuts for America's small businesses, as well as Making Work Pay tax credits that go to the vast majority of small-business owners. So far, the Recovery Act has supported over 64,000 loans to small businesses, more than $27 billion in new lending. More than 1,200 banks and credit unions that had stopped making SBA loans when the financial crisis hit are lending again today, and more than $8 billion in Federal Recovery Act contracts are now going to small businesses.

So right now a series of additional tax incentives and other steps to promote hiring are taking effect. Because of a bill I signed into law a few months ago, businesses are now eligible for tax cuts when they hire unemployed workers. Companies are also able to write off more of their investments in new equipment. And as part of the health reform package, 4 million small-business owners recently received a postcard in their mailboxes telling them that they could be eligible for a health care tax credit this year. It's worth perhaps tens of thousands of dollars to your companies. And it will provide welcome relief to small-business owners, who—I know you guys understand—all too often have to choose between hiring or keeping your health care for yourselves and your workers.

I also want to say a few words about what the SBA has been doing to help those workers and business owners who've been affected by the oil spill in the Gulf Coast. From the very beginning of this disaster, the SBA has acted quickly to assist fishermen and fishing-dependent small businesses. They're offering low-interest loans and deferrals of existing loans. And while small businesses are encouraged to file claims with BP, these loans and deferrals can provide much needed temporary assistance.

So all of these steps have made a real difference in the lives of people who own and work at small businesses all across America, and that includes all of you who are here with us today.

I just met with Trapper and Tom, who are the State of Maine's small-business owners of the year. Karen assures me that the reason they're on stage is not because they're from Maine, her home State. [*Laughter*] They started a company that manufactures aluminum trailers about 4 years ago with 20 employees. They've grown rapidly over the last few years, and that growth has been supported by a Recovery Act loan from the Small Business Administration. They got some of their fees waived. And today, they have 85 employees, are planning to add another 15 by the end of this year, and hope to add another 30 by the end of 2011.

Frank and Donna Masley are here. They are Delaware's small-business owners of the year. Where are they? There they are, right there. Congratulations.

Ten years ago, they launched a glove-making business to provide flexibility and protection for our men and women in uniform. When they won a contract to supply gloves for soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2009, they received a Recovery Act loan through the SBA and saved thousands on fees. It was that loan that allowed Frank and Donna to rehire some employees who had been laid off during this recession, and today, their business is growing and thriving once more.

So many people who are here today have stories just like this. Their success isn't the result of a heavy-handed government. It's the result of a government that lent a helping hand, that complements the sheer grit and determination of America's small-business owners. And I believe we need to do even more to give these men and women a boost.

So that's why I'm calling on Congress to pass small-business jobs—a small-business jobs package as soon as possible. This legislation should ensure that creditworthy small-business owners can get the capital they need to expand and create jobs. It should include needed tax relief, like our proposal to completely eliminate capital gains taxes for those making key long-term investments in small businesses. It should include expansions of vital Small Business Administration loan programs that are needed now more than ever.

And it should include two important lending initiatives that I recently sent to Congress.

The first initiative is the $30 billion small-business lending fund I called for in my State of the Union Address. This fund would target only small community and neighborhood banks, and it would help these institutions increase lending to small businesses. The second initiative is a new State small-business credit program that we recently proposed, working with Governors like Governor Doyle and Governor Granholm. It's an initiative that will help expand private lending for small businesses and manufacturers at a time when budget shortfalls are leading States to cut back on vitally important lending programs.

Now, I'm very pleased that elements of this small-business jobs package have already passed the House Financial Services Committee last week, and I know that the Senate is working on the issue as well. I urge both Chambers to act on these proposals as soon as possible.

This shouldn't be a partisan issue. This is not a Republican issue or a Democratic issue. This should not be an issue about big government versus small government. This is an issue that involves putting government on the side of small-business owners, who create most of the jobs in this country. It's about giving them tax credits and loans and tax cuts so they can keep growing and keep hiring. It's about unleashing the great power of our economy and the ingenuity of our people.

And when you have a chance to talk to Charles and you find out what he's been doing in Michigan, creating a business that is expanding, working with restaurants and other institutions on their designs; when you think about somebody like Tamara, who started her own business after her husband, I believe, actually had to take disability, and she's now growing and hiring employees, getting into a business that historically has been male dominated, the moving business; when you hear their stories, you can't help but be inspired. And you realize that there are thousands of people all across America who, despite the odds, despite the naysayers, are going out there and making their dreams happen.

So that's what today should be about and that's what this package in Congress should be about, unleashing the great power of our economy and the ingenuity of our people. In so many ways, each of you today have shown that ingenuity as you've successfully navigated your companies through an extraordinarily difficult time, the toughest time that we've seen since the Great Depression. You should be proud of that achievement and know that as you continue that journey, you're always going to have a fierce advocate in your President and in your SBA Administrator and in your Government.

So thank you very much, everybody. Congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:23 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Trapper R. Clark, president, and Thomas M. Sturtevant, corporate vice president, ALCOM Inc.; Charles Reid, president, Charter House Innovations; Tamara Marquez Nugent, president, Moving Solutions, Inc.; and Francis J. Masley, chief executive officer, and Donna L. Masley, president, Masley Enterprises, Inc. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at a Fundraiser for Senator Barbara Boxer in San Francisco, California

May 25, 2010

The President. Hello, hello, everyone! How's it going, California?

Audience member. Love you!

The President. Love you back. [*Laughter*] This is a good-looking crowd.

Sen. Boxer. I know. That's Nancy's granddaughter, Isabella—Nancy Pelosi.

The President. Well, she's just precious, and I know her pretty well. [*Laughter*] Hey, Mom, how are you?

Well, it is so nice to see everybody. Thank you for the wonderful welcome and the genuine San Francisco weather. [*Laughter*] I mean, I wouldn't want to come here and it was all sunny and bright. [*Laughter*] No, no, that's not the way it's supposed to work.

Audience member. You rock, Barack!

The President. Thank you.

We just flew in today from Washington, and I have to say that we've got a lot on our plate right now, so I don't travel for just anybody. But when it comes to Barbara Boxer, I'm a lot like many of you, which is, if she calls and she says, "I need some help," then we're going to give her some help because she has helped millions of Californians and millions of Americans all across the country. And we're going to make sure that Barbara Boxer is in office for an awful long time to come, whether Stew likes it or not.

I was talking to Stew in the back, and you know, when you're a Senator, an elected official, right around this time of year, you basically become a widow or a widower—[*laughter*]—until your spouse is finished with their race. But Stew has been so supportive because he knows the value of what Barbara does each and every day.

Now, let's face it, this has been as tough a year and a half as any year and a half in our history since the 1930s. When I came into office, when I was sworn in, we were on the brink of what many economists thought might be another great depression. At minimum, we knew we were going to have the worst recession since the Great Depression. We were losing 750,000 jobs per month. The economy had contracted 6½ percent. I had wrapped like a gift—a welcoming gift for me—a $1.3 trillion deficit.

And so we had to act quickly. And that meant that right away we had to make sure that we put in place mechanisms to put people back to work, to get the economy growing again. We had to cut taxes for small businesses and for individuals so that they would boost demand in the economy that was caving. It meant that we had to make sure that unemployment insurance and COBRA was in place so that people would have some safety net under them when they lost a job through no means of their own, through no fault of their own.

But it also meant that we had to make investments so that we would create a foundation for long-term growth in this country. See, we couldn't keep on doing the same things we had been doing. It wasn't good enough just to go back to the status quo ante. We couldn't have a situation in which growth was premised on everybody maxing out on their credit cards and taking out home equity loans and getting deeper and deeper into debt and wild speculation on the financial markets.

What we had to do was to go back to basics and think about what has made America great. Well, one of the things that has always made America great is innovation. And so through our Recovery Act, we made the largest investment in clean energy in our history. And we made the largest investment in science. And while we were making all those investments in research and development, we also elevated science once again. And we said we would make decisions on stem cell research and other issues based on what science tells us. And so we had an innovation agenda.

Then we had an agenda with respect to making sure that we made the health care system more efficient. And so even before we got into the health care bill, we invested in information technology so that when you go to the doctor, you don't have to take five tests. We're just going to take one test, and then you're going to e-mail the five tests to everybody else. And by the way, you won't get charged for five tests, or Medicaid or Medicare won't get charged for five tests.

And we thought about how could we restore an auto industry that was on the brink. But again, we couldn't go back to the status quo. So what we did was we said, you know what, we're going to make sure that GM and Chrysler aren't liquidated, but we're going to make sure that we invest in advanced battery technologies and hybrid technologies so that we can start seeing a future of plug-in hybrids that get 150 miles a gallon so that we can start breaking our dependence on foreign oil.

And we said, you know, part of the innovation economy is making sure every child in America has a decent education, which meant we made the largest investment in education in our history, not only at the K–12 level, but also at the community college level and at the university level.

And then we said, you know, we—if we're going to innovate and grow, we've got to have great infrastructure. And so we passed the largest investment in infrastructure since Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System.

And we said, if we're going to cut taxes, let's make sure we cut taxes for the right folks. And so as a consequence, we passed the most progressive tax cut in our history to make sure that people who really needed it got the benefits.

Now, California, I want you to understand we did all that in the first month. [*Laughter*] That was in the first month. And in the first couple of months, we had already provided 4 million more children health care under the children's health insurance bill. We had already passed legislation to make sure that a basic principle that women, if they're working on the job, should get paid the same for doing the work that a man's doing.

In the first 6 months, we had already made sure that tobacco companies couldn't market to our kids and the toughest credit card regulations in our history and legislation to prevent housing fraud. We did that in the first 6 months.

But that wasn't enough to start building this new foundation for our economy. So we just kept on going. And as Barbara mentioned, we ended up doing something that seven Congresses and seven Presidents have failed to do—had failed to do for a century, and that is, start providing basic security for all Americans when it comes to their health care, because in a country this wealthy, no person should go bankrupt because they get sick, no child should go unattended if they've got a chronic illness. That is a basic principle of America. And by the way, it turns out that by making these changes, we can actually make the health care system more efficient and drive down costs and drive down premiums and help small businesses.

Now, we decided that's still not enough in order to make the changes that are necessary. And so we said, we're never going to have the situation again where taxpayers are forced to choose between the entire economy collapsing or having to bail out a bunch of folks who've been irresponsible. So we decided we had to create a financial regulatory structure that continues to affirm the power of the free market, that recognizes that financial institutions have to be there to be able to finance small businesses and individuals buying homes and cars. And that's all good. That's part of what makes America so creative and so dynamic. That drives our growth. But there got to be basic rules of the road so consumers aren't getting cheated, so people aren't missing the fine print and suddenly find themselves way overextended, so that you don't have financial instruments that can blow the entire economy apart.

And so after the last—over the last several months, after we finished with health care, we've tackled financial regulatory reform. We've now passed it through the House. We've now passed it through the Senate. And we are going to pass it through Congress. And then I'm going to sign that bill to make sure that we don't have taxpayer bailouts for irresponsible behavior in our financial sector.

All right, so that's not a bad 18 months' work. [*Laughter*] That's pretty good. But here's the thing: I couldn't have done that by myself. I mean, one of the things you learn as President is because you've got this title and, you know, there's the plane and the helicopter and all that stuff—[*laughter*]—that people expect you to solve problems. And when things go wrong, they're definitely going to blame you. If things go right, occasionally you might get the credit.

But the truth is, is that in order for us to succeed in bringing about the kind of America where everybody has opportunity, where our economy is growing and innovative and more stable, where our children are getting a good education, where we've got a sound health care system, where we've got an actual energy agenda, I can't do that by myself. I've got to have strong allies. I've got to have people with passion. I've got to have people who are willing to fight for what's right. I've got to have people who always have the voices of their constituents in their ear and understand and remember, no

matter how long they've been in Washington, who it is that they're fighting for.

And nobody is a better example of that than Barbara Boxer, which is why you are here today. On every fight that needed to be fought, Barbara was there, standing right there next to me, and sometimes we were in a foxhole together—[*laughter*]—and shots are being fired. That's just a figure of speech. I don't want the Secret Service—[*laughter*]—getting excited.

But Barbara's always there. She's been there for you. She's been there for California. She's been there for me. And now——

Audience member. You've got a Boxer in your corner.

The President. We've got a Boxer in our corner. That's a good one. [*Laughter*]

So now we've got to be there for her, because the truth is, our work is not yet done. You know, I actually visited the Republican caucus today, and it was a very warm and cuddly meeting. [*Laughter*] But the truth is, I want the country to come together in dealing with some big problems that we've still got. And Barbara wants the same thing.

And here's what I told them. I'm not going to get into all the details of the meeting because they wanted the meeting closed. We had a meeting that was open with the Republican caucus on the House side, and I had a lot of fun there. So—[*laughter*]—but basically, I said, we've done some good work. Unfortunately, sometimes we haven't gotten a lot of help from the other side of the aisle, but we still are hopeful that you are willing to put party below what needs to be done for the American people.

And here are some areas where we know we've got to make progress. We know we still have to make progress on energy. This situation in the Gulf is heartbreaking. And the day that it was reported to me that this riser and the drilling situation had blown, I said to my team, we've got to put every bit of energy, time, all the resources we've got, to make sure that we deal with this.

And we've now got over a thousand people from the Federal Government deployed down there. We are doing everything we can to contain the damage. But the fact of the matter is, is that not only do we have to revisit how these oil companies are operating, to make sure that they're operating in a safe and effective way, but we've also still got this overarching issue, even if you hadn't seen the catastrophe down in the Gulf, the reason that folks are now having to go down a mile deep into the ocean and then another mile drilling into the ground below that is because the easy oilfields and oil wells are gone, or they're starting to diminish.

And what does that tell us? That tells us that we've got to have a long-term energy strategy in this country, that we've got to start cultivating solar and wind and biodiesel. And we've got to increase energy efficiency across our economy in our buildings and in our automobiles.

And we've got to also make sure that——

[*At this point, there was a brief disruption*.]

Oops. [*Laughter*] You don't agree?

And we've got to make sure that as these technologies develop, the Government's not creating these technologies, but it's supporting them, because that's how the railroads got built and that's how the Internet got developed, was—there was some measure of Government support.

And we've got to stop subsidizing those industries that are not going to lead us to the future. Now—[*applause*]—so I said to the Republicans, join with me. There's been some good work done by John Kerry and Joe Lieberman and Lindsey Graham. Let's go; let's not wait. Let's show the American people that in the midst of this crisis, all of us are opening our eyes to what's necessary to fulfill the promise to our children and our grandchildren.

And then I talked about immigration reform, another area where there are a lot of passions right now. And I said to them, look, I disagree with this Arizona law. I think it's a bad idea. But I also said, I understand the frustration of folks in Arizona. I understand they're feeling that somehow the Federal Government can't control the border effectively, and I'm willing to work with my Republican colleagues to create a stronger border here in California, New Mexico, and in Arizona. I

think everybody understands that that's an important investment to make.

And I told them, if we actually want to solve the problem, as opposed to just score political points, then we can't just have one leg of the stool. We've got to make sure that we're dealing with employers who are dealing in unscrupulous ways with undocumented workers. We've got—[*applause*]—and for the millions of folks who are already here, we've got to say to them, you've got to take responsibility. You broke the law; you've got to pay a fine. You've got to pay your back taxes. You've got to learn English. You've got to go to the back of the line, but here's a pathway whereby you can get right with our community and contribute to the larger American project.

Those are issues that we're going to have some legitimate differences on. Some of those differences were expressed in the Republican caucus. And I expressed my opinions as well. But you know what? If you talk to most Americans on these issues, they're not thinking Republican, they're not thinking Democrat, they're not thinking liberal, they're not thinking conservative. They're thinking, what's common sense, what's decent, what's right, what does the science say, what do the facts say, what will work, what won't work? Solve the problem.

And that's what I'm prepared to do. And that's what Barbara Boxer's always stood for. And that's why it's so important that you're here tonight, because that's the kind of politics that is going to create a better future for California, that's the kind of politics that's going to create a better future for the Nation. And that's why I know that you are going to make sure that Barbara Boxer gets another 6 years in the United States Senate.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:11 p.m. at the Fairmont San Francisco Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Christine P. Pelosi, daughter of Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi; and Stewart Boxer, husband of Sen. Boxer. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 26.

Remarks at a Reception for Senator Barbara Boxer in San Francisco
May 25, 2010

The President. Hello, California! Thank you. You doing a little dance? Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Oh, thank you. Now, it is good to be back. But I resent I didn't get a chance to hear the choir sing. [*Laughter*] I was up somewhere. They were working me hard, and I could have used a little lift of the spirit there. [*Laughter*]

Now, fortunately, if I'm not mistaken, I recognize Reverend Williams, being here. I know he's sitting right in front. And I recognize this choir because I saw you guys a while back when I was here. So I have heard them in the past. To the Glide Methodist Church Choir, thank you so much. Reverend Williams, thank you. To musician Brett Dennen, thank you very much for helping out here.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Uh-oh, down—yes, if you've got a chair, go ahead and use it. Feel free. Feel free. [*Laughter*]

It is wonderful to be back in California. It's also wonderful to be back in the home district of one of the greatest Speakers in the history of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi.

And it's good to be here in the home State of my friend, somebody who has been fighting the good fight for this State for so many years, and then you look at her and you realize she started when she was 12—[*laughter*]—your outstanding Senator, Barbara Boxer.

I talked to Stew, Barbara's husband, beforehand, and he told me that Barbara has not changed a bit since she first went to Congress—as beautiful as ever. The only difference is she was actually 5´10´´—[*laughter*]—when she went there——

Sen. Boxer. That's true.

The President. ——and just got worn down. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Boxer. Worn down, but strong as ever.

The President. But that's okay, I didn't have any gray hair when I went there. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Boxer. Mr. President, mine turned blonde.

The President. Right, yours turned blonde. [*Laughter*]

Now, it is one of the great privileges of having been a Senator that I had a chance to work alongside Barbara. California has been a leader in promoting hybrids and compact cars and cleaner-burning fuels. And appropriately, you've got Senator Barbara Boxer, a subcompact Senator—[*laughter*]—with a seemingly inexhaustible source of energy. [*Laughter*] And she already talked about how deeply she cares about the environment, about her work to pursue a clean energy future. And that work has never been more important than it is now. But I also want you to understand, this is a woman with extraordinarily deep passion to fight for all of you on a whole range of issues.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Absolutely. [*Laughter*] Barbara is somebody who hasn't forgotten why she went to Washington. She remembers the people of California, the stories she's heard, the people she's talked to: the woman without health insurance, the child who is in a substandard school, the guy who's lost his job.

That's what she's passionate about—especially right now—fighting for jobs, jobs right here in California, jobs with good wages, jobs with good benefits. She's passionate for fighting for California's families and making sure that everybody here has got a fair shake, that if they're willing to work hard, that they can reach for that American Dream.

And that's what I want to talk to you about tonight, because reviving our economy remains the central challenge that we're facing today. I don't have to tell you folks here in California. This State has been hit as hard as any State with economic troubles over the past few years. And jobs have been lost in heartbreaking numbers up and down the coast. Housing crisis hit the State with a vengeance. Budget problems have put a further strain on people here at a time when they really need help, and that forces the State government to make painful choices about where to spend, where to save.

The challenges here reflect challenges that are facing people all across America. I'm trying to get out of Washington once a week. [*Laughter*] It's good for me. I mean, there are good things about Washington. I've got no commute—[*laughter*]—which I know you'll appreciate here in California. [*Laughter*] But it's good to get out of town, and you talk to everybody, you see the letters that are being sent, and I'm reminded, first of all, of what we confronted when we got here, when we got into office. Seven hundred and fifty thousand jobs per month being lost—750,000. The economy was contracting at 6.5 percent that quarter that I was sworn in, the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression.

Now, you've heard that said before, but think about that. Think about that. This is the worst economic crisis that many of the people in this room have seen in their lifetimes. And the fact is, is that a lot of folks didn't know what to do. And there were some economists who said that we may be falling over a precipice: The banking sector had completely locked up, no credit was flowing, and we might end up seeing a global depression that rivaled what happened in the 1930s.

And so we had to act quickly. We had to act fast. And unfortunately, we didn't have all the tools that we needed to act fast because you had a previous Congress and a previous administration that had left a $1.3 trillion deficit, wrapped up in a bow, that turned surpluses into deficits as a consequence of a whole host of irresponsible policies.

These problems that we confronted didn't come out of nowhere. They didn't just happen. There was a consequence of policies that had been in place for years, that Barbara's opponents, that the other party had promoted. And so we had to move fast, and that's what we did.

On day one, we took the reins, and we said, we are going to make sure that we don't slip into a great depression. And we are——

Audience member. Move faster on "don't ask, don't tell"!

Audience members. Boo!

The President. It's good to see you again.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. Thank you.

I have to say, you know, I saw this guy down in L.A.—[*laughter*]—at a Barbara Boxer event about a month and a half ago. And I would—two points I want to make. Number one, he should—I hate to say this, but he really should, like, buy a ticket to—if he wants to demonstrate—buy a ticket to a guy who doesn't support his point of view. [*Laughter*] And then you can yell as much as you want there.

The other point is, maybe he didn't read the newspapers—[*laughter*]—because we are working with Congress as we speak to roll back "don't ask, don't tell." I actually think he does read the newspapers because he wasn't as—his heart didn't seem in it. [*Laughter*] He said, do it faster. It's like, come on, man, I'm dealing with Congress here. [*Laughter*] It takes a little bit of time. [*Laughter*]

Where was I? [*Laughter*] I was going down memory lane. [*Laughter*] So we ended up initiating a series of steps: the largest investment in clean energy in our history, restoring the primacy of science and investing in research and development, the largest investment in infrastructure since Eisenhower built the interstate railway system, the largest investment in education by the Federal Government in our history, the most progressive tax cut in our history to restore a sense of fairness to our tax system, help for States so that they didn't have to lay off teachers and firefighters and police officers, including right here in California. Talk to Governor Schwarzenegger if you don't believe the kinds of help that was involved. And we did all this in the first month—the first month.

And just as an aside, we passed legislation to make sure that 4 million kids could get health insurance that didn't have it before. We passed the Lilly Ledbetter law that put forward the basic principle that an equal's day—that a day's work should get an equal day's pay, regardless of whether it's a man or a woman who is doing the work. Made sure tobacco companies couldn't market to kids. Made sure that we have the toughest credit card antifraud provisions that we had seen, anti-housing fraud provisions, biggest national service investment, all that we did in the first few months.

Now—and that was before we got to health care to make sure that every American had the chance to get decent health care and people weren't going bankrupt when they got sick.

Audience members. Thank you.

The President. You're welcome.

Audience members. Thank you.

The President. You're welcome. It's nice to feel appreciated once in a while. [*Applause*] Thank you.

So now, here's the thing, though——

Audience member. We love you, Obama!

The President. I love you back. But here's the thing, California: We've still got work to do. Because of those folks that I talked about—unemployment in California and all across the country is still unacceptably high. People are still losing their homes. Folks are still seeing premium increases on their health care. And we've got some big issues that Congress hasn't yet tackled in the way that we know they have to be tackled if we want a better future for our kids and our grandkids.

Now, some of you heard I went to the Republican caucus today. It was a warm and cuddly meeting. [*Laughter*] The last time I appeared, it was before the House Republican caucus, and we agreed to let the press in on that one; this one, not so much. [*Laughter*] And—but I wanted to talk to them about the fact that as busy as people have been, as hard as we've been working, we've got more work to do. And everybody knows it in their gut. Everybody knows that we are at an inflection point in our history, that we've got a choice between going back to the same status quo—except the status quo won't work any more. We're not going to be able to run an economy based on maxing out your credit cards and taking out home equity loans and running up debt and the financial sector getting exorbitant profits based on a bunch of financial shenanigans.

We know that if we want to build a real future in an economy this competitive, with China and India and Brazil and other countries on the rise, that we're going to have to go back to basics. We've got to fix our education system. We've got to make sure that every young person

in America has a chance to go to college. We've got to make sure—and by the way, you may have missed it during the health care debate, but we added billions of dollars in funding to student loans by cutting out the financial middlemen. That was just—that didn't even get front-page news. We've got to strengthen our community colleges. We're going to have work to do implementing our health care bill. And we've also got some critical issues that all of us have in mind right now. And I'm going to mention two—and I mentioned these to the Republican caucus.

Said the first is energy. Now, there's not a person here who has just felt that sense of despair in watching the broadcasts about the oil spill down in the Gulf. Nobody is more upset than me, because ultimately, like any President, when this happens on your watch, then every day you are thinking, how does this get solved?

And so we've sent over a thousand people down to the Gulf—boom, equipment, legal advisers, helping fishermen who have lost their livelihoods as a consequence of this. And we are now having to do a thoroughgoing review to see how it is that oil companies can say that they know how to handle these problems when it turns out actually that they don't. And that's a responsibility of Government.

But we also have to face a broader fact. There's a reason why those folks are out there drilling a mile down in the water, and then when they hit ground a mile down, they have to go another mile down to get oil. That's an expensive proposition; it's a dangerous proposition; it's a risky proposition. Why are we doing it? Well, we're doing it because we have not made a transition to a new energy future.

And we've been putting it off for decade after decade after decade. And it is about time that we said to ourselves that we're ready to make a change on behalf of the future of our children and our grandchildren. And it won't happen overnight. It won't happen tomorrow. It won't happen next week. But if we start investing in clean energy technology and solar and wind and biodiesel, if we invest in hybrid plug-ins that can get 150 miles a gallon, if we start making our buildings more efficient, and if we start finally saying to ourselves, we can't just let everybody pollute for free, if we follow science and we follow some commonsense principles, then, look, oil is still going to be in the energy mix. We're not going to eliminate that completely, but we are going to, over time, transition to ourselves, and we will become more energy efficient, which will be good for our national security, it will be good for our economy, it will be good for our environment, it will be good for our future.

And by the way, we can create millions of jobs right here in the United States of America investing in a new clean energy future. And I told the Republicans, I am ready to work with you right now to get this done.

Second issue is immigration. Now, folks are out there looking at the Arizona law, and it's divided the country.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Now, I've been very clear. I think the Arizona law was a mistake. And my Justice Department is looking very carefully at the nature of this law.

But I understand the frustrations of folks in Arizona. The fact of the matter is, is that for decades, we keep on talking about solving the problems of the border and we don't. Truth of the matter is, is that you've got hundreds of thousands of undocumented workers coming over the border, and that gets people stressed. You've got employers who are exploiting undocumented workers all across America, actively recruiting them and often taking advantage of them when they get here.

So there is a whole bunch of work that has to be done. But we can't solve the problem by playing politics. We can't solve the problem by demagoguing the issue.

And so what I told my Republican colleagues is, look, I'll be there with you in terms of securing the border. That's part of my responsibility as Commander in Chief and as President. But you've got to meet me on solving the problem long term. It's not enough to just talk about National Guard down at the border. You've got to talk about how are we going to hold employers accountable and how are we going to take the folks who are living in the shadows right now and say to them, you've

got a responsibility, you'll have to pay a fine, you'll have to pay back taxes, you'll have to learn English, but we are going to give you a pathway in order for you to be a part of this community legally. That is something we've got to work on together.

Now, California, the last thing I said to my Republican colleagues was, you don't even have to meet me halfway. [*Laughter*] I'll bring most Democrats on these issues. I'm just looking for 8 or 10 of you—[*laughter*]—you know? I mean, the time—the day has passed when I expected this to be a full partnership. I mean, it's just—[*laughter*]—you know, I understand the strategy of sitting on the sidelines. And let's face it: Politically, it hasn't been bad for them. It made a lot of people forget how we got into this mess in the first place, just sitting there and saying no to everything.

Sen. Boxer. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Well, Barbara points out—I've said this before—you know, folks—here you got folks driving a car in the ditch, and then we're out there in the mud pulling the car out of the ditch, and they're sitting there comfortable, drinking on a Slurpee or something—[*laughter*]—and saying, "You know, you're not pulling the car out of the ditch fast enough." [*Laughter*] "You're not doing that the right way. When you put your shoulder behind, you got to lean into it." [*Laughter*]

So then we finally get the car out of the ditch, and they want the keys back. [*Laughter*]

Audience members. No!

The President. Say, no, you can't have the keys. You can't—you don't know how to drive. You can't have the keys. Can't have them. If you want to get in, we'll give you a ride. [*Laughter*] But we're not going to let you drive.

Audience member. No keys. [*Laughter*]

The President. No keys. No, you don't get the keys back. [*Laughter*]

But here's my point, look—and then after the meeting, we got some of the usual stuff about, well, he talks about bipartisanship, but we don't really see partisanship in the financial regulatory bill, you know, it just passed with mostly Democratic votes, few Republican votes to break the filibuster.

Look, understand this about bipartisanship: I have a track record in my legislative career of working with folks across the aisle. And I also, by the way, am sympathetic to the fact that it's hard for Republicans to work with me right now because there are members of their base who, if somebody even smiles at me, they think, you're a traitor. [*Laughter*] You smiled at Obama. [*Laughter*] You're nice to him. You were polite. And if you're rude to Obama, we can raise money. [*Laughter*] So the incentive structure right now for cooperation within the Republican Party is not real strong. So I'm sympathetic to that.

But when we talk about bipartisanship, what we mean is, is that there's going to be some negotiation, and, no, the Republicans aren't going to get their way on everything. And there are going to be some times where we disagree. And when we disagree, if we're not doing everything the way they want and they say, I'm going to take my ball and go home, and I won't vote for anything, that's not a failure of bipartisanship on our part. There's got to be some give on the other side, particularly when you drove the car into the ditch.

You know, we can't just go back to business as usual. So on immigration, meet me a quarter of the way. [*Laughter*] We'll deal with border security issues, and I'll be serious about it. And by the way, sometimes I'll get attacked in my own base, right. Because sometimes some of the things I've done, some of you guys aren't happy with.

But what I said to them today was, if I'm willing to make decisions that aren't always comfortable for me politically, I need you to make some decisions that aren't always comfortable for you politically.

And if they're willing to do that, we can get immigration reform done. And it needs to be done, comprehensive immigration reform. And if they are willing to do it, we can get an energy package that puts us on the path to a clean energy future.

So I remain hopeful. Remember hope?

Audience members. Yeah!

The President. I know it's been 18 tough months. And I know I've got more gray hair. [*Laughter*] I know some folks say, "Well, you know, he's not as cool as he was." [*Laughter*]

When they had all the posters around and everything—now I've got a Hitler mustache on the posters. [*Laughter*] That's quite a change. [*Laughter*]

You know, my approval ratings kind of start sinking. And some people are just not entirely satisfied. "You know what? The health care bill wasn't everything I wanted. It's the biggest deal since Medicare, but you know"—[*laughter*]—"it wasn't everything I wanted."

Look, I understand that, but remember what the campaign was about: hope, change. People weren't paying attention to me when I said, change is hard. People—a lot of folks, they just missed that part. [*Laughter*] They were like, hope, change—[*laughter*]—and they thought, nice swearing-in, you got Bruce Springsteen singing. [*Laughter*] Everybody is feeling good. This is going to happen fast. [*Laughter*]

Well, no. If it was easy, it would've happened before. If it was easy, we would have put in place mileage standards on cars 30 years ago, 40 years ago, 50 years ago—on trucks. We didn't do it because it's hard.

And it's hard not just because of the special interests, although they're there, but it's also hard because, you know what, everybody gets kind of comfortable with the devil they know. And change can be scary. And people can be frightened. And issues can be demagogued. And the talking head media debate can get everybody confused and cynical and feeling like, you know what, nothing is changing.

The fact of the matter is, over the last year and a half, we have moved this country in powerful ways. And the reason we've been able to do it is because I've had a partner, Barbara Boxer of California, who has fought with me and marched with me and held hands with me. And if you want to see that change happen for the next 18 months and the next 18 months after that and the next 18 months after that, well, then doggone it, reelect Barbara Boxer to be your United States Senator.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:53 p.m. at the Fairmont San Francisco Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Cecil Williams, founder and minister of liberation, Glide Memorial United Methodist Church in San Francisco, CA. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 26.

Remarks at Solyndra, Inc., in Fremont, California
May 26, 2010

Hello, everybody. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. It is wonderful to be here and to see all of you here today. And I would be remiss if I did not note the presence of your Governor, give him a big round of applause, Arnold Schwarzenegger. All right, I'm just going to go ahead and mention our district attorney, Kamala Harris, who's here.

It is great to be in Fremont, good to be back in northern California. I was reminiscing a little bit. Michelle and I took our honeymoon in Napa Valley. That was almost 17 years ago when we drove down the Pacific Coast Highway, and so I was fantasizing about going and renting a car. [*Laughter*] But I was told that would cause a stir—[*laughter*]—so next time.

But it's wonderful to be here in northern California. It is always nice to get out of Washington a little bit. Now, don't get me wrong, the Capital is a beautiful place, nice monuments. I have no commute—[*laughter*]—which very few people in California can say is true for them.

But the truth of the matter is, is that when you're in Washington, a lot of times all you're thinking about or all that's being talked about is politics—who's up, who's down, the contest between the parties—instead of people remembering why it is that they aspired to go into politics in the first place. We end up getting caught up in the moment instead of what is important for the future.

So I try to visit places like this about once a week, hear from folks as often as possible who are actually doing the extraordinary work of building up America. And I appreciated the

chance to tour your plant and to see the incredible, cutting-edge solar panels that you're manufacturing, but also the process that goes into the manufacturing of these solar panels. And it is just a testament to American ingenuity and dynamism and the fact that we continue to have the best universities in the world, the best technology in the world, and most importantly, the best workers in the world. And you guys all represent that. So thank you very much for that.

And while I'm at it, I also want to give some credit to those guys in the back who have been building this facility so that we can put more people back to work and build more solar panels to send all across the country. Thank you for the great work that you guys are doing.

Now, it's fitting that this technology is being pioneered here in California. Where else, right? For generations, this part of the country has embodied the entrepreneurial spirit that has always defined America's success: People heading west.

It was here where weary but hopeful travelers came with pickaxes in search of a fortune. It was here that tinkerers and engineers turned a sleepy valley into a center of innovation and industry. It's here that companies like Solyndra are leading the way toward a brighter and more prosperous future.

And you're doing so at a time of real challenge for America. I don't have to tell you that. The Governor doesn't have to tell you that. California was hit as hard as any State by the home mortgage crisis and the economic storms that followed. Even this high-tech corridor wasn't immune. Foreclosures skyrocketed; home values fell. Businesses slowed, from family restaurants to Fortune 500 companies. Fremont lost thousands of jobs as the NUMMI auto plant slowed production and shut down, and that hurt not only autoworkers but local businesses and parts suppliers.

Many in this community are still reeling from the effects of the recession, and that followed a decade of struggle and growing economic insecurity for a lot of middle class families. The truth is, even though the economy is growing and adding jobs again, it's going to take a while to create the favorable conditions for communities like this one to rebound and to flourish. But what was clear when I walked through the Oval Office door, at a time of maximum peril in our economy, when economists were warning we might be going into a great depression and the financial system might be on the verge of collapse, what was clear was that even though it might be difficult and even though some of the things we had to do might not be politically popular, we had to act. We couldn't accept a future that was marked by decline.

And that's why we took a series of steps to stop what was nothing short of an economic freefall. We passed a series of tax cuts to put more money in the pockets of working families right away, including more than 12 million families in California. We increased the Pell grant, which brought 4 million additional dollars—$4 million of additional aid to students right here in Fremont. We backed loans to small businesses, including 20 million to companies in this community alone.

We also provided relief for those hardest hit, who not only needed help but would most likely use the relief to generate more economic activity. So we extended unemployment benefits for more than 3 million California residents and made COBRA cheaper for people who'd lost their jobs so they could keep their health care for their families. We provided $250 in relief to more than 5 million California seniors, many whose life savings had taken a big hit in the financial crisis. And we provided emergency assistance to our Governors to prevent teachers and police officers and firefighters from being laid off as a result of State budget shortfalls. At a time when California is facing a fiscal crisis, we know that this has saved the jobs of tens of thousands of educators and other needed public servants just in this State. And what was true in California was true all across the country.

But our goal in dealing with this economic crisis wasn't just about bringing an end to the recession. We said to ourselves, we've got to build a new foundation for lasting growth. We can't have an economy that's just built on maxing out on credit cards and home equity loans and complex financial instruments that are generating big bonuses but can potentially bring an entire economy down.

So we recognized that we've got to go back to basics. We've got to go back to making things. We've got to go back to exports. We've got to go back to innovation. And we recognized that there was only so much Government could do. The true engine of economic growth will always be companies like Solyndra, will always be America's businesses. But that doesn't mean the Government can just sit on the sidelines. Government still has the responsibility to help create the conditions in which students can gain an education so they can work at Solyndra and entrepreneurs can get financing so they can start a company and new industries can take hold.

So that's why, even as we've cut taxes and provided emergency relief over the past year, we also invested in basic research, in broadband networks, in rebuilding roads and bridges, in health information technology, and in clean energy. Because not only would this spur hiring by businesses, it would create jobs in sectors with incredible potential to propel our economy for years, for decades to come. There is no better example than energy.

We all know the price we pay as a country as a result of how we produce and use—and yes, waste—energy today. We've been talking about it for decades, since the gas shortages of the 1970s. Our dependence on foreign oil endangers our security and our economy. Climate change poses a threat to our way of life; in fact, we're already beginning to see its profound and costly impact. And the spill in the Gulf, which is just heartbreaking, only underscores the necessity of seeking alternative fuel sources. We're not going to transition out of oil next year or 10 years from now, but think about it: Part of what's happening in the Gulf is that oil companies are drilling a mile underwater before they hit ground and then a mile below that before they hit oil.

With the increased risks, the increased costs, it gives you a sense of where we're going. We're not going to be able to sustain this kind of fossil fuel use. This planet can't sustain it. And think about when China and India—where consumers there are starting to buy cars and use energy the way we are. So we've known that we've had to shift in a fundamental way, and that's true for all of us.

Now, earlier today I spoke to Energy Secretary Steven Chu, who, as you know, is a Nobel Prize-winning physicist. And he's been on the scene in the Gulf, deeply involved in our efforts to bring this crisis to an end. And we discussed today's attempt to stop the leak through what's known as the top kill, plugging the well with densely packed mud to prevent any more oil from escaping. If it's successful—and there are no guarantees—it should greatly reduce or eliminate the flow of oil now streaming into the Gulf from the sea floor. And if it's not, there are other approaches that may be viable.

And as work continues in the next couple of months to complete relief wells, my administration is intensively engaged with scientists and engineers to explore all alternative options, and we're going to bring every resource necessary to put a stop to this thing. But a lot of damage has been done already: livelihoods destroyed, landscapes scarred, wildlife affected, lives have been lost. Our thoughts and prayers are very much with the people along the Gulf Coast.

And then let me reiterate: We will not rest until this well is shut, the environment is repaired, and the cleanup is complete. And I look forward to returning there on Friday to review the efforts currently underway and lend my support to the region.

But even as we are dealing with this immediate crisis, we've got to remember that the risks our current dependence on oil holds for our environment and our coastal communities is not the only cost involved in our dependence on these fossil fuels. Around the world, from China to Germany, our competitors are waging a historic effort to lead in developing new energy technologies. There are factories like this being built in China, factories like this being built in Germany. Nobody is playing for second place. These countries recognize that the nation that leads the clean energy economy is likely to lead the global economy. And if we fail to recognize that same imperative, we risk falling behind. We risk falling behind.

Fifteen years ago, the United States produced 40 percent of the world's solar panels—40 percent. That was just 15 years ago. By 2008, our share had fallen to just over 5 percent. I don't know about you, but I'm not prepared to cede American leadership in this industry, because I'm not prepared to cede America's leadership in the global economy.

So that's why we've placed a big emphasis on clean energy. It's the right thing to do with our—for our environment, it's the right thing to do for our national security, but it's also the right thing to do for our economy.

And we can see the positive impacts right here at Solyndra. Less than a year ago, we were standing on what was an empty lot. But through the Recovery Act, this company received a loan to expand its operations. This new factory is the result of those loans.

Since the project broke ground last fall, more than 3,000 construction workers have been employed building this plant. Across the country, workers in 22 States are manufacturing the supplies for this project. Workers in a dozen States are building the advanced manufacturing equipment that will power this new facility. When it's completed in a few months, Solyndra expects to hire a thousand workers to manufacture solar panels and sell them across America and around the world.

And this in turn will generate business for companies throughout our country who will create jobs supplying this factory with parts and materials. So there's a ripple effect. It's not just localized to this area.

Meanwhile, down the road, we're seeing some other welcome signs. I know the closure of the NUMMI plant was devastating to this community and thousands of jobs were lost. And it was all the more painful and heartbreaking because the factory had been held up as an example of how America could lead in manufacturing.

But thanks to loans through the Department of Energy, which helped provide Tesla Motors with the financial wherewithal to expand, that shuttered plant is soon going to reopen. And once again it will be a symbol of promise, an example of what's possible here in America.

Tesla is joining with Toyota in a venture to put a thousand skilled workers back to work manufacturing an all-electric car. And this is only the beginning. We're investing in advanced battery technologies to power plug-in hybrid cars. In fact, today in Tennessee, there's a groundbreaking for an advanced battery manufacturing facility that will generate hundreds of jobs. And it was made possible by loans through the Department of Energy, as well as tax credits and grants to increase demand for these vehicles.

We used to account for about 2 percent of advanced battery technologies for cars. We're expecting, in the next couple of years, to get up to 20, 30, maybe even 40 percent, building our market share right here in the United States of America.

We're investing in an advanced electricity grid—and Governor Schwarzenegger and I were just talking about this before we came out, because this has been a big priority for him—that will be more efficient and better able to harness renewable energy sources. We're providing grants to build wind farms and install these solar panels, helping us double our ability to generate renewable energy. We're expanding our capacity in biofuels to reduce our dependence on oil. We've helped forge one historic agreement—and are on track to produce a second—to dramatically increase the fuel efficiency of America's cars and trucks. So we are making progress. It's progress that's going to produce jobs, that's going to help secure our future.

But we've still got more work to do, and that's why I'm going to keep fighting to pass comprehensive energy and climate legislation in Washington. We're going to try to get it done this year, because what we want to do is create incentives that will fully unleash the potential for jobs and growth in this sector.

So already we're seeing the results of the steps we've taken. As I said, before the Recovery Act, we had the capacity to make less than 2 percent of the world's advanced vehicle batteries. In the next 5 years, we'll make 40 percent of these batteries here in the United States. Before the Recovery Act, we could build just 5 percent of the world's solar panels. In the next

few years, we're going to double our share to more than 10 percent.

Here at this site, Solyndra expects to make enough solar panels each year to generate 500 megawatts of electricity. And over the lifetime of this expanded facility, that could be like replacing as many as eight coal-fired power plants. It's also worth noting, to achieve this doubling of our share of solar capacity, we actually need to make four times as many solar panels because other countries are adding capacity too. Nobody in this race is standing still.

So these steps are helping to safeguard our environment. They're helping to lower our dependence on oil. At a time when people are struggling and looking for work, these steps are helping to strengthen our economy and create jobs. And we all know how important that is, because times here in California are still tough. It's going to take time to replace the millions of jobs we lost in this recession.

Unemployment remains high, even though the economy is growing and has started adding hundreds of thousands of jobs each month. So it took years to dig our way into this hole; we're not going to dig our way out overnight. But what you are proving here—all of you, collectively—is that as difficult as it will be, as far as we've got to go, we will recover. We will rebuild. We will emerge from this period of turmoil stronger than ever before.

That's not all. You're also proving something more. Every day that you build this expanded facility, as you fill orders for solar panels to ship around the world, you're demonstrating that the promise of clean energy isn't just an article of faith, not anymore. It's not some abstract possibility for science fiction movies or a distant future, for 10 years down the road or 20 years down the road. It's happening right now. The future is here. We're poised to transform the ways we power our homes and our cars and our businesses. And we're poised to lead our competitors in the development of new technologies and products and businesses. And we are poised to generate countless new jobs, good-paying, middle class jobs right here in the United States of America.

That's the promise of clean energy. And thanks to the men and women here today and the innovators and the workers all across America, it's a promise that we've already begun to fulfill.

So thank you very much. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m.

Remarks Honoring the NCAA Men's Basketball Champion Duke Blue Devils

May 27, 2010

The President. Hello, everybody. Please have a seat. Welcome to the White House. Welcome to the Rose Garden. You know, when I woke up this morning and I saw a few hundred students camping out on my lawn—[*laughter*]—I remembered that today is Duke day. [*Laughter*] Congratulations to the 2010 Men's NCAA basketball national champions, the Bluke—[*laughter*]—the Duke Blue Devils. Give them a big round of applause.

Now, we've got some big Duke fans here today. My outstanding Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Ric Shinseki, is here. He got a graduate degree from Duke, and both he and Coach K are proud graduates of West Point. They missed each other by 1 year.

We've got some members of the North Carolina congressional delegation who are here. We've also got some proud Duke alumni serving in Congress. Representative Shelley Moore Capito is a alum. Representative David Price has been a professor at Duke since 1973. And Under Secretary of Energy Dr. Kristina Johnson is here, and she was the dean of the Pratt School of Engineering at Duke for 8 years. So you can give them all a big round of applause.

The Archivist of the United States, David Ferriero is here. And he once ran the Duke li-

brary system; today, he takes care of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. [*Laughter*] North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper and Durham Mayor Bill Bell are here as well. Give them a big round of applause.

Now, I know that all of you remember last year, when I filled out my bracket—[*laughter*]—I picked North Carolina to win it all. It wasn't anything personal. [*Laughter*] Just trying to win some money. [*Laughter*] I was right. Coach K wasn't too happy. He basically told me to stick it. [*Laughter*] Or stick to my day job, is what he said. [*Laughter*]

And then this year, he went out with all these guys and he won so he could come to the White House and crow about it. [*Laughter*] Payback is sweet, isn't it, Coach? Congratulations on your fourth national championship at Duke.

Obviously, it's not a smart thing to bet against Coach K. This is a guy who has 868 wins, 12 ACC championships, 11 Final Fours, 4 NCAA championships, a couple of Olympic gold medals for men's basketball, including in 2008, when he brought the gold back to where it belongs: the USA. And congratulation to Coach K's lovely wife Mickie—Mrs. K—who's been with him for all of it. So we are very grateful to them.

Now, some of you may know that my assistant, Reggie Love, used to play for Coach K at Duke. Reggie played on the 2001 national championship team, and he was a team captain in 2005. In fact, Reggie was so excited to see his old coach today that I had to make him come out and run some sprint drills—[*laughter*]—just to calm him down.

And then Coach and I were both discussing—I play with Reggie now, and when Reggie was playing, Coach said, don't shoot. [*Laughter*] And when he's on my team, I say to Reggie, don't shoot. [*Laughter*] So things haven't changed that much. [*Laughter*] Go down in the post. Rebound. [*Laughter*]

I also want to congratulate the assistant coaches, Chris Collins, Nate James, Steve Wojciechowski—I'll just call him "Wojo," like everybody else—all of whom were once captains on Coach K's teams as well.

And congratulations to all the players, especially the seniors: Jordan Davidson, Jon Scheyer—my homeboy from the Chicago area, Lance Thomas, and Brian Zoubek. It's really been a 4-year journey for these guys. And each year, they've gotten better together. When they were freshmen, they lost in the first round of the tournament. As sophomores, they made it to the second round. As juniors, they made it to the Sweet 16. And this year, they won it all. That's the kind of progress that you want to see in your college career.

Jon Scheyer, Kyle Singler, and Nolan Smith were the top-scoring trio in the NCAA this year. And I should also mention that I—when I was running for President, we did a campaign event in Medford, Oregon, in the gym where Singler grew up. So I was the second most famous person to ever show up in Medford. [*Laughter*] It's true.

I understand that Zoubek is unique in Duke history: the only player that Coach K ever allowed to grow a beard. [*Laughter*] Talk about somebody who's overcome a lot, who powered through setbacks and injuries to set a new Duke record for most offensive rebounds in a single season this year, including some critical boards in the title game.

And it was, as everybody here knows, a incredible tournament from start to finish, one of the most exciting tournaments any of us have ever seen. The championship game against Butler—the most watched championship game in more than 10 years—was everything fans hoped it would be. It came down to the final possession. And these guys hung in there and won it all.

I know that Coach K has said that this is as close a team as he's ever had, a bunch of throwback guys who hustle and work and have fun together. And they play by his—one of his philosophies, which is "think of a hand." If you attach—if you attack with your hand open, as five fingers individually, you're more likely to break a finger. But if you bring them together and make a fist, you can really pound somebody. [*Laughter*] That's very subtle, Coach K. [*Laughter*]

Now, there is a softer side of these guys too. Coach K is an integral part of the Durham community in so many ways, whether it's helping change the odds for underprivileged kids

through the Emily K Center he founded and named after his mom or just buying pizza for the Cameron Crazies who camp outside for days at a time. His players participate in the Read With the Blue Devils program and visit patients at the Children's Hospital in Durham, giving as much as they can to the Duke community that gives so much to them.

And seeing as how Coach is a proud graduate of West Point and a former Army basketball player under Bobby Knight, they're going to the Pentagon after this to thank some of the folks who bravely and selflessly serve our country day in and day out.

So congratulations, Coach K. Congratulations to the team. And good luck next year. I suspect that you're going to try to bust my bracket once again. [*Laughter*] But I may not make the same mistake twice. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, the President was presented with a framed team jersey.*]

The President. Oh, look at this. That's nice! Now, you know, Reggie's going to make me hang this in the Oval Office. Take down Lincoln or something. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:46 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Michael W. Krzyzewski, head coach, Jordan Davidson and Jon Scheyer, guards, Lance Thomas and Kyle Singler, forwards, and, Brian Zoubek, center, Duke University men's basketball team; and Robert M. Knight, former head coach of the U.S. Military Academy, Indiana University, and Texas Tech University men's basketball teams.

The President's News Conference
May 27, 2010

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. Before I take your questions, I want to update the American people on the status of the BP oil spill, a catastrophe that is causing tremendous hardship in the Gulf Coast, damaging a precious ecosystem, and one that led to the death of 11 workers who lost their lives in the initial explosion.

Yesterday the Federal Government gave BP approval to move forward with a procedure known as a top kill to try to stop the leak. This involves plugging the well with densely packed mud to prevent any more oil from escaping. And given the complexity of this procedure and the depth of the leak, this procedure offers no guarantee of success. But we're exploring any reasonable strategies to try and save the Gulf from a spill that may otherwise last until the relief wells are finished, and that's a process that could take months.

The American people should know that from the moment this disaster began, the Federal Government has been in charge of the response effort. As far as I'm concerned, BP is responsible for this horrific disaster, and we will hold them fully accountable on behalf of the United States as well as the people and communities victimized by this tragedy. We will demand that they pay every dime they owe for the damage they've done and the painful losses that they've caused. And we will continue to take full advantage of the unique technology and expertise they have to help stop this leak.

But make no mistake: BP is operating at our direction. Every key decision and action they take must be approved by us in advance. I've designated Admiral Thad Allen, who has nearly four decades of experience responding to such disasters, as the national incident commander, and if he orders BP to do something to respond to this disaster, they are legally bound to do it. So, for example, when they said they would drill one relief well to stem this leak, we demanded a backup and ordered them to drill two. And they are in the process of drilling two.

As we devise strategies to try and stop this leak, we're also relying on the brightest minds and most advanced technology in the world. We're relying on a team of scientists and engineers from our own national laboratories and from many other nations, a team led by our Energy Secretary and Nobel Prize-winning

physicist, Steven Chu. And we're relying on experts who've actually dealt with oil spills from across the globe, though none this challenging.

The Federal Government is also directing the effort to contain and clean up the damage from the spill, which is now the largest effort of its kind in U.S. history. In this case, the Federal, State, and local governments have the resources and expertise to play an even more direct role in the response effort. And I will be discussing this further when I make my second trip to Louisiana tomorrow. But so far, we have about 20,000 people in the region who are working around the clock to contain and clean up this oil. We have activated about 1,400 members of the National Guard in 4 States. We have the Coast Guard onsite. We have more than 1,300 vessels assisting in the containment and cleanup efforts. We've deployed over 3 million feet of total boom to stop the oil from coming onshore, and today more than 100,000 feet of boom is being surged to Louisiana parishes that are facing the greatest risk from the oil.

So we'll continue to do whatever is necessary to protect and restore the Gulf Coast. For example, Admiral Allen just announced that we're moving forward with a section of Governor Jindal's barrier island proposal that could help stop oil from coming ashore. It will be built in an area that is most at risk and where the work can be most quickly completed.

We're also doing whatever it takes to help the men and women whose livelihoods have been disrupted and even destroyed by this spill, everyone from fishermen to restaurant and hotel owners. So far, the Small Business Administration has approved loans and allowed many small businesses to defer existing loan payments. At our insistence, BP is paying economic injury claims, and we'll make sure that when all is said and done, the victims of this disaster will get the relief that they are owed. We're not going to abandon our fellow citizens. We'll help them recover, and we will help them rebuild.

And in the meantime, I should also say that Americans can help by continuing to visit the communities and beaches of the Gulf Coast. I was talking to the Governors just a couple of days ago, and they wanted me to remind everybody that except for three beaches in Louisiana, all of the Gulf's beaches are open, they are safe, and they are clean.

Now, as we continue our response effort, we're also moving quickly on steps to ensure that a catastrophe like this never happens again. I've said before that producing oil here in America is an essential part of our overall energy strategy. But all drilling must be safe.

In recent months, I've spoken about the dangers of too much—I've heard people speaking about the dangers of too much Government regulation. And I think we can all acknowledge there have been times in history when the Government has overreached. But in this instance, the oil industry's cozy and sometimes corrupt relationship with Government regulators meant little or no regulation at all.

When Secretary Salazar took office, he found a Minerals and Management Service that had been plagued by corruption for years. This was the agency charged with not only providing permits, but also enforcing laws governing oil drilling. And the corruption was underscored by a recent Inspector General's report that covered activity which occurred prior to 2007, a report that can only be described as appalling. And Secretary Salazar immediately took steps to clean up that corruption. But this oil spill has made clear that more reforms are needed.

For years, there's been a scandalously close relationship between oil companies and the agency that regulates them. That's why we've decided to separate the people who permit the drilling from those who regulate and ensure the safety of the drilling.

I also announced that no new permits for drilling new wells will go forward until a 30-day safety and environmental review was conducted. That review is now complete. Its initial recommendations include aggressive new operating standards and requirements for offshore energy companies, which we will put in place.

Additionally, after reading the report's recommendations with Secretary Salazar and other members of my administration, we're going to be ordering the following actions: First, we will suspend the planned exploration of two locations off the coast of Alaska; second, we will cancel the pending lease sale in the Gulf of Mexico and the proposed lease sale off the coast

of Virginia; third, we will continue the existing moratorium and suspend the issuance of new permits to drill new deepwater wells for 6 months; and four, we will suspend action on 33 deepwater exploratory wells currently being drilled in the Gulf of Mexico.

What's also been made clear from this disaster is that for years, the oil and gas industry has leveraged such power that they have effectively been allowed to regulate themselves. One example: Under current law, the Interior Department has only 30 days to review an exploration plan submitted by an oil company. That leaves no time for the appropriate environmental review. The result is, they are continually waived. And this is just one example of a law that was tailored by the industry to serve their needs instead of the public's. So Congress needs to address these issues as soon as possible, and my administration will work with them to do so.

Still, preventing such a catastrophe in the future will require further study and deeper reform. That's why last Friday, I also signed an Executive order establishing the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling. While there are a number of ongoing investigations, including an independent review by the National Academy of Engineering, the purpose of this Commission is to consider both the root causes of the disaster and offer options on what safety and environmental precautions are necessary.

If the laws on our books are inadequate to prevent such a spill, or if we did not enforce those laws, then I want to know. I want to know what worked and what didn't work in our response to the disaster and where oversight of the oil and gas industry broke down.

Let me make one final point. More than anything else, this economic and environmental tragedy—and it's a tragedy—underscores the urgent need for this Nation to develop clean, renewable sources of energy. Doing so will not only reduce threats to our environment, it will create a new, homegrown American industry that can lead to countless new businesses and new jobs.

We've talked about doing this for decades, and we've made significant strides over the last year when it comes to investing in renewable energy and energy efficiency. The House of Representatives has already passed a bill that would finally jump-start a permanent transition to a clean energy economy, and there is currently a plan in the Senate—a plan that was developed with ideas from Democrats and Republicans—that would achieve the same goal.

If nothing else, this disaster should serve as a wake-up call that it's time to move forward on this legislation. It's time to accelerate the competition with countries like China, who've already realized the future lies in renewable energy. And it's time to seize that future ourselves. So I call on Democrats and Republicans in Congress, working with my administration, to answer this challenge once and for all.

I'll close by saying this: This oil spill is an unprecedented disaster. The fact that the source of the leak is a mile under the surface, where no human being can go, has made it enormously difficult to stop. But we are relying on every resource and every idea, every expert and every bit of technology to work to stop it. We will take ideas from anywhere, but we are going to stop it.

And I know that doesn't lessen the enormous sense of anger and frustration felt by people on the Gulf and so many Americans. Every day I see this leak continue, I am angry and frustrated as well. I realize that this entire response effort will continue to be filtered through the typical prism of politics, but that's not what I care about right now. What I care about right now is the containment of this disaster and the health and safety and livelihoods of our neighbors in the Gulf Coast. And for as long as it takes, I intend to use the full force of the Federal Government to protect our fellow citizens and the place where they live. I can assure you of that.

All right. I'm going to take some questions. I'm going to start with Jennifer Loven [Associated Press].

Federal Oversight of Oil Spill Response

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. This is on, right?

The President. Yes.

Q. You just said that the Federal Government is in charge, and officials in your administration have said this repeatedly. Yet how do you explain that we're more than 5 weeks into this crisis and that BP is not always doing as you're asking, for example, with the type of dispersant that's being used?

And if I might add one more, to the many people in the Gulf who, as you said, are angry and frustrated and feel somewhat abandoned, what do you say about whether your personal involvement, your personal engagement, has been as much as it should be, either privately or publicly?

The President. Well, I'll take the second question first, if you don't mind. The day that the rig collapsed and fell to the bottom of the ocean, I had my team in the Oval Office that first day. Those who think that we were either slow on our response or lacked urgency don't know the facts. This has been our highest priority since this crisis occurred.

Personally, I'm briefed every day and have probably had more meetings on this issue than just about any issue since we did our Afghan review. And we understood from day one the potential enormity of this crisis and acted accordingly. So when it comes to the moment this crisis occurred, moving forward, this entire White House and this entire Federal Government has been singularly focused on how do we stop the leak and how do we prevent and mitigate the damage to our coastlines.

The challenge we have is that we have not seen a leak like this before, and so people are going to be frustrated until it stops. And I understand that. And if you're living on the coasts and you see this sludge coming at you, you are going to be continually upset, and from your perspective, the response is going to be continually inadequate until it actually stops. And that's entirely appropriate and understandable.

But from Thad Allen, our national incident coordinator, through the most junior member of the Coast Guard or the under-under-under secretary of NOAA or any of the agencies under my charge, they understand this is the single most important thing that we have to get right.

Now, with respect to the relationship between our Government and BP, the United States Government has always been in charge of making sure that the response is appropriate. BP, under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, is considered the responsible party, which basically means they've got to pay for everything that's done to both stop the leak and mitigate the damage. They do so under our supervision, and any major decision that they make has to be done under the approval of Thad Allen, the national incident coordinator.

So this notion that somehow the Federal Government is sitting on the sidelines and for the last 3 or 4 or 5 weeks we've just been letting BP make a whole bunch of decisions is simply not true.

What is true is that when it comes to stopping the leak down below, the Federal Government does not possess superior technology to BP. This is something, by the way—going back to my involvement—2 or 3 days after this happened, we had a meeting down in the Situation Room in which I specifically asked Bob Gates and Mike Mullen, what assets do we have that could potentially help that BP or other oil companies around the world do not have? We do not have superior technology when it comes to dealing with this particular crisis.

Now, one of the legitimate questions that I think needs to be asked is, should the Federal Government have such capacity? And that's part of what the role of the Commission is going to be, is to take a look and say, do we make sure that a consortium of oil companies pay for specific technology to deal with this kind of incident when it happens? Should that response team that's effective be under the direct charge of the United States Government or a private entity? But for now, BP has the best technology, along with the other oil companies, when it comes to actually capping the well down there.

Now, when it comes to what's happening on the surface, we've been much more involved in the in situ burns, in the skimming. Those have been happening more or less under our direction, and we feel comfortable about many of the steps that have been taken.

There have been areas where there have been disagreements, and I'll give you two exam-

ples. Initially on this top kill, there were questions in terms of how effective it could be, but also what were the risks involved, because we're operating at such a pressurized level, a mile underwater, and in such frigid temperatures that the reactions of various compounds and various approaches had to be calibrated very carefully. That's when I sent Steven Chu down, the Secretary of Energy, and he brought together a team, basically a brain trust, of some of the smartest folks we have at the national labs and in academia to essentially serve as a oversight board with BP engineers and scientists in making calculations about how much mud could you pour down, how fast, without risking, potentially, the whole thing blowing.

So in that situation, you've got the Federal Government directly overseeing what BP is doing, and Thad Allen is giving authorization when finally we feel comfortable that the risks of attempting a top kill, for example, are sufficiently reduced that it needs to be tried.

I already mentioned a second example, which is they wanted to drill one relief well. The experience has been that when you drill one relief well, potentially you keep on missing the mark. And so it's important to have two to maximize the speed and effectiveness of a relief well.

And right now Thad Allen is down there, because I think he—it's his view that some of the allocation of boom or other efforts to protect shorelines hasn't been as nimble as it needs to be. And he's said so publicly. And so he will be making sure that, in fact, the resources to protect the shorelines are there immediately.

But here's the broad point: There has never been a point during this crisis in which this administration, up and down the line, in all these agencies, hasn't, number one, understood this was my top priority—getting this stopped and then mitigating the damage; and number two, understanding that if BP wasn't doing what our best options were, we were fully empowered to instruct them—to tell them to do something different.

And so if you take a look at what's transpired over the last 4 to 5 weeks, there may be areas where there have been disagreements, for example, on dispersants, and these are complicated issues. But overall, the decisions that have been made have been reflective of the best science that we've got, the best expert opinion that we have, and have been weighing various risks and various options to allocate our resources in such a way that we can get this fixed as quickly as possible. Okay?

Jake Tapper [ABC News].

Federal Response to Oil Spill

Q. Thanks, Mr. President. You say that everything that could be done is being done, but there are those in the region and those industry experts who say that's not true. Governor Jindal obviously had this proposal for a barrier. They say that if that had been approved when they first asked for it, they would have 10 miles up already. There are fishermen down there who want to work, who want to help, haven't been trained, haven't been told to go do so. There are industry experts who say that they're surprised that tankers haven't been sent out there to vacuum, as was done in '93 outside Saudi Arabia. And then, of course, there's the fact that there are 17 countries that have offered to help, and it's only been accepted from two countries, Norway and Mexico. How can you say that everything that can be done is being done with all these experts and all these officials saying that's not true?

The President. Well, let me distinguish between—if the question is, Jake, are we doing everything perfectly out there, then the answer is absolutely not. We can always do better. If the question is, are we, each time there is an idea, evaluating it and making a decision, is this the best option that we have right now, based on how quickly we can stop this leak and how much damage can we mitigate, then the answer is yes.

So let's take the example of Governor Jindal's barrier islands idea. When I met with him when I was down there 2 weeks ago, I said, I will make sure that our team immediately reviews this idea, that the Army Corps of Engineers is looking at the feasibility of it, and if they think—if they tell me that this is the best approach to dealing with this problem,

then we're going to move quickly to execute it. If they have a disagreement with Governor Jindal's experts as to whether this would be effective or not, whether it was going to be cost-effective, given the other things that need to be done, then we'll sit down and try to figure that out.

And that essentially is what's happened, which is why today you saw an announcement where, from the Army Corps' perspective, there were some areas where this might work, but there are some areas where it would be counterproductive and not a good use of resources.

So the point is, on each of these points that you just mentioned, the job of our response team is to say, okay, if 17 countries have offered equipment and help, let's evaluate what they've offered: How fast can it get here? Is it actually going to be redundant, or will it actually add to the overall effort? Because in some cases, more may not actually be better. And decisions have been made based on the best information available that says, here's what we need right now. It may be that a week from now or 2 weeks from now or a month from now, the offers from some of those countries might be more effectively utilized.

Now, it's going to be entirely possible in a operation this large that mistakes are made, judgments prove to be wrong, that people who say in retrospect, you know, if we could have done that or we did that, this might have turned out differently—although in a lot of cases, it may be speculation. But the point that I was addressing from Jennifer was, does this administration maintain a constant sense of urgency about this, and are we examining every recommendation, every idea is out there, and making our best judgment as to whether these are the right steps to take, based on the best experts that we know of? And on that answer, the answer is yes—or on that question, the answer is yes.

Chuck Todd [NBC News].

Federal Oversight of Oil Spill Response

Q. I just want to follow up on the question as it has to do with the relationship between the Government and BP. It seems that you've made the case on the technical issues. But onshore, Admiral Allen admitted the other day in a White House briefing that they needed to be pushed harder. Senator Mary Landrieu this morning said it's not clear who's in charge, that the Government should be in charge. Why not ask BP to simply step aside on the onshore stuff, make it an entirely Government thing? Obviously, BP pays for it, but why not ask them to just completely step aside on that front?

And then also, can you respond to all the Katrina comparisons that people are making about this with yourself?

The President. Well, the—I'll take your second question first. I'll leave it to you guys to make those comparisons and make judgments on it, because what I'm spending my time thinking about is how do we solve the problem. And when the problem is solved and people look back and do an assessment of all the various decisions that were made, I think people can make a historical judgment. And I'm confident that people are going to look back and say that this administration was on top of what was an unprecedented crisis.

In terms of shoreline protection, the way this thing has been set up under the oil spill act of 1990—Oil Pollution Act—is that BP has contracts with a whole bunch of contractors on file in the event that there is an oil spill, and as soon as the Deep Horizon well went down, then their job is to activate those and start paying them. So a big chunk of the 20,000 who are already down there are being paid by BP.

The Coast Guard's job is to approve and authorize whatever BP is doing. Now, what Admiral Allen said today, and the reason he's down there today, is that if BP's contractors are not moving as nimbly and effectively as they need to be, then it is already the power of the Federal Government to redirect those resources. I guess the point being that the Coast Guard and our military are potentially already in charge as long as we've got good information and we are making the right decisions.

And if there are mistakes that are being made right now, we've got the power to correct those decisions. We don't have to necessarily reconfigure the setup down there. What we do have to make sure of is, is that on each and every one of the decisions that are being made about what beaches to protect, what's going to happen with

these marshes, if we build a barrier island, how is this going to have an impact on the ecology of the area over the long term—in each of those decisions, we've got to get it right.

Q. You understand the credibility of BP seems to be so bad to folks on down the shore that there's almost no——

The President. Right.

Q. ——trust that they're getting——

The President. I understand. And part of the purpose of this press conference is to explain to the folks down in the Gulf that ultimately it is our folks down there who are responsible. If they're not satisfied with something that's happening, then they need to let us know, and we will immediately question BP and ask them why isn't X, Y, Z happening. And those skimmers, those boats, that boom, the people who are out there collecting some of the oil that's already hit shore, they can be moved and redirected at any point.

And so, understandably, people are frustrated, because, look, this is a big mess coming to shore, and even if we've got a perfect organizational structure, spots are going to be missed, oil's going to go to places that maybe somebody thinks it could have been prevented from going. There is going to be damage that is heartbreaking to see. People's livelihoods are going to be affected in painful ways. The best thing for us to do is to make sure that every decision about how we're allocating the resources that we've got is being made based on the best expert advice that's available.

So I'll take one last stab at this, Chuck. The problem, I don't think, is that BP is off running around doing whatever it wants and nobody is minding the store. Inevitably in something this big, there are going to be places where things fall short. But I want everybody to understand today that our teams are authorized to direct BP in the same way that they'd be authorized to direct those same teams if they were technically being paid by the Federal Government. In either circumstance, we've got the authority that we need. We just got to make sure that we're exercising it effectively.

All right, Steve Thomma [McClatchy Newspapers].

Federal Response to Oil Spill/Federal Oversight of Offshore Drilling

Q. Thank you, sir. On April 21, Admiral Allen tells us, the Government started dispatching equipment rapidly to the Gulf, and you just said on day one, you recognized the enormity of this situation. Yet here we are 39, 40 days later, you're still having to rush more equipment, more boom. There are still areas of the coast unprotected. Why is it taking so long? And did you really act from day one for a worst-case scenario?

The President. We did. Part of the problem you've got is—let's take the example of boom. The way the plans have been developed—and I'm not an expert on this, but this is as it's been explained to me—predeploying boom would have been the right thing to do, making sure that there is boom right there in the region at various spots, where you could anticipate, if there was a spill of this size, the boom would be right there ready to grab.

Unfortunately, that wasn't always the case. And so this goes back to something that Jake asked earlier. When it comes to the response since the crisis happened, I am very confident that the Federal Government has acted consistently with a sense of urgency.

When it comes to prior to this accident happening, I think there was a lack of anticipating what the worst-case scenarios would be. And that's a problem. And part of that problem was lodged in MMS and the way that that agency was structured. That was the agency in charge of providing permitting and making decisions in terms of where drilling could take place, but also in charge of enforcing the safety provisions. And as I indicated before, the IG report, the Inspector General's report that came out, was scathing in terms of the problems there.

And when Ken Salazar came in, he cleaned a lot of that up. But more needed to be done and more needs to be done, which is part of the reason why he's separated out the permitting function from the functions that involve enforcing the various safety regulations.

But I think on a whole bunch of fronts, you had a complacency when it came to what happens in the worst-case scenario.

I'll give you another example, because this is something that some of you have written about, the question of how is it that oil companies kept on getting environmental waivers in getting their permits approved. Well, it turns out that the way the process works, first of all, there is a thorough environmental review as to whether a certain portion of the Gulf should be leased or not. That's a thoroughgoing environmental evaluation. Then the overall lease is broken up into segments for individual leases, and again, there's an environmental review that's done.

But when it comes to a specific company with its exploration plan in that one particular area—they're going to drill right here in this spot—Congress mandated that only 30 days could be allocated before a yes or no answer was given. That was by law. So MMS's hands were tied. And as a consequence, what became the habit, predating my administration, was you just automatically gave the environmental waiver because you couldn't complete an environmental study in 30 days.

So what you've got is a whole bunch of aspects to how oversight was exercised in deepwater drilling that were very problematic. And that's why it's so important that this Commission moves forward and examines, from soup to nuts, why did this happen, how should this proceed in a safe, effective manner, what's required when it comes to worst-case scenarios to prevent something like this from happening.

I continue to believe that oil production is important, domestic oil production is important. But I also believe we can't do this stuff if we don't have confidence that we can prevent crises from—like this from happening again. And it's going to take some time for the experts to make those determinations. And as I said, in the meantime, I think it's appropriate that we keep in place the moratorium that I've already issued. Okay.

Chip Reid [CBS News].

Minerals Management Service

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, Elizabeth Birnbaum resigned today. Did she resign? Was she fired? Was she forced out? And if so, why? And should other heads roll as we go on here?

Secondly, with regard to the Minerals Management Service, Secretary Salazar yesterday basically blamed the Bush administration for the cozy relationship there, and you seemed to suggest that when you spoke in the Rose Garden a few weeks ago, when you said, for too long, a decade or more—most of those years, of course, the Bush administration—there's been a cozy relationship between the oil companies and the Federal agency that permits them to drill. But you knew as soon as you came in—and Secretary Salazar did—about this cozy relationship, but you continued to give permits, some of them under questionable circumstances. Is it fair to blame the Bush administration? Don't you deserve some of that?

The President. Well, let me just make the point that I made earlier, which is, Salazar came in and started cleaning house, but the culture had not fully changed in MMS. And absolutely, I take responsibility for that. There wasn't sufficient urgency in terms of the pace of how those changes needed to take place.

There's no evidence that some of the corrupt practices that had taken place earlier took place under the current administration's watch. But a culture in which oil companies were able to get what they wanted without sufficient oversight and regulation—that was a real problem. Some of it was constraints of the law, as I just mentioned, but we should have busted through those constraints.

Now, with respect to Ms. Birnbaum, I found out about her resignation today. Ken Salazar's been in testimony throughout the day, so I don't know the circumstances in which this occurred. I can tell you what I've said to Ken Salazar, which is that we have to make sure, if we are going forward with domestic oil production, that the Federal agency charged with overseeing its safety and security is operating at the highest level. And I want people in there who are operating at the highest level and aren't making excuses when things break down, but are intent on fixing them. And I have confidence that Ken Salazar can do that.

Q. And his job is safe?

The President. Yes.

Julianna [Julianna Goldman, Bloomberg News].

Dissemination of Information Regarding Oil Spill

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. We're learning today that oil—the oil has been gushing as much as five times the initial estimates. What does that tell you and the American people the—about the extent to which BP can be trusted on any of the information that it's providing, whether the events leading up to the spill, any of their information?

The President. Right. Well, BP's interests are aligned with the public interest to the extent that they want to get this well capped. It's bad for their business. It's bad for their bottom line. They're going to be paying a lot of damages, and we'll be staying on them about that. So I think it's fair to say that they want this thing capped as badly as anybody does and they want to minimize the damage as much as they can.

I think it is a legitimate concern to question whether BP's interests in being fully forthcoming about the extent of the damage is aligned with the public interest. All right? I mean, they—their interests may be to minimize the damage, and to the extent that they have better information than anybody else, to not be fully forthcoming. So my attitude is, we have to verify whatever it is they say about the damage.

This is an area, by the way, where I do think our efforts fell short. And I'm not contradicting my prior point that people were working as hard as they could and doing the best that they could on this front. But I do believe that when the initial estimates came of—that there were—it was 5,000 barrels spilling into the ocean per day, that was based on satellite imagery and satellite data that would give a rough calculation. At that point, BP already had a camera down there, but wasn't fully forthcoming in terms of what did those pictures look like. And when you set it up in time-lapse photography, experts could then make a more accurate determination. The administration pushed them to release it, but they should have pushed them sooner. I mean, I think that it took too long for us to stand up our flow-tracking group that has now made these more accurate ranges of calculation.

Now, keep in mind that that didn't change what our response was. As I said, from the start, we understood that this could be really bad. We are hoping for the best, but preparing for the worst. And so there aren't steps that we would have taken in terms of trying to cap the well or skimming the surface or the in situ burns or preparing to make sure when this stuff hit shore that we could minimize the damage—all those steps would have been the same even if we had information that this flow was coming out faster.

And eventually, we would have gotten better information because by law, the Federal Government, if it's going to be charging BP for the damage that it causes, is going to have to do the best possible assessment. But there was a lag of several weeks that I think shouldn't have happened. Okay?

Helen Thomas [Hearst Newspapers]

Military Operations in Afghanistan/Pakistan

Q. Mr. President, when are you going to get out of Afghanistan? Why are we continuing to kill and die there? What is the real excuse? And don't give us this Bushism, "If we don't go there, they'll all come here."

The President. Well, Helen, the reason we originally went to Afghanistan was because that was the base from which attacks were launched that killed 3,000 people.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. And I'm going to get to your question, I promise. But I just want to remind people, we went there because the Taliban was harboring Al Qaida, which had launched an attack that killed 3,000 Americans.

Al Qaida escaped capture, and they set up in the border regions between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Al Qaida has affiliates that not only provide them safe harbor but increasingly are willing to conduct their own terrorist operations, initially in Afghanistan and in Pakistan, but increasingly directed against Western targets and targets of our allies as well.

So it is absolutely critical that we dismantle that network of extremists that are willing to attack us. And they are currently——

Q. [*Inaudible*]—a threat to us?

The President. Oh, well, they absolutely are a threat to us. They're a significant threat to us. I wouldn't be deploying young men and women into harm's way if I didn't think that they were an absolute threat to us.

Now, General McChrystal's strategy, which I think is the right one, is that we are going to clear out Taliban strongholds, we are going to strengthen the capacity of the Afghan military, and we are going to get them stood up in a way that allows us then to start drawing down our troops, but continuing to provide support for Afghan in its effort to create a stable government.

It is a difficult process. At the same time, we've also got to work with Pakistan so that they are more effective partners in dealing with the extremists that are within their borders. And it is a big, messy process. But we are making progress, in part because the young men and women under General McChrystal's supervision, as well as our coalition partners, are making enormous sacrifices, but also on the civilian side, we're starting to make progress in terms of building capacity that will allow us then to draw down with an effective partner. Okay?

Jackie Calmes, New York Times.

Energy/Federal Oversight of Offshore Drilling

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Is this on? Okay. I want to follow up on something—exchange you had with Chip. Leaving aside the existing permits for drilling in the Gulf, before—weeks before BP, you had called for expanded drilling. Do you now regret that decision? And why did you do so, knowing what you have described today about the sort of dysfunction in the MMS?

The President. I continue to believe what I said at that time, which was that domestic oil production is an important part of our overall energy mix. It has to be part of an overall energy strategy. I also believe that it is insufficient to meet the needs of our future, which is why I've made huge investments in clean energy, why we continue to promote solar and wind and biodiesel and a whole range of other approaches, why we're putting so much emphasis on energy efficiency.

But we're not going to be able to transition to these clean energy strategies right away. I mean, we're still years off and some technological breakthroughs away from being able to operate on purely a clean energy grid. During that time, we're going to be using oil. And to the extent that we're using oil, it makes sense for us to develop our oil and natural gas resources here in the United States and not simply rely on imports. That's important for our economy; that's important for economic growth.

So the overall framework, which is to say domestic oil production should be part of our overall energy mix, I think, continues to be the right one. Where I was wrong was in my belief that the oil companies had their act together when it came to worst-case scenarios.

Now, that wasn't based on just my blind acceptance of their statements. Oil drilling has been going on in the Gulf, including deepwater, for quite some time. And the record of accidents like this we hadn't seen before. But it just takes one for us to have a wake-up call and recognize that claims that fail-safe procedures were in place or that blowout preventers would function properly or that valves would switch on and shut things off, that—whether it's because of human error, because of—the technology was faulty, because when you're operating at these depths, you can't anticipate exactly what happens—those assumptions proved to be incorrect.

And so I'm absolutely convinced that we have to do a thoroughgoing scrub of that—those safety procedures and those safety records. And we have to have confidence that even if it's just a one-in-a-million shot, that we've got enough technology know-how that we can shut something like this down not in a month, not in 6 weeks, but in 2 or 3 or 4 days. And I don't have that confidence right now.

Minerals Management Service/Offshore Drilling Technologies/Energy

Q. If I could follow up——

The President. Sure.

Q. Do you—are you sorry now—do you regret that your team had not done the reforms at the Minerals Management Service that you've subsequently called for? And I'm also curious as

how it is that you didn't know about Ms. Birnbaum's resignation/firing before——

The President. Well, you're assuming it was a firing. If it was a resignation, then she would have submitted a letter to Mr. Salazar this morning, at a time when I had a whole bunch of other stuff going on.

Q. So you rule out that she was fired?

The President. I'm—come on, Jackie, I don't know. I'm telling you the—I found out about it this morning, so I don't yet know the circumstances, and Ken Salazar's been in testimony on the Hill.

With respect to your first question, at MMS, Ken Salazar was in the process of making these reforms. But the point that I'm making is, is that obviously they weren't happening fast enough. If they had been happening fast enough, this might have been caught. Now, it's possible that it might not have been caught. All right? I mean, we could have gone through a whole new process for environmental review; you could have had a bunch of technical folks take a look at BP's plans, and they might have said, this is—meets industry standards, we haven't had an accident like this in 15 years, and we should go ahead.

That's what this Commission has to discover, is, was this a systemic breakdown? Is this something that could happen once in a million times? Is it something that could happen once in a thousand times or once every 5,000 times? What exactly are the risks involved?

Now, let me make one broader point, though, about energy. The fact that oil companies now have to go a mile underwater and then drill another 3 miles below that in order to hit oil tells us something about the direction of the oil industry. Extraction is more expensive, and it is going to be inherently more risky.

And so that's part of the reason you never heard me say, "Drill, baby, drill," because we can't drill our way out of the problem. It may be part of the mix as a bridge to a transition to new technologies and new energy sources, but we should be pretty modest in understanding that the easily accessible oil is already been sucked up out of the ground.

And as we are moving forward, the technology gets more complicated, the oil sources are more remote, and that means that there's probably going to end up being more risk. And we as a society are going to have to make some very serious determinations in terms of what risks are we willing to accept. And that's part of what the Commission, I think, has to—is going to have to look at.

I will tell you, though, that understanding we need to grow—we—we're going to be consuming oil in terms—for our industries and for how people live in this country, we're going to have to start moving on this transition. And that's why when I went to the Republican caucus just this week, I said to them, let's work together. You've got Lieberman and Kerry, who previously were working with Lindsey Graham—even though Lindsey's not on the bill right now—coming up with a framework that has the potential to get bipartisan support and says, yes, we're going to still need oil production, but you know what, we can see what's out there on the horizon, and it's a problem if we don't start changing how we operate. Okay?

Macarena Vidal [EFE News]. Not here? Oh, there you are.

U.S. Border Security/Arizona's Illegal Immigration Enforcement Legislation

Q. Mr. President, you announced—or the White House announced on—2 days ago that you were going to send 1,200 people to—1,200 members of the National Guard to the border. I wanted to—if you could precise what their target is going to be, what you're planning to achieve with that—if you could clarify a bit more the mission that they're going to have.

And also, on Arizona, after you having criticized so much the immigration law that has been approved there, would you support the boycott that some organizations are calling towards that State?

The President. Okay. I've indicated that I don't approve of the Arizona law. I think it's the wrong approach. I understand the frustrations of the people of Arizona and a lot of folks along the border that that border has not been entirely secured in a way that is both true

our—to our traditions as a nation of law and as a nation of immigrants.

I'm President of the United States; I don't endorse boycotts—or not endorse boycotts. That's something that the private citizens can make a decision about. What my administration is doing is examining very closely this Arizona law and its implications for the civil rights and civil liberties of the people in Arizona, as well as the concern that you start getting a patchwork of 50 different immigration laws around the country in an area that is inherently the job of the Federal Government.

Now, for the Federal Government to do its job, everybody's got to step up. And so I've tried to be as clear as I could this week, and I will repeat it to everybody who's here: We have to have a comprehensive approach to immigration reform. The time to get moving on this is now. And I am prepared to work with both parties and Members of Congress to get a bill that does a good job securing our borders, holds employers accountable, makes sure that those who have come here illegally have to pay a fine, pay back taxes, learn English, and get right by the law.

We have the opportunity to do that. We've done—we've gotten a vote of a supermajority in the Senate just 4 years ago. There's no reason why we shouldn't be able to recreate that bipartisan spirit to get this problem solved.

Now, with respect to the National Guardsmen and women, I have authorized up to 1,200 National Guardspersons in a plan that was actually shaped last year. So this is not simply in response to the Arizona law. And what we find is, is that National Guardspersons can help on intelligence, dealing with both drug and human trafficking along the borders. They can relieve border guards so that the border guards then can be in charge of law enforcement in those areas. So there are a lot of functions that they can carry out that helps leverage and increase the resources available in this area.

By the way, we didn't just send National Guard. We've also got a package of $500 million in additional resources, because, for example, if we are doing a better job dealing with trafficking along the border, we've also got to make sure that we've got prosecutors down there who can prosecute those cases.

But the key point I want to emphasize to you is that I don't see these issues in isolation. We're not going to solve the problem just solely as a consequence of sending National Guard troops down there. We're going to solve this problem because we have created an orderly, fair, humane immigration framework in which people are able to immigrate to this country in a legal fashion, employers are held accountable for hiring legally present workers.

And I think we can craft that system if everybody is willing to step up. And I told the Republican caucus when I met with them this week, I don't even need you to meet me halfway; meet me a quarter of the way. I'll bring the majority of Democrats to a smart, sensible, comprehensive immigration reform bill, but I'm going to have to have some help, given the rules of the Senate, where a simple majority is not enough. Okay?

Last question. Major [Major Garrett, FOX News].

Federal Response to Oil Spill/Representative Joe Sestak

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Good afternoon.

The President. Good afternoon.

Q. Two issues. Some in your Government have said the Federal Government's boot is on the neck of BP. Are you comfortable with that imagery, sir? Is your boot on the neck of BP? And can you understand, sir, why some in the Gulf who feel besieged by this oil spill consider that a meaningless, possibly ludicrous, metaphor?

Secondarily, can you tell the American public, sir, what your White House did or did not offer Congressman Sestak to not enter the Democratic senatorial primary? And how will you meet your levels of expressed transparency and ethics to convey that answer to satisfy what appear to be bipartisan calls for greater disclosure about that matter?

The President. The——

Q. Thank you.

The President. There will be an official response shortly on the Sestak issue, which I hope will answer your questions.

Q. From you, sir?

The President. You will get it from my administration. So—and it will be coming out—when I say "shortly," I mean shortly. I don't mean weeks or months. With respect to the first——

Q. Can you assure the public it was ethical and legal, sir?

The President. I can assure the public that nothing improper took place. But as I said, there will be a response shortly on that issue.

With respect to the metaphor that was used, I think Ken Salazar would probably be the first one to admit that he has been frustrated, angry, and occasionally emotional about this issue, like a lot of people have. I mean, there are a lot of folks out there who see what's happening and are angry at BP, are frustrated that it hasn't stopped. And so I'll let Ken answer for himself. I would say that we don't need to use language like that. What we need is actions that make sure that BP is being held accountable. And that's what I intend to do, and I think that's what Ken Salazar intends to do.

But look, we've gone through a difficult year and a half. This is just one more bit of difficulty. And this is going to be hard not just right now; it's going to be hard for months to come. The Gulf——

Q. This spill?

The President. This spill. The Gulf is going to be affected in a bad way. And so my job right now is just to make sure that everybody in the Gulf understands this is what I wake up to in the morning and this is what I go to bed at night thinking about.

Q. The spill?

The President. The spill. The—and it's not just me, by the way. When I woke up this morning and I'm shaving and Malia knocks on my bathroom door and she peeks in her head and she says, "Did you plug the hole yet, Daddy?" Because I think everybody understands that when we are fouling the Earth like this, it has concrete implications not just for this generation, but for future generations.

I grew up in Hawaii where the ocean is sacred. And when you see birds flying around with oil all over their feathers and turtles dying and—that doesn't just speak to the immediate economic consequences of this; this speaks to how are we caring for this incredible bounty that we have.

And so sometimes when I hear folks down in Louisiana expressing frustrations, I may not always think that their comments are fair; on the other hand, I probably think to myself, these are folks who grew up fishing in these wetlands and seeing this as an integral part of who they are, and to see that messed up in this fashion would be infuriating.

So the thing that the American people need to understand is that not a day goes by where the Federal Government is not constantly thinking about how do we make sure that we minimize the damage on this, we close this thing down, we review what happened to make sure that it does not happen again. And in that sense, there are analogies to what's been happening in terms of in the financial markets and some of these other areas where big crises happen. It forces us to do some soul-searching. And I think that's important for all of us to do.

In the meantime, my job is to get this fixed. And in case anybody wonders—in any of your reporting, in case you're wondering who's responsible, I take responsibility. It is my job to make sure that everything is done to shut this down. That doesn't mean it's going to be easy. It doesn't mean it's going to happen right away or the way I'd like it to happen. It doesn't mean that we're not going to make mistakes. But there shouldn't be any confusion here: The Federal Government is fully engaged, and I'm fully engaged.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:50 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG, in his capacity as national incident commander for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill; Gov. Piyush "Bobby" Jindal of Louisiana; Gov. Haley R. Barbour of

Mississippi; Gov. Robert R. Riley of Alabama; Gov. Charles J. Crist, Jr., of Florida; S. Elizabeth Birnbaum, former Director, Minerals Management Service; and Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia
May 27, 2010

President Obama. Well, I want to officially welcome President Sirleaf to the Oval Office. I have been an extraordinary admirer of her work for many years now. I fondly recall the speech that she delivered in a joint session of Congress when I was still in the Senate.

The United States and Liberia are close friends, longstanding partners, and Liberia is now emerging from a very difficult period in its history. Part of the reason that it has been able to emerge is because of the heroism and the courage of President Sirleaf. Her own personal story obviously is extraordinary: somebody who came from being a prisoner to the first female President not just of her own country, but also on the continent.

And over the last several years, what we've seen is a continued determination on her part to have a full accounting of some of the tragedies that took place earlier, making sure that the country is refocused on development, being willing to tackle corruption, which obviously plagues not just Liberia, but countries throughout the continent of Africa. She has been committed to rule of law. She has made strides in reforming her judiciary.

And in all these endeavors, I want to make sure that the people of Liberia understand—and I certainly want you, Madam President, to understand—that the United States is going to be a constant friend and partner in these efforts. We are working with Liberia on a food initiative that will help to create greater food security and independence in the country. We continue to work with the Liberian Government on issues like maternal health and education.

There has been extraordinary cooperation between our two countries in the issue of counterterrorism as well as drug trafficking, because unfortunately, the western coast of Africa increasingly is seen as a place where drug traffickers internationally may be able to operate with impunity. And so on all these issues, we have been able to cultivate a strong partnership, a strong relationship, and I want President Sirleaf to know that that will continue.

I also want to commend her for her commitment to democracy. There are going to be legislative and Presidential elections in 2011. And part of President Sirleaf's legacy is that she will continue to usher in a sense that democracy is the regular way of doing business in Liberia. And in that way, she can be an example for countries like Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire and Niger that I think can—should look to Liberia as an example for democracy and rule of law.

So, Madam President, welcome. We are grateful to you for your extraordinary work. I still recall in your speech that part of the reason you ran was because you wanted to see the children of Liberia smiling again, and I want you to know that we have that same hope, that same dream for Liberia and we'll be there with you every step of the way.

President Johnson Sirleaf. Mr. President, I want to thank you very much. I'm extremely proud, extremely pleased to have this opportunity to meet with you.

In 2006, when our Government started, we inherited a broken country—devastated by war, people displaced, infrastructure broken, institutions dysfunctional—but we said that we were going to make Liberia rise again.

I come today on behalf of the Liberian people to say that we've made a lot of progress in that commitment. We've been able to maintain peace for 7 years now. And I say that today, our children who are entering first grade have known—not known a gun or not had to run, and that's great progress.

Our security sector reform, with the United States supports, has come a long way with the training of our new army. Today, we're reopening our economy—our mining, forestry, and agriculture sectors. We've tackled our debt. We're

beginning to provide basic services by restoring infrastructure such as roads, clinics, and schools and lights and water, things that our people have been deprived of for more than two decades.

And we're also establishing the rule of law and governance. Freedoms—we say today that all freedoms, basic fundamental freedoms, are allowed in the country. And we're very proud of that.

We have challenges, and I'll be the first to admit that—challenges in national capacity because most of our brains left the country. I want to thank you for your approval of the DED that extended them for 18 months, allowing them to stay a little bit while we prepare to receive them. Corruption, the rule of law, our judiciary system and its weakness, unemployment among the many young who did not have the opportunity to go to school, who knew only war and violence in their young days—but those challenges we see as the ones that we have to tackle. And the progress we have made enable us to have the commitment and capacity to meet those challenges.

I want you to know that the United States has been a great partner to us. We could not have achieved the progress that we have had if we had not had the support in those initial days when we were just scrambling and looking for the ways to be able to go forward. The U.S. was there as a great partner.

And so the administration, as well as the Congress, have been very supportive of us. It has continued through these 4 years. And I'm just here to say that the return on your investment is beginning to come. We hope that that return will be even greater in the next few years when we consolidate the peace and when we are able to deliver basic services to our people.

I bring you greetings on behalf of the Liberian people.

President Obama. Excellent. Well, thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:26 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Johnson Sirleaf referred to DED, the deferred enforced departure protection status for Liberians in the United States.

Remarks at a Reception Celebrating Jewish American Heritage Month
May 27, 2010

Thank you so much. It is wonderful to see all of you, and I am proud to welcome you to the first ever event held at the White House to honor Jewish American Heritage Month.

This is a pretty fancy group here, pretty distinguished group. We've got Senators and Representatives. We've got Supreme Court Justices and successful entrepreneurs, rabbinical scholars, Olympic athletes, and Sandy Koufax. Sandy and I actually have something in common: We are both lefties. [*Laughter*] He can't pitch on Yom Kippur; I can't pitch. [*Laughter*]

I'm looking forward to the reading by Rabbi Alysa Stanton, the performance by Regina Spektor.

I know that my Chief of Staff, Rahm Emanuel, wanted to be here, but as some of you know, he is in Israel for the Bar Mitzvah of his son, and which is——

The diversity of talents and accomplishments represented in this room underscores the vast contributions that Jewish Americans have made to this country. Of course, it's impossible to separate the achievements of Jewish Americans from the struggles of Jewish people around the world. Even before we were a nation, we were a sanctuary for Jews seeking to live without the specter of violence or exile. That's what drew a band of 23 Jewish refugees to a place called New Amsterdam more than 350 years ago. That's what brought Jewish immigrants, fleeing pogroms, on a long journey to America in the last turn of the century. And that's what led Holocaust survivors and Jews trapped behind the Iron Curtain to travel to these shores to rebuild their lives.

As Jews sought freedom and opportunity in America, these waves of immigrants and generations that followed have helped to make America what it is—richer, stronger, more prosperous—from the discoveries of Jonas Salk to the pioneering work of Albert Einstein; from the music of Irving Berlin to the poetry of Emma Lazarus. And then there are the countless names that we don't know—the teachers, the small business owners, the doctors and nurses, the people who seek only to live honestly and faithfully, and to give their children more than they had. Jewish Americans have always been a critical part of the American story.

These contributions have not always been embraced. Jewish communities have at times faced hardship and hostility—right here in the United States of America—a reminder that we have to respond, at all times, swiftly and firmly whenever bigotry rears its ugly head. But no matter what the obstacles, Jewish Americans have endured, learning from each other, leaning on each other, true to their faith, leaning on the values that have been associated for so long with Jewish history: a sense of community, a sense of moral purpose, and an ethic of responsibility.

So it's heartening to know that these are the enduring values of a history marked by so much tragedy—not cynicism or despair, not callous indifference. Every person in this room knows somebody—perhaps a mother or father, an aunt, an uncle, perhaps yourself—who exemplifies this heritage. Every person in this room stands at the end of an unbroken chain of perseverance, of a conviction that a better future is possible. That doesn't just offer a lesson to Jewish Americans, it offers a lesson to all Americans. And ultimately, that is what we are celebrating today.

Yes, Jewish Americans have garnered success in industry and in government, as we can see by the guests gathered here today. Yes, Jews have helped to pioneer incredible advances in science and medicine, across countless fields. But the contributions of the Jewish community to America run deeper. As a product of history and faith, Jewish Americans have helped to open our eyes to injustice, to people in need, and to the simple idea that we ought to recognize ourselves in the struggles of our fellow men and women.

That's what's led Jewish advocates to fight for women's equality and workers' rights. That's what led rabbis to preach against racism from the *bimah* and to lead congregants on marches and protests to stop segregation. And that is what helped lead America to recognize and support Israel as a Jewish homeland and a beacon for democratic values, beginning mere minutes after its independence was declared. In fact, we have the original statement by President Harry Truman on display here today.

So what we are called upon to do now is to continue to live up to those values as a nation, to continue to uphold the principle of *tikkun olam*, our obligation to "repair the world." Here at home, at a time of continuing struggle for millions of families, it is incumbent upon us to remain focused not only on rebuilding our economy, but rebuilding it stronger than before. And I'd note that our efforts are bolstered by the work of so many Jewish organizations that help the sick and educate our children and provide assistance to seniors and others in need.

But our responsibility doesn't end at the water's edge. That's why my administration is renewing American leadership around the world, strengthening old alliances and forging new ones, defending universal values while ensuring that we uphold our values here at home. In fact, it's our common values that leads us to stand with allies and friends, including the State of Israel. That's why, even as we never waver in pursuing peace——

[*At this point, a pager went off in the audience.*]

That happens to me all the time. [*Laughter*]

That is why, even as we never waver in pursuing peace between Israelis, Palestinians, and Arabs, our bond with Israel is unbreakable. It is the bond of two peoples that share a commitment to a common set of ideals: opportunity, democracy, and freedom.

Those ideals are what have drawn generations to these shores. Those ideals are what have allowed Jewish immigrants to seek a better life in America, while enriching the life of our country. And those ideals are what you and all

Jewish Americans continue to help us uphold each and every day.

So thank you. God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:27 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Brooklyn/Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Sanford "Sandy" Koufax; Rabbi Alysa Stanton of Congregation Bayt Shalom in Greenville, NC; and entertainer Regina I. Spektor. The related proclamation of April 30 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on the Death of John W. Finn
May 27, 2010

Michelle and I were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of retired Navy Lt. John William Finn, the oldest living Medal of Honor recipient. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and loved ones at this time. Lt. Finn received the medal for the heroism he displayed during the attack on Pearl Harbor. Under a torrent of gunfire, Lt. Finn defended his fellow sailors, holding his position for 2 hours until the skies went quiet, despite suffering serious wounds. Like many of those who have served our Nation with such distinction, Lt. Finn often said that he never intended to be a hero. Instead, he felt that he was simply doing his duty. But his modesty does not diminish his extraordinary conduct or the incredible example he has set for our men and women in uniform and for all Americans. I had the privilege of meeting Lt. Finn last year, and I was struck by his warmth and humility. As we mark Memorial Day, and pay tribute all who have fallen in defense of this Nation, the passing of Lt. Finn is a reminder of the sacrifices that generations have made to preserve the freedoms we hold dear.

Statement on Congressional Action on the Department of Defense's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Policy
May 27, 2010

I have long advocated that we repeal "don't ask, don't tell," and I am pleased that both the House of Representatives and the Senate Armed Services Committee took important bipartisan steps toward repeal tonight. Key to successful repeal will be the ongoing Defense Department review, and as such I am grateful that the amendments offered by Representative Patrick Murphy and Senators Joseph Lieberman and Carl Levin that passed today will ensure that the Department of Defense can complete that comprehensive review that will allow our military and their families the opportunity to inform and shape the implementation process. Our military is made up of the best and bravest men and women in our Nation, and my greatest honor is leading them as Commander in Chief. This legislation will help make our Armed Forces even stronger and more inclusive by allowing gay and lesbian soldiers to serve honestly and with integrity.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the National Security Strategy of the United States
May 27, 2010

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 108 of the National Security Act of 1947, as amended (50 U.S.C. 404a), I am transmitting the National Security Strategy of the United States.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 27, 2010.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters in Port Fourchon, Louisiana
May 28, 2010

The President. Everybody, I want you all to meet Charlotte Randolph, who's the parish president in this parish. And what I just heard from Thad Allen was that this parish has been as effective as any in coordinating and working to make sure that they respond quickly.

You've got about 7 miles of beach here where two types of boom have already been laid. This is new boom as well. What you're seeing here, if I'm not mistaken—right, Thad?—is——

Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG. The old boom was picked up yesterday.

The President. The old boom was picked up yesterday, but this will just soak up the oil as it comes up. And if you guys want to get a little bit closer and get dirty, you can see—you might want to stop right around here—you can see these little balls; these are the tar balls that they're talking about.

So, Madam President, these you can actually send out teams to pick up as they wash up onshore.

Lafourche Parish President Charlotte A. Randolph. And it's picked up by the booms.

The President. So either the boom soaks stuff up or manually you can pick up these tar balls as they're coming ashore. But obviously, the concern is, is that until we actually stop the flow, we've got problems. And it may be that there's some additional strategies, Madam President, that you're interested in pursuing.

So the—Thad, you want to just talk a little bit about how the parish, Coast Guard, has been—and the cleanup teams have been working together?

Adm. Allen. Yes, Mr. President. I was here yesterday meeting with the parish president——

The President. Yes, that stick is——

Adm. Allen. You got an oiled stick there.

The unified command center they have here is one of the best examples I've seen in the region where you have Coast Guard, the responsible party, and the local responders both from the parish and the State and the other Federal stakeholders that are there. They sit in a room every day; they work together. They've got everything up on a screen in front of them; they know where the boom is at; they track it. They're using modern technology to do that, and they've got a real sound booming strategy. If oil were to get into the bay over here, which is very, very sensitive, they'd have to have local shrimp boats that are standing by to deploy the boom. A lot of good integration among State and local and Federal here—and the contractors.

The President. Good.

Parish President Randolph. Plus we're concerned about the port being closed by oil.

The President. Right.

Parish President Randolph. The Coast Guard has been very vigilant over that, any oil that has attempted to get into the port, the Coast Guard is on top of. We can't close our port.

The President. Right.

Adm. Allen. The other thing is we have—if a ship comes through and it gets oiled before it hits port, we try to establish a cleaning station so we can manage that so we can keep the com-

merce going, unless it's a—[*inaudible*]—situation.

The President. Now, I was here—they were also saying that a day like today is actually ideal for in-situ burning and skimming. It's hot, and it's calm, which means that a lot of boats are out there right now, and they're in a position where they can help prevent it from getting close to shore.

Some of you guys may have noticed when we were walking up, by the way, there were a couple of dolphins right—just about 50 feet out, maybe 100 yards out. So obviously, there's precious wildlife in this area, even though you see a whole bunch of oil rigs in the background. The parish president said she used to come out here and do a lot of fishing, so we want to make sure that she comes back and can fish again.

All right, thank you, everybody.

Q. Thank you, sir.

Source of Tar Balls on Fourchon Beach

Q. Can you be sure these oil tar balls are from the oil spill? Because when I used to swim on the Gulf in Texas, I'd get tar balls in my bathing suit all the time.

Adm. Allen. Some of them are naturally occurring. I think we can say to a high degree of certainty this is from the——

Parish President Randolph. We attribute all of them that we see right now to BP.

Q. Yes. But you do get some occasionally, right, in good times?

Parish President Randolph. Yes, seepage.

Adm. Commander Allen. There's natural seepage from time to time as well.

The President. At some time—at some point, Jackie [Jackie Calmes, New York Times], we'll want to hear more about those tar balls and your bathing suit. [*Laughter*]

Offshore Oil Royalties

Q. Mr. President, would you support Mary Landrieu's efforts to step up payments of the offshore oil royalties?

The President. You know, we're going to be doing a statement——

Q. Okay.

The President. ——at the next stop.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:07 a.m. on Fourchon Beach. Adm. Allen spoke in his capacity as national incident commander for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Remarks Following a Briefing on the Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico and an Exchange With Reporters in Grand Isle, Louisiana
May 28, 2010

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. I know it's a little warm out here so want to get started. I've just had a meeting with these Governors, Members of Congress, local officials, as well as Admiral Thad Allen, the national incident commander in charge of response efforts to the BP oil spill. Admiral Allen gave us an update, the latest information on both the efforts to plug the well as well as giving us an update on arrangements and coordination that's being made with respect to mitigating this damage that's been done.

He updated us on these latest efforts to stop the leak, mitigate the damage to the great beaches of the Gulf Coast. And I had the chance to visit with Charlotte—the—a beach like Port Fourchon that gives you a sense of what extraordinary efforts are being made at the local level, but also the damage that we're already starting to see as a consequence of this spill.

Now, our mission remains the same as it has since this disaster began, since the day I visited Louisiana nearly 4 weeks ago: We want to stop the leak, we want to contain and clean up the oil, and we want to help the people of this region return to their lives and their livelihoods as soon as possible.

And our response treats this event for what it is: It's an assault on our shores, on our people, on the regional economy, and on communities like this one. This isn't just a mess that

we've got to mop up. People are watching their livelihoods wash up on the beach. Parents are worried about the implications for their children's health. Every resident of this community has watched this nightmare threaten the dreams that they've worked so hard to build. And they want it made right, and they want to make it right now.

I just had a chance to listen to Mayor David Camardelle of Grand Island [Isle],* our host here, telling us heartbreaking stories about fishermen who are trying to figure out where their—where the next paycheck is going to come from, how are they going to pay a mortgage or a note on their boat. And he is having to dig into his pocket at this point to make sure that some of them are able to deal with the economic impact. So this is something that has to be dealt with immediately, not sometime later. And that's everybody's driving focus—everybody who is standing behind me. This is our highest priority, and it deserves a response that is equal to the task.

That's why this has already been the largest cleanup effort in U.S. history. On the day this disaster began, even as we launched a search and rescue effort for workers on the drilling rig, we were already staging equipment in the event of a larger scale spill. By the time we discovered the third breach, a week after the Deepwater Horizon platform sank, we had already stationed more than 70 vessels and hundreds of thousands of feet of protective boom on site.

Today there are more than 20,000 people in the region working around the clock to contain and clean up this spill. We've activated about 1,400 members of the National Guard across 4 States. Nearly 1,400 vessels are aiding in the containment and cleanup effort. And we've deployed more than 3 million feet of hard and sorbent boom, including an additional 100,000 just yesterday for these parishes in Louisiana that face the greatest threat.

Now, I've made clear to Admiral Allen, and I did so again today, that he should get whatever he needs to deal with this crisis. Whatever he needs, he will get.

Right now we're still within the window where we don't yet know the outcome of the highly complex top kill procedure that the Federal Government authorized BP to use to try to stop the leak. If it is successful, it would obviously be welcome news. If it's not, a team of some of the world's top scientists, engineers, and experts, led by our Energy Secretary and Nobel Prize-winning physicist, Steven Chu, has for some time being—has for some time been exploring any and all reasonable contingency plans.

But our response will continue with its full force regardless of the outcome of the top kill approach, because even if the leak was stopped today, it wouldn't change the fact that these waters still contain oil from what is now the largest spill in American history. And more of it will come ashore.

To ensure that we're fully prepared for that, and in accordance with input from folks down here, I've directed Secretary Napolitano and Admiral Allen to triple the manpower in places where oil has hit the shore or is within 24 hours of impact. This increase will allow us to further intensify this already historic response, contain and remove oil more quickly, and help minimize the time that any oil comes into contact with our coastline. That means deploying more boom, cleaning more beaches, performing more monitoring of wildlife and impact to this ecosystem.

We're also going to continue to do whatever it takes to help Americans whose livelihoods have been upended by this spill. Gulf Coast residents should know that we've gathered all pertinent information regarding available assistance and the Federal response in one place at whitehouse.gov.

We have ordered BP to pay economic injury claims, and we will make sure they deliver. And the parish presidents and Governors here in Louisiana were already giving us some sense of some of the bureaucratic problems that we're going to have to cut through, but we are going to cut through them. And for those who are in economic distress, if you've already filed a claim and you're not satisfied with the resolution,

* White House correction.

then whitehouse.gov will point you in the right direction.

As I said yesterday, the Small Business Administration has stepped in to help businesses by approving loans, but also as important, allowing many to defer existing loan payments. A lot of folks are still loaded up with loans that they had from Katrina and other natural disasters down here, so they may need some additional help.

If you're a small-business owner and you weren't aware of some of the programs that have been put in place or haven't participated, then, again, the White House web site will connect you to the resources you need. And we are making sure that all the parish presidents know, and folks like the mayor, other local officials are going to be aware of how they can get immediate help from us.

What's more, we've stationed doctors and scientists across the five Gulf States to look out for people's health and then to monitor any ill effects felt by cleanup workers and local residents. And we've begun setting up a system to track these efforts—excuse me, to track these effects and ensure folks get the care that they need. And we've told BP that we expect them to pay for that too.

As I've said before, BP is the responsible party for this disaster. What that means is they're legally responsible for stopping the leak, and they're financially responsible for the enormous damage that they've created. And we're going to hold them accountable, along with any other party responsible for the initial explosion and loss of life on that platform.

But as I said yesterday and as I repeated in the meeting that we just left, I ultimately take responsibility for solving this crisis. I'm the President and the buck stops with me. So I give the people of this community and the entire Gulf my word that we're going to hold ourselves accountable to do whatever it takes for as long as it takes to stop this catastrophe, to defend our natural resources, to repair the damage, and to keep this region on its feet. Justice will be done for those whose lives have been upended by this disaster, for the families of those whose lives have been lost. That is a solemn pledge that I am making.

I think I can speak for anybody here and for anybody who has been involved in the response and the cleanup effort and for most Americans when I say that I would gladly do whatever it takes to end this disaster today. But I want to also repeat something that I said to the group as a whole while we were meeting: This is a manmade catastrophe that's still evolving, and we face a long-term recovery and restoration effort.

America has never experienced an event like this before. And that means that as we respond to it, not every judgment we make is going to be right the first time out. Sometimes there are going to be disagreements between experts or between Federal and State and local officials or among State officials or between States about what the most effective measures will be. Sometimes there are going to be risks and unintended consequences associated with a particular mitigation strategy that we consider. In other words, there are going to be a lot of judgment calls involved here. There are not going to be silver bullets or a lot of perfect answers for some of the challenges that we face.

Understandably, the feelings of frustration and anger, the sense that any response is inadequate is—we expect that frustration and anger to continue until we actually solve this problem. But in the meantime, we've got to make sure that everybody is working in concert, that everybody is moving in the same direction. And I want everybody to know that everybody here, at every level, is working night and day to end this crisis. We're considering every single idea out there, especially from folks who know these communities best.

Admiral Allen announced yesterday, for example, that after a bunch of back-and-forth between State and Federal experts, he is prepared to authorize moving forward with a portion of the idea for a barrier island that may stop some of the oil from coming ashore. We had an extensive conversation about this and—to see whether additional steps can be taken on this barrier island idea.

And what I told the parish president, what I told the Governor is that if there is an idea that can be shown to work, then we should move

forward on it, and they deserve quick answers. But I also reminded everybody that we've got to make sure that whatever we do is actually going to work, particularly because we're going to have not unlimited resources, at least not right now. For example, there's a limited amount of boom. We're going to try to get more boom manufactured, but that may take some time, and that means we're going to have to make some decisions about how to deploy it effectively.

The bottom line is this. Every decision we make is based on a single criterion: What's going to best protect and make whole the people and the ecosystems of the Gulf?

And I want to thank everybody in this region who's rolled up their sleeves and pitched in to help, from the National Guard putting their experience to the task to the local officials and every citizen who loves this area and calls it home, every American who's traveled to the region to lend a hand. If every—if any American is looking for ways to volunteer and help, then we've put links to that information on our web site as well; that's whitehouse.gov.

And all these Governors—Bobby Jindal, as well as Charlie Crist and Bob Riley, they want—and I know Haley Barbour is not here, but I think he agrees with this as well—one of the most powerful ways that you can help the Gulf right now is to visit the communities and the beaches off of the coast. Except for three beaches here in Louisiana, all of the Gulf's beaches at this moment are open, they are safe, and they are clean. And so that's always a good way to help, is to come down and provide support to the communities along the coasts.

To the people of the Gulf Coast: I know that you've weathered your fair share of trials and tragedy. I know there have been times where you've wondered if you were being asked to face them alone. I am here to tell you that you're not alone. You will not be abandoned. You will not be left behind. The cameras at some point may leave, the media may get tired of the story, but we will not. We are on your side, and we will see this through. We're going to keep at this every day until the leak has stopped, that this—until this coastline is clean and your communities are made whole again. That's my promise to you, and that is a promise on behalf of a nation. It is one that we will keep.

And I will make one last point, and I said this to every leader who is here: If something is not going right down here, then they need to talk to Thad Allen. And if they're not getting satisfaction from Thad Allen, then they can talk to me. There's nobody here who can't get in touch with me directly if there is an idea, a suggestion, or a logjam that needs to be dealt with.

So we're in this together. And it's going to be a difficult time, and obviously, the folks down here are going to be feeling the brunt of it, but we're going to make sure that we're doing everything we can to get this solved as quickly as possible.

And I want to again think everybody here for the extraordinary work that they're putting in. You shouldn't underestimate how hard these folks are working, day in, day out, on behalf of their constituencies.

So thank you very much. Thank you, everybody.

Status of Oil Spill

Q. Mr. President, how confident are you that it will be—that the leak will be plugged soon?

The President. All I can say is that we've got the best minds working on it and we're going to keep on at it until we get it plugged.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:56 p.m. at U.S. Coast Guard Station Grand Isle. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Piyush "Bobby" Jindal of Louisiana; Gov. Charles J. Crist, Jr., of Florida; Gov. Robert R. Riley of Alabama; Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG, in his capacity as national incident commander for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill; Charlotte A. Randolph, president, Lafourche Parish, LA; and Gov. Haley R. Barbour of Mississippi.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Job Growth and Tax Reform Legislation
May 28, 2010

Today the House passed an important package of measures that would bring much-needed relief to our Nation's families and businesses during these hard economic times. The bill extends vital unemployment benefits to help those Americans who are fighting to find a good job and provides tax cuts for individuals and businesses to help support the economic recovery. It helps extend Small Business Administration lending efforts so our Nation's small businesses can get the credit they need to create jobs and grow. And it includes funding to settle the longstanding discrimination claims that African American farmers have had against the Federal Government and to resolve the *Cobell* case, helping address these painful chapters in our history. I am also pleased to see that this bill fully pays for its nonemergency measures by closing loopholes that allow corporations to avoid taxes by shifting their profits overseas and by ensuring that investment managers pay the same tax rates on their earned income that the typical American worker pays.

While this is one important step forward in getting American families the help they need, Congress must act in the coming weeks on additional measures, including health care benefits for the unemployed, assistance to States to maintain health services and avoid layoffs of teachers, police officers, and firefighters, and proposals I have put forth to support small businesses and help consumers invest in energy efficiency. I ask the Senate for its swift action on this package so I can sign it into law, and I urge Congress to move quickly on additional relief measures.

Statement on Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates's Efforts to Reform Department of Defense Spending
May 28, 2010

As the Congress continues its work on funding bills for the Department of Defense, I want to reiterate my strong support for the reforms Secretary Gates is advancing at the Pentagon. He has kept me fully apprised of his efforts to reform how our military operates and bring needed efficiencies to the Department of Defense. I stand squarely behind Secretary Gates's position on the JSF second engine and C–17 programs. As the statement of administration policy made clear, our military does not want or need these programs being pushed by the Congress, and should Congress ignore this fact, I will veto any such legislation so that it can be returned to me without those provisions.

Statement on the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference
May 28, 2010

The United States welcomes the agreements reached at the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference to strengthen the global nonproliferation regime.

The NPT must be at the center of our global efforts to stop the spread of nuclear weapons around the world, while pursuing the ultimate goal of a world without them. This agreement includes balanced and practical steps that will advance nonproliferation, nuclear disarmament, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, which are critical pillars of the global nonproliferation regime. It reaffirms many aspects of the agenda that I laid out in Prague and which we have pursued together with other nations over the last year and underscores that

those nations that refuse to abide by their international obligations must be held accountable.

The document includes an agreement to hold a regional conference in 2012 to discuss issues relevant to a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their delivery systems. The United States has long supported such a zone, although our view is that a comprehensive and durable peace in the region and full compliance by all regional states with their arms control and nonproliferation obligations are essential precursors for its establishment. We strongly oppose efforts to single out Israel and will oppose actions that jeopardize Israel's national security.

The greatest threat to proliferation in the Middle East and to the NPT is Iran's failure to live up to its NPT obligations. Today's efforts will only strengthen the NPT as a critical part of our efforts to ensure that all nations meet their NPT and nonproliferation obligations or face consequences. Together, we must work for a world where nations benefit from the peaceful power of nuclear energy, while also being secure from the threat posed by nuclear proliferation.

The President's Weekly Address
May 29, 2010

This weekend, as we celebrate Memorial Day, families across America will gather in backyards and front porches, fire up the barbecue, kick back with friends, and spend time with people they care about. That's as it should be. But I also hope that as you do so, you'll take some time to reflect on what Memorial Day is all about, on why we set this day aside as a time of national remembrance.

It's fitting every day to pay tribute to the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States of America. Still, there are certain days that have been set aside for all of us to do so. Veterans Day is one such day, when we are called to honor Americans who've fought under our country's flag.

Our calling on Memorial Day is different. On this day, we honor not just those who've worn this country's uniform, but the men and women who've died in its service, who've laid down their lives in defense of their fellow citizens, who've given their last full measure of devotion to protect the United States of America. These are the men and women I'll be honoring this weekend, and I know many of you are doing the same.

There are any number of reasons America emerged from its humble beginnings as a cluster of colonies to become the most prosperous, most powerful nation on Earth. There is the hard work, the resilience, the character of our people. There is the ingenuity and enterprising spirit of our entrepreneurs and innovators. There are the ideals of opportunity, equality, and freedom that have not only inspired our people to perfect our own Union, but inspired others to perfect theirs as well.

But from the very start, there was something more: a steadfast commitment to serve, to fight, and if necessary, to die to preserve America and advance the ideals we cherish. It's a commitment witnessed at each defining moment along the journey of this country. It's what led a ragtag militia to face British soldiers at Lexington and Concord. It's what led young men, in a country divided half slave and half free, to take up arms to save our Union. It's what led patriots in each generation to sacrifice their own lives to secure the life of our Nation, from the trenches of World War I to the battles of World War II, from Inchon and Khe Sanh to Mosul and Marja.

That commitment, that willingness to lay down their lives so we might inherit the blessings of this Nation, is what we honor today. But on this Memorial Day, as on every day, we're called to honor their ultimate sacrifice with more than words. We're called to honor them with deeds.

We're called to honor them by doing our part for the loved ones our fallen heroes have left behind and looking after our military families, by making sure the men and women serving this country around the world have the support they need to achieve their mission and come home safely, by making sure veterans have the care and assistance they need, in short, by serv-

ing all those who have ever worn the uniform of this country—and their families—as well as they have served us.

On April 25, 1866, about a year after the Civil War ended, a group of women visited a cemetery in Columbus, Mississippi, to place flowers by the graves of Confederate soldiers who had fallen at Shiloh. As they did, they noticed other graves nearby belonging to Union dead. But no one had come to visit those graves or place a flower there. So they decided to lay a few stems for those men too, in recognition not of a fallen Confederate or a fallen Union soldier, but a fallen American.

A few years later, an organization of Civil War veterans established what became Memorial Day, selecting a date that coincided with the time when flowers were in bloom. So this weekend, as we commemorate Memorial Day, I ask you to hold all our fallen heroes in your hearts and, if you can, lay a flower where they have come to rest.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:55 p.m. on May 27 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on May 29. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 28, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 29.

Statement on the Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico
May 29, 2010

Today I've spoken with National Incident Commander Admiral Thad Allen, as well as Energy Secretary Steven Chu, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson, and senior White House advisers John Brennan and Carol Browner regarding the ongoing efforts to stop the BP oil spill. From the beginning, our concern has been that the surest way to stop the flow of oil—the drilling of relief wells—would take several months to complete. So engineers and experts have explored a variety of alternatives to stop the leak now. They had hoped that the top kill approach attempted this week would halt the flow of oil and gas currently escaping from the seafloor. But while we initially received optimistic reports about the procedure, it is now clear that it has not worked. Rear Admiral Mary Landry today directed BP to launch a new procedure whereby the riser pipe will be cut and a containment structure fitted over the leak.

This approach is not without risk and has never been attempted before at this depth. That is why it was not activated until other methods had been exhausted. It will be difficult and will take several days. It is also important to note that while we were hopeful that the top kill would succeed, we were also mindful that there was a significant chance it would not. And we will continue to pursue any and all responsible means of stopping this leak until the completion of the two relief wells currently being drilled.

As I said yesterday, every day that this leak continues is an assault on the people of the Gulf Coast region, their livelihoods, and the natural bounty that belongs to all of us. It is as enraging as it is heartbreaking, and we will not relent until this leak is contained, until the waters and shores are cleaned up, and until the people unjustly victimized by this manmade disaster are made whole.

Remarks on Memorial Day at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland
May 31, 2010

Hello, everybody. First of all, I want to just say thank you to Colonel Steve Shepro, who's just done such great work for us and for me over the last several months, several years. I

know he's about to be transferred, and I just to want to say to him and Helen and Jack how much we appreciate everything that they do.

To Major General Darrell Jones, our commander as—of Air Force District of Washington, as well as Holly and Stuart, and to all of you and all the men, women, and families of the Joint Base at Andrews, good evening. It is wonderful to see all of you on this solemn and special day.

In the life of our Nation, there are few more sacred places than our national cemeteries, around the world, at Arlington, and our national cemeteries across the country. As some of you know, earlier today I was honored to join the Memorial Day ceremony at the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, Illinois. Unfortunately, some extraordinary storms moved in, and for the safety of all involved, the ceremony was canceled.

But while the storm was raging outside, I was fortunate to meet with some of the families, friends, and veterans who had come to honor loved ones who had given their lives in service of this Nation. Later, I was privileged to visit with families of our wounded warriors as they battle to recover from the wounds of war. And I wanted to stop by here because I fly in all the time but sometimes don't get a chance to meet so many of you individually, to say thank you for your service, and recognize that long chain of valor and service that you are a part of.

The families that I met with know in their hearts what every American must never forget. At its core, the nobility and the majesty of Memorial Day can be found in the story of ordinary Americans who've become extraordinary for the most simple of reasons: They loved their country so deeply, so profoundly that they were willing to give their lives to keep it safe and free.

In another time, they might have led a life of comfort and ease, but a revolution needed to be won or a Union needed to be preserved or our harbor was bombed or our country was attacked on a clear September morning. So they answered their country's call. They stepped forward. They raised their hand. They took an oath, just as all of you did, and they earned a title that would define them for the rest of their lives, as a soldier, a sailor, an airman, a marine, a coast guardsman.

In the letters that they wrote home, they spoke of the horrors of war and the bravery it summoned, how they endured the slaughter of the trenches and the chaos of beach landings, the bitter cold of a Korean winter or the endless heat of a Vietnam jungle.

Today we can imagine what it must have been like for all those they fought to save when American forces finally came into view. A country was liberated. A Holocaust was over. A town was rid of insurgents. A village was finally free from the terror of violent extremists.

But had you asked any troop—any of those troops in the past, they would have likely told you the same thing: Yes, we fought for freedom; yes, we fought for that flag; but most of all, we fought for each other, to bring our buddies home, to keep our families safe. And that's what they did, to their last breath.

This is what we honor today: the lives they led, the service they rendered, the sacrifice that they made for us. In this time of war, we pay special tribute to the thousands of Americans who have given their lives during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and who have earned their place among the greatest of generations. And though our heart aches in their absence, we find comfort in knowing that their legacy shines bright on the people they loved, America's Gold Star families.

Their legacy lives on in the pride of their parents, like the mother who wrote to me about her son, Specialist Stephan Mace, who gave his life in Afghanistan. She told me, "I just want you to know what kind of hero he was." To all those moms and dads, you instilled in your sons and daughters the values and virtues that led them to service. And to you, every American here, every American around the country owes a debt of profound gratitude.

Their legacy lives on in the love of their spouses, the wives and husbands who gave to our Nation the person they cherished most in the world. To all those spouses, you have sacrificed in ways most Americans can't even begin to imagine, but as you summon the strength to carry on each day, know that you're not alone and that America will always be at your side.

Their legacy lives on in their beautiful children. To all those sons and daughters, we say as one Nation: Your moms and dads gave their lives so you could live yours. America will be there for you as well, as you grow into the men and women your parents knew you could be.

Their legacy lives on in those who fought alongside them, our veterans who came home, you, our troops, who are still in harm's way. Just as you keep alive the memory of your fallen friends, America must keep its commitment to you. And that means providing the support to our troops and families when they need it and the health care and benefits that our veterans deserve. This is our sacred trust to all who serve, and the—upholding that trust is a moral obligation.

And finally, on this day of remembrance, I say to every American, the legacy of these fallen soldiers, these fallen heroes lives on in each of us. The security that lets us live in peace, the prosperity that allows us to pursue our dreams, the freedom that we cherish, these were earned by the blood and the sacrifice of patriots who went before. And now it falls on us to preserve that inheritance for all who follow.

They proclaimed our unalienable rights, so let us speak out for the dignity of every human being and the rights that are universal. They saved the Union, so let us never stop working to perfect it. They defeated fascism and laid the foundation for decades of prosperity, so let us renew the sources of American strength and innovation at home. They forged alliances that won a long cold war, so let us build the partnership for a just and lasting peace.

And today, our forces are fighting and dying once more, in faraway lands, to keep our homeland safe. Some of you have come from overseas deployments; some of you are about to go. Let us make sure that all of us are worthy of your sacrifice and of the sacrifices who have fallen. Let us go forward as they do, with the confidence and the resolve, the resilience and the unity that's always defined us as a people and shaped us as a nation and made America a beacon of hope to the world.

So may God bless our fallen heroes. May He comfort their families. May God bless all of you, and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:28 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Col. Steven M. Shepro, USAF, installation commander, Andrews Air Force Base, and commander, 316th Wing, and his wife Helen and their son Jonathan; and Holly Jones, wife, and Stuart Jones, son, of Maj. Gen. Darrell D. Jones.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the Cochairs of the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling
June 1, 2010

Good morning, everybody. I just met with these two gentlemen, former Senator Bob Graham of Florida and former EPA Administrator Bill Reilly. They will lead the national commission on the BP oil spill in the Gulf, which is now the greatest environmental disaster of its kind in our history. Their job, along with the other members of the Commission, will be to thoroughly examine the spill and its causes so that we never face such a catastrophe again.

At the same time, we're continuing our efforts on all fronts to contain the damage from this disaster and extend to the people of the Gulf the help they need to confront this ordeal. We've already mounted the largest cleanup effort in the Nation's history and continue to monitor, minute to minute, the efforts to

halt or capture the flow of oil from the wrecked BP well. Until the well is stopped, we'll multiply our efforts to meet the growing threat and to address the widespread and unbelievably painful losses experienced by the people along the Gulf Coast. What's being threatened, what's being lost isn't just the source of income, but a way of life, not just fishable waters, but a national treasure.

There are now more than 20,000 men and women in the region working around the clock to contain and clean up the oil. We've authorized more than 17,000 National Guard members to respond across 4 States. More than 1,700 vessels are currently aiding in the response. And we'll ensure that any and all responsible means of containing this leak are pursued as we await the completion of the two relief wells. I've also directed Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and Admiral Thad Allen, who is the national incident commander, to triple the manpower in those places where oil has hit shore or is within 24 hours of impact.

The economic response continues as well. We've ordered BP to pay economic injury claims, and we will make sure they deliver. The Small Business Administration has stepped in to help businesses by approving loans and allowing deferrals of existing loan payments. We've stationed doctors and scientists across the region to look out for people's health and monitor any ill effects felt by cleanup workers and residents. And we will absolutely continue to hold BP and any other responsible parties accountable for financial losses borne by the people in the region.

But our responsibility doesn't end there. We have an obligation to investigate what went wrong and to determine what reforms are needed so that we never have to experience a crisis like this again. If the laws on our books are insufficient to prevent such a spill, the laws must change. If oversight was inadequate to enforce these laws, oversight has to be reformed. If our laws were broken, leading to this death and destruction, my solemn pledge is that we will bring those responsible to justice on behalf of the victims of this catastrophe and the people of the Gulf region.

Now, when Interior Secretary Ken Salazar took office, for example, he found a Minerals and Management Services agency that had been plagued by corruption for years, corruption that was underscored by a recent Inspector General's report that uncovered appalling activity that took place before last year. Secretary Salazar immediately took steps to clean up that corruption. But this oil spill has made clear that more reforms are needed. For years, there's been a far too cozy relationship between oil companies and the agencies that regulate them. That's why we've decided to separate the people who permit offshore leases, who collect revenues, and who regulate the safety of drilling.

In addition, we've placed a 6-month moratorium on drilling new deepwater oil and gas wells in the Outer Continental Shelf. And now that a 30-day safety and environmental review is complete, we're making a series of changes. The review recommended aggressive new operating standards and requirements for offshore energy companies, which we will put in place. And I've also called on Congress to pass a bill to provide critical resources to respond to this spill and better prepare us for any spills in the future.

Now, all that has to do with dealing with the crisis at hand, but it's critical that we take a comprehensive look at how the oil and gas industry operates and how our Government oversees those operations. That's why I signed an Executive order establishing this national Commission. And I'm extraordinarily pleased that Bob Graham and Bill Reilly have agreed to be its Cochairs.

Bob served two terms as Florida's Governor, represented Florida in the Senate for almost two decades. And during that time, he earned a reputation as a champion of the environment, leading the most extensive environmental protection effort in the State's history. Bill is chairman emeritus of the board of the World Wildlife Fund and is also deeply knowledgeable of the oil and gas industry. He also was EPA Administrator during the first Bush administration, serving during the Exxon *Valdez* disaster.

So I can't think of two people who will bring greater experience or judgment to this task. I personally want to thank both of them for taking on this arduous assignment, for demonstrating a great sense of duty to this country.

Very soon I'll appoint five other distinguished Americans, including leaders in science and engineering, to join them. And they'll work alongside other ongoing reviews, including an independent examination by the National Academy of Engineers. And I've authorized the Commission to hold public hearings and to request information from Government, from non-for-profit organizations, and from experts in the oil and gas industry both at home and abroad, as well as from relevant companies, including BP, Transocean, Halliburton, and others.

I just said in our meeting, in doing this work, they have my full support to follow the facts wherever they may lead, without fear or favor. And I'm directing them to report back in 6 months with options for how we can prevent and mitigate the impact of any future spills that result from offshore drilling.

Now, as a result of this disaster, lives have been lost, businesses have been decimated, communities that had already known great hardship now face the specter of sudden and painful economic dislocations, untold damage is being done to the environment, damage that could last for decades. We owe all those who've been harmed, as well as future generations, a full and vigorous accounting of the events that led to what has now become the worst oil spill in U.S. history. Only then can we be assured that deepwater drilling can take place safely. Only then can we accept further development of these resources as we transition to a clean energy economy. Only then can we be confident that we've done what's necessary to prevent history from repeating itself.

All right. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG, in his capacity as national incident commander for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Transmitting Designations Under the Kingpin Act

June 1, 2010

*Dear*_____:

This report to the Congress, under section 804(a) of the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act, 21 U.S.C. 1901–1908 (the "Kingpin Act"), transmits my designations of the following five foreign individuals as appropriate for sanctions under the Kingpin Act and reports my direction of sanctions against them under the Act:

Haji Agha Jan Alizai (Afghanistan)
Haji Bando (Afghanistan)
Ousmane Conte (Guinea)
Sergio Enrique Villarreal Barragan (Mexico)
Mohamed Bachir Suleman (Mozambique)

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Carl Levin, chairman, and John S. McCain III, ranking member, Senate Committee on Armed Services; Max S. Baucus, chairman, and Charles E. Grassley, ranking member, Senate Committee on Finance; John F. Kerry, chairman, and Richard G. Lugar, ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Patrick J. Leahy, chairman, and Jefferson B. Sessions III, ranking member, Senate Committee on the Judiciary; Dianne Feinstein, chair, and Christopher S. Bond, vice chairman, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence; Isaac N. "Ike" Skelton IV, chairman, and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, ranking member, House Committee on Armed Services; Howard L. Berman, chairman, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, ranking member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs; John Conyers, Jr., chairman, and Lamar S. Smith, ranking member, House Committee on the Judiciary; Sand-

er M. Levin, acting chairman, and David L. Camp, ranking member, House Committee on Ways and Means; and Silvestre Reyes, chairman, and Peter Hoekstra, ranking member, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Alan Garcia Perez of Peru
June 1, 2010

President Obama. Well, I've just had an excellent meeting with President Garcia and want to welcome him not only to the Oval Office, but also say to the Peruvian people how much we appreciate the friendship between our two countries.

Peru, I think, has been an extraordinary success story over the last several years. We've seen not only the solidification of a thriving democracy, but also an extraordinary economic success story. And even last year, in the midst of a very tough global recession, we saw that Peru was able to remain resilient. And I think that's a testimony to the President's leadership on this front.

We had an extensive conversation about a range of issues. On our bilateral relationship, we agreed to continue to pursue the details of the free trade agreement that has already been executed so that it is creating jobs and prosperity in both countries. We discussed how we can work together on security issues.

We also talked, though, about a broader international vision of how we can continue to promote democracy, human rights, press freedoms, economic development, not just for those at the top, but also from the bottom up: poverty reduction. These are all issues that the President has some excellent track records of success in his own country, and we want to continue to be an effective partner with Peru as they continue to grow and develop.

Finally, we discussed some important international, geopolitical issues. One of the main concerns that both President Garcia and I share is the issue of nuclear nonproliferation. We recognize that it's important to leave to the next generation a country that has fewer nuclear threats rather than more nuclear threats. And so I very much appreciate Peru's strong stance on that issue.

We also discussed the environment, issues like climate change, and we came to recognize that we can't solve these problems individually. A single country can't solve these problems, but we have to work together in partnership.

That's the kind of relationship that the President and I have established personally. It's the kind of relationship that our countries have been able to establish over the years. And it's a relationship that I expect will continue to grow and develop in the years to come.

So welcome, Mr. President. Thank you very much. Thank you.

[*At this point, a Spanish translation was provided by an interpreter*.]

President Obama. And I also apologize, I should have let the translator break that up. But sometimes I forget I'm supposed to wait for that—my translator.

Interpreter. That's okay.

President Obama. Fortunately, she's very good. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President.

President Garcia. I want to thank President Obama very much for the invitation to visit him here in the White House, to this dialogue, a very warm and friendly dialogue we've had today. And I think that President Obama just provided you with a succinct and brilliant summary of what we discussed.

We did discuss global issues. Although Peru is not a major power in the world today, it is a country that believes firmly, as does the United States, that nuclear proliferation must stop here and now. This is something that we believe in very firmly. We believe in nuclear nonproliferation. We believe in putting a stop to nuclear disorder. And we support President Obama's ideas.

Regarding the economic crisis that has affected our entire world, I believe that the United States has exerted very important leadership in this sense, calling on the meetings of the G–20.

I agree with the criteria that we have presented at those fora. We believe in the importance of economic expansion and also regulation of economic activity. But all countries need very deep reforms economically in order to avoid the stumbles and falls that have beset some regions of the world; we're looking at what happened in Europe just recently. And I would humbly suggest that perhaps a professional organization should be following up on these G–20 proposals. Perhaps that organization could be the IMF.

And on regional issues, we are convinced that democracy will become stronger and stronger in Latin America. But this democracy needs to be modern, vibrant, a democracy that works with technology, with investment, one that does not fall into the trap of protectionism, protectionism which can only lead to poverty.

Peru is a country that congratulates itself, therefore, on having attained a free trade agreement with the United States, one that will promote more jobs, more technology, and more investment. And so I am very pleased that Peru chose correctly in the last few years, and this has been demonstrated in fact. We opened our economy. We opened the way to more investment. We were not beset by political complexes that made us close our doors. And so as a result, we've seen a growth in our economy. We've seen a growth in the job rate. We've seen all kinds of economic growth despite the international crisis that the world went through last year.

And today in South America, what we're seeing is the waning effects of socialist capitalism, a force that has not led to good results, a force that would have had us close our doors and open up the path to poverty.

And we discussed a number of other issues that we know we will continue to develop when Secretary Clinton comes to Peru in the next week, where she will be leading the U.S. delegation during the OAS General Assembly. And we talked about our commitment—we will continue talking about our commitment to combat drug trafficking.

We will continue to talk about our defense and support for immigration reform. And we would ask the U.S. Congress to support this idea.

And we will continue talking about other issues, issues that I know will be supported by the strong friendship and leadership shown by President Obama that will lead to a greater partnership between our two countries.

And finally, I would like to say to the people of the United States that I bring to you my greetings and I bring to you all my respect. The United States has always served as a laboratory for the most important social issues affecting our globe.

Before coming to the White House, I visited the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington Cemetery. And like everyone who has gone there, I stood thinking how many U.S. service men and women have given their lives to defend the world from the decadent monarchies of the 19th and 20th centuries, to stop the racism imposed by Hitler. And today, they continue to do that, stopping fundamentalism in all its ugly forms around the world. And you will continue to do that by stopping the nuclear threat that affects us all throughout the world.

And I know that you are also helping us today in Latin America to secure our peace and our security by combating the illegal drug trade. And I thank you for all that you do, and I thank you, Mr. President, for this exchange of ideas we were able to have today.

President Obama. Thank you again, my friend. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:41 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Garcia spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
June 2, 2010

Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. Thank you very much.

Let me begin by thanking Dr. Jared Cohon and the entire Carnegie Mellon community for welcoming me once again and for the terrific work that he and the administration, faculty, and staff do here each and every day.

I also want to acknowledge your outstanding mayor, who doesn't look any older than the last time I saw him, Mayor Luke Ravenstahl. There he is right there.

It is great to be back at Carnegie Mellon and in the beautiful city of Pittsburgh. I love visiting a good sports town. Last year, I stole Dan Rooney—[*laughter*]—to serve as my Ambassador to Ireland. To make it up, I invited both the Steelers and the Penguins to the White House to celebrate their championships. Now, seeing how the Blackhawks are headed to Philly tonight with a 2–0 lead in the Stanley Cup finals, I'm just glad that we're on this side of the State. [*Laughter*] I noticed that a couple people said they were rooting for the Blackhawks, which tells me something about the rivalry between Pittsburgh and Philly.

Of course, we meet here at an incredibly difficult time for America. Among other things, it's a time when the worst environmental disaster of its kind in our Nation's history is threatening the Gulf Coast and the people who live there. Right now stopping this oil spill and containing its damage is necessarily the top priority not just of my administration, but, I think, of the entire country. And we're waging this battle every minute of every day.

But at the same time, we're continuing our efforts to recover and rebuild from an economic disaster that has touched the lives of nearly every American. And that's what I want to talk about today: the state of our economy, the future we must seize, and the path we chose to get there.

It has now been a little over 16 months since I took office amid one of the worst economic storms in our history. And to navigate that storm, my administration was forced to take some dramatic and unpopular steps. And these steps have succeeded in breaking the freefall. We're again moving in the right direction.

An economy that was shrinking at an alarming rate when I became President has now been growing for three consecutive quarters. After losing an average of 750,000 jobs a month during the winter of last year, we've now added jobs for 5 of the last 6 months, and we expect to see strong job growth in Friday's report. The taxpayer money it cost to shore up the financial sector and the auto industry, that's being repaid. And both GM and Chrysler are adding shifts and operating at a profit. So despite temporary setbacks, uncertain world events, and the resulting up and downs of the market, this economy is getting stronger by the day.

Now, that doesn't mean this recession is by any means over for the millions of Americans who are still looking for a job or a way to pay the bills—not by a long shot. The devastation created by the deepest downturn since the Great Depression has hit people and communities across our country very hard. And it's not going to be a real recovery until people can feel it in their own lives.

In the immediate future, this means doing whatever is necessary to keep the recovery going and to spur job growth. But in the long term, it means recognizing that for a lot of middle class families—for entire communities, in some case—a sense of economic security has been missing since long before the recession began.

Over the last decade, these families saw their incomes decline. They saw the cost of things like health care and college tuition reach record highs. They lived through a so-called economic expansion that generated slower job growth than at any prior expansion since World War II. Some people have called the last 10 years the "lost decade."

So the anxiety that's out there today isn't new. The recession has certainly made it worse, but that feeling of not being in control of your own economic future, that sense that the American Dream might slowly be slipping away, that's been around for some time now. And for

better or for worse, our generation of Americans has been buffeted by tremendous forces of economic change. Long gone are the days when a high school diploma could guarantee a job at a local factory, not when so many of those factories have moved overseas. Pittsburgh, a city that once was defined by the steel industry, knows this better than just about anybody. And today, the ability of jobs and entire industries to relocate where there's skilled workers and an Internet connection has forced America to compete like never before.

From China to India to Europe, other nations have already realized this. They're putting a greater emphasis on math and science and demanding more from their students. Some countries are building high-speed railroads and expanding broadband access. They're making serious investments in technology and clean energy because they want to win the competition for those jobs.

So we can't afford to stand pat while the world races by. The United States of America did not become the most prosperous nation on Earth by sheer luck or happenstance. We got here because each time a generation of Americans has faced a changing world, we have changed with it. We have not feared our future, we have shaped it. America does not stand still, we move forward.

And that's why I've said that as we emerge from this recession, we can't afford to return to the precrisis status quo. We can't go back to an economy that was too dependent on bubbles and debt and financial speculation. We can't accept economic growth that leaves the middle class owing more and making less. We have to build a new and stronger foundation for growth and prosperity, and that's exactly what we've been doing for the last 16 months.

It's a foundation based on investments in our people and their future; investments in the skills and education we need to compete; investments in a 21st-century infrastructure for America, from high-speed railroads to high-speed Internet; investments in research and technology, like clean energy, that can lead to new jobs and new exports and new industries.

This new foundation's also based on reforms that will make our economy stronger and our businesses more competitive, reforms that will make health care cheaper, our financial system more secure, and our Government less burdened with debt.

In a global economy, we can't pursue this agenda in a vacuum. At the height of the financial crisis, the coordinated action we took with the nations of the G–20 prevented a global depression and helped restore worldwide growth. And as we've recently witnessed in Europe, economic difficulties in one part of the world can affect everybody else. And that's why we have to keep on working with the nations of the G–20 to pursue more balanced growth. That's why we need to coordinate financial reform with other nations so that we avoid a global race to the bottom. It's why we need to open new markets and meet the goal of my National Export Initiative to double our exports over the next 5 years. And it's why we need to ensure that our competitors play fair and our agreements are enforced. This too is part of building a new foundation.

Now, some of you may have noticed that we have been building this foundation without much help from our friends in the other party. From our efforts to rescue the economy to health insurance reform to financial reform, most have sat on the sidelines and shouted from the bleachers. They said no to tax cuts for small businesses, no to tax credits for college tuition, no to investments in clean energy. They said no to protecting patients from insurance companies and consumers from big banks.

And some of this, of course, is just politics. Before I was even inaugurated, the congressional leaders of the other party got together and made a calculation that if I failed, they'd win. So when I went to meet with them about the need for a Recovery Act, in the midst of crisis, they announced they were against it before I even arrived at the meeting. Before we even had a health care bill, a Republican Senator actually said: "If we're able to stop Obama on this, it will be his Waterloo. It will break him." So those weren't very hopeful signs.

But to be fair, a good deal of the other party's opposition to our agenda has also been rooted in their sincere and fundamental belief

about the role of government. It's a belief that government has little or no role to play in helping this Nation meet our collective challenges. It's an agenda that basically offers two answers to every problem we face: more tax breaks for the wealthy and fewer rules for corporations.

The last administration called this recycled idea the ownership society. But what it essentially means is that everyone is on their own. No matter how hard you work, if your paycheck isn't enough to pay for college or health care or childcare, well, you're on your own. If misfortune causes you to lose your job or your home, you're on your own. And if you're a Wall Street bank or an insurance company or an oil company, you pretty much get to play by your own rules, regardless of the consequences for everybody else.

Now, I've never believed that government has all the answers. Government cannot and should not replace businesses as the true engine of growth and job creation. Government can't instill good values and a sense of responsibility in our children. That's a parent's job. Too much government can deprive us of choice and burden us with debt. Poorly designed regulations can choke off competition and the capital that businesses need to thrive.

I understand these arguments. And it's reflected in my policies. After all, one-third of the Recovery Act we designed was made up of tax cuts for families and small businesses. And when you think back to the health care debate, despite calls for a single-payer, Government-run health care plan, we passed reform that maintains our system of private health insurance.

But I also understand that throughout our Nation's history, we have balanced the threat of overreaching government against the dangers of an unfettered market. We've provided a basic safety net, because any one of us might experience hardship at some time in our lives and may need some help getting back on our feet. And we've recognized that there have been times when only government has been able to do what individuals couldn't do and corporations wouldn't do.

That's how we have railroads and highways, public schools and police forces. That's how we've made possible scientific research that has led to medical breakthroughs like the vaccine for Hepatitis B and technological wonders like GPS. That's how we have Social Security and a minimum wage and laws to protect the food we eat and the water we drink and the air that we breathe. That's how we have rules to ensure that mines are safe and, yes, that oil companies pay for the spills that they cause.

Now, there have always been those who've said no to such protections, no to such investments. There were accusations that Social Security would lead to socialism and that Medicare was a Government takeover. There were bankers who claimed the creation of Federal deposit insurance would destroy the industry. And there were automakers who argued that installing seatbelts was unnecessary and unaffordable. There were skeptics who thought that cleaning our water and our air would bankrupt our entire economy. And all of these claims proved false. All of these reforms led to greater security and greater prosperity for our people and our economy.

So what was true then is true today. As November approaches, leaders in the other party will campaign furiously on the same economic arguments they've been making for decades. Fortunately, we don't have to look back too many years to see how their agenda turns out. For much of the last 10 years, we've tried it their way. They gave us tax cuts that weren't paid for to millionaires who didn't need them. They gutted regulations and put industry insiders in charge of industry oversight. They shortchanged investments in clean energy and education, in research and technology. And despite all their current moralizing about the need to curb spending, this is the same crowd who took the record $237 billion surplus that President Clinton left them and turned it into a record $1.3 trillion deficit.

So we know where those ideas lead us. And now we have a choice as a nation. We can return to the failed economic policies of the past, or we can keep building a stronger future. We can go backward, or we can keep moving forward. And I don't know about you, but I want to move forward. I think America wants to move forward.

Now, the first step in building a new foundation that allows us to move forward has been to address the costs and risks that have made our economy less competitive: outdated regulations, crushing health care costs, and a growing debt.

To start with, we can't compete as a nation if the irresponsibility of a few folks on Wall Street can bring our entire economy to its knees. That's why we're on the verge of passing the most sweeping financial reform since the Great Depression. It's a reform that will help prevent another AIG. It will end taxpayer-funded bank bailouts. It contains the strongest consumer protections in history, protections that will empower Americans with the clear and concise information they need before signing up for a credit card or taking out a mortgage.

Now, financial reform will not guard against every instance of greed and irresponsibility on Wall Street. But it will enshrine a new principle in our financial system: From now on, instead of competing to see who can come up with the cleverest scheme to make the quickest buck, financial institutions will compete to see who can make the better product and the better service. And that's a competition that benefits Wall Street and Main Street. That's why we need to get this legislation done. It's why we can't afford to go back; we have to move forward.

We also know we can't compete in a global economy if our citizens are forced to spend more and more of their income on medical bills, if our businesses are forced to choose between health care and hiring, if State and Federal budgets are weighed down with skyrocketing health care costs. That's why we finally passed health insurance reform.

Now, let's be clear: The costs of health care are not going to come down overnight just because legislation passed. And in an ever-changing industry like health care, we're going to continuously need to apply more cost-cutting measures as the years go by. But once this reform is in full effect, middle class families will pay less for their health care and the worst practices of the insurance industry will end. People with preexisting medical conditions will no longer be excluded from coverage. People who become seriously ill will no longer be thrown off their coverage for reasons contrived by the insurance company. Taxpayers will no longer have to pay—in the form of higher premiums—for trips to the ER by uninsured Americans. Businesses will get help with their health care costs. In fact, small businesses are already learning they're eligible for tax credits to cover their workers this year. And with less waste and greater efficiency in the system, this reform will do more to bring down the deficit than any step we have taken in more than a decade.

The other party has staked their claim this November on repealing these health insurance reforms instead of making them work. They want to go back; we need to move forward.

Making health care more cost efficient is critical, because it's also true we can't be competitive as a nation if we remain dragged down by our growing debt. Now, let me talk about debt just for a second.

By the time I took office, we had a 1-year deficit of over $1 trillion and projected deficits of $8 trillion over the next decade. Most of this was the result of not paying for two major tax cuts skewed to the wealthy and a worthy but expensive prescription drug program that wasn't paid for. I always find it interesting that the same people who participated in these decisions are the ones who now charge our administration with fiscal irresponsibility.

And the truth is, if I had taken office in ordinary times, I would have liked nothing more than to start bringing down the deficits that they created. But we took office amid a crisis, and the effects of the recession put a $3 trillion hole in our budget before I even walked through the door. Additionally, the steps that we had to take to save the economy from depression temporarily added more to the deficit, by about $1 trillion. Of course, if we had spiraled into a depression, our deficits and debt levels would be much worse.

Now, the economy is still fragile, so we can't put on the brakes too quickly. We have to do what it takes to ensure a strong recovery. A growing economy will unquestionably improve

our fiscal health, as will the steps we take in the short term to put Americans back to work.

And that's why I signed a bill that will provide tax cuts for small businesses that hire unemployed workers. That's why I've urged Congress to pass a small-business lending fund so that small businesses can get the credit they need to create jobs and grow. That's why I believe it's critical we extend unemployment insurance for several more months so that Americans who've been laid off through no fault of their own get the support they need to provide for their families and can maintain their health insurance until they're rehired. And we have to work with State and local governments to make sure they have the resources to prevent likely layoffs of hundreds of thousands of public school teachers across the country over the next few months.

But as we look ahead, we can't lose sight of the urgent need to get our fiscal house in order. There are four key components to putting our budget on a sustainable path. Maintaining economic growth is number one. Health care reform is number two. The third component is the belt-tightening steps I've already outlined to reduce our deficit by $1 trillion.

Starting in 2011, we will enact a 3-year freeze on all discretionary spending outside of national security, something that was never enacted in the last administration. We will allow the tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans to expire. We've gone through the budget line by line and identified more than 120 programs for elimination. We've restored a simple budgeting rule that every family and business understands called pay as you go. And we will charge the largest Wall Street firms a fee to repay the American people for rescuing them during the financial crisis, a fee that will bring down the deficit by $90 billion over the next decade. By the way, that $90 billion represents about one-eighth of the amount these banks will pay out in bonuses over the same period of time.

Now, finally, the fourth component in improving our fiscal health is the bipartisan fiscal commission that I've established that will provide a specific set of solutions by the fall to deal with our medium- and long-term deficit. And I have to warn you, this will not be easy. I know that some like to make the argument that if we would just eliminate pork barrel projects and foreign aid, we could eliminate our deficit. Turns out, such spending makes up just 3 percent of our deficit. You combine all foreign aid and all earmarks, that's 3 percent of our budget. So meeting the deficit challenge will require some very difficult decisions about the largely popular programs that make up the other 97 percent. It means we'll have to sort through our priorities and figure out what programs that we can do without.

On this point, I strongly agree with my friends in the other party. What I don't agree with is the notion that we should also sacrifice critical investments in our people and our future. You know, if you're a family who's tightening your belt, you will definitely sacrifice going out to dinner, but you're not going to sacrifice saving for your child's college education. It's precisely our investments in education and innovation that will make America more competitive in the 21st century. And we can't go back; we've got to move forward.

That's why I've made education reform a top priority, because countries that outeducate us today will outcompete us tomorrow. And so we want every citizen to have the skills and training they need in a global economy, from the day that you're born through whatever career you may choose.

Last year, we launched a national competition to improve our schools based on a simple idea: Instead of funding the status quo, we will only invest in reform, reform that raises student achievement, that inspires students to excel in math and science, and turns around failing schools that steal the future of too many young Americans.

And to achieve my goal of ensuring America once more has the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020, we passed a law that will make college more affordable by ending the unnecessary taxpayer subsidies that go to financial institutions for student loans. That means we're saving billions of dollars that will go directly to students, including students right here at Carnegie Mellon. It's a bill that will also revitalize our community colleges, which are a

career pathway to the children of so many working families.

In addition to training our workers for the jobs of the future, we're also investing in the innovation that will create those jobs here in America, the research, the technology, the infrastructure that will secure our economic future. Right now, as we speak, the Recovery Act is putting Americans to work building a 21st-century America. There's no reason China should have the fastest trains or that rural Pennsylvania should be without high-speed Internet access. We've got to make those investments. From the first railroads to the Interstate Highway System, this Nation has always been built to compete. So we're going to invest and are investing right now in new infrastructure, expanding broadband, health information technology, advanced manufacturing facilities, America's first high-speed rail network. And we're also investing in the ideas and technologies that will lead to new jobs and entire new industries.

Consider what we've done with clean energy. The tax credits and loan guarantees in the Recovery Act alone will lead to 720,000 clean energy jobs in America by 2012—720,000. I'll give you one example. The United States used to make less than 2 percent of the world's advanced batteries for hybrid cars. By 2015, because of the investments that we made, we'll have enough capacity to make up to 40 percent of these batteries.

Now, this brings me to an issue that's on everybody's minds right now, namely, what kind of energy future can ensure our long-term prosperity? The catastrophe unfolding in the Gulf right now may prove to be a result of human error or of corporations taking dangerous shortcuts to compromise safety or a combination of both. And I've launched a national commission so that the American people will have answers on exactly what happened. But we have to acknowledge that there are inherent risks to drilling 4 miles beneath the surface of the Earth, and these are risks that are bound to increase the harder oil extraction becomes. We also have to acknowledge that an America run solely on fossil fuels should not be the vision we have for our children and our grandchildren.

We consume more than 20 percent of the world's oil, but have less than 2 percent of the world's oil reserves. So without a major change in our energy policy, our dependence on oil means that we will continue to send billions of dollars of our hard-earned wealth to other countries every month, including countries in dangerous and unstable regions. In other words, our continued dependence on fossil fuels will jeopardize our national security, it will smother our planet, and it will continue to put our economy and our environment at risk.

Now, I understand that we can't end our dependence on fossil fuels overnight. That's why I supported a careful plan of offshore oil production as one part of our overall energy strategy. But we can pursue such production only if it's safe and only if it's used as a short-term solution while we transition to a clean energy economy.

And the time has come to aggressively accelerate that transition. The time has come, once and for all, for this Nation to fully embrace a clean energy future. Now, that means continuing our unprecedented effort to make everything from our homes and businesses to our cars and trucks more energy efficient. It means tapping into our natural gas reserves and moving ahead with our plan to expand our Nation's fleet of nuclear powerplants. It means rolling back billions of dollars of tax breaks to oil companies so we can prioritize investments in clean energy research and development.

But the only way the transition to clean energy will ultimately succeed is if the private sector is fully invested in this future, if capital comes off the sidelines and the ingenuity of our entrepreneurs is unleashed. And the only way to do that is by finally putting a price on carbon pollution.

Now, many businesses have already embraced this idea because it provides a level of certainty about the future. And for those that face transition costs, we can help them adjust. But if we refuse to take into account the full costs of our fossil fuel addiction, if we don't factor in the environmental costs and the national security costs and the true economic

costs, we will have missed our best chance to seize a clean energy future.

The House of Representatives has already passed a comprehensive energy and climate bill, and there is currently a plan in the Senate, a plan that was developed with ideas from Democrats and Republicans, that would achieve the same goal. And, Pittsburgh, I want you to know, the votes may not be there right now, but I intend to find them in the coming months. I will continue to make the case for a clean energy future wherever and whenever I can. I will work with anyone to get this done, and we will get it done. The next generation will not be held hostage to energy sources from the last century. We are not going to move backwards; we are going to move forward.

Now, this overarching principle that we must invest in and embrace the innovation and technology of the future and not the past, that applies beyond our energy policy. That's why we've decided to devote more than 3 percent of our GDP to research and development, to spur the discovery of services and products and businesses that we have yet to imagine.

We've proposed making the research and experimentation tax credit permanent, a tax credit that helps businesses afford the high costs of developing new technologies and new products. Last year, we made the largest investment in basic research funding in history.

The possibilities of where this research might lead are endless. Imagine a new treatment that kills cancer cells but leaves healthy ones untouched, regenerative medicine that ends the agonizing wait for an organ transplant. Imagine a lightweight vest for soldiers and police officers that can stop armor-piercing bullets, educational software that's as effective and engaging as a personal tutor, intelligent prosthetics that can enable a wounded veteran to play the piano again. And now imagine all the workers and small-business owners and consumers who would benefit from these discoveries.

We can't know for certain what the future will bring. We can't guess with 100 percent accuracy what industries and innovations will next shape our world. I'm sure there were times when this city couldn't imagine life without steel mills and heavy smog that filled these streets. And when that industry shrank and so many jobs were lost, who could have guessed that Pittsburgh would fare better than many other rust belt cities and reemerge as a center for technology and green jobs, health care and education? Who would have thought that the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center's logo would one day adorn the U.S. Steel Tower or that this institute, Carnegie Mellon, would be the region's largest employer? All of this came to be because as a community, you prepared and adapted and invested in a better future, even if you weren't always sure what that future would look like.

And that's what America does. That's what we've always done. The interests of the status quo will always have the most vocal and powerful defenders at every level of government. There will always be lobbyists for the banks or the insurance industry that doesn't want more regulation or the corporation that would prefer to see more tax breaks instead of more investments in infrastructure or education. And let's face it: A lot of us find the prospect of change scary, even when we know the status quo isn't working for us.

But there's no natural lobby for the clean energy company that may start a few years from now. There's no natural lobby for the research that may lead to a lifesaving medical breakthrough. There's no natural lobby for the student who may not be able to afford a college education, but if they got one, could end up making discoveries that would transform America and the world.

It's our job as a nation to advocate on behalf of the America that we hope for, to make decisions that will benefit the next generation, even if it's not always popular, even if we can't always see those benefits in the short term. We make decisions like this on behalf of our own children every single day. And while it's harder to do with an entire country as large and diverse as ours, it's no less important.

The role of government has never been to plan every detail or dictate every outcome. At its best, government has simply knocked away barriers to opportunity and laid the foundation

for a better future. Our people, with all their drive and ingenuity, always end up building the rest. And if we can do that again, if we can continue building that foundation and making those hard decisions on behalf of the next generation, I have no doubt that we will leave our children the America that we all hope for.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:22 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Jared L. Cohon, president, Carnegie Mellon University; and Sen. James W. DeMint.

Videotaped Remarks to the Korea Society 2010 Annual Dinner
June 2, 2010

Good evening, everyone. I appreciate the opportunity to send my wishes as you celebrate the unbreakable bonds between the United States and the Republic of Korea. This year, of course, holds special meaning for us all.

We recall that it was exactly 60 years ago, on another June day, when the Communist armies poured across the 38th Parallel and threatened the very survival of the Republic of Korea.

We honor all those who rallied to her defense, the fallen whose names are etched in sacred memorials, and veterans like General Paik who join you tonight.

We salute the resolve of the people of the Republic of Korea, who, from the ruins of war, built an economic miracle, a vibrant democracy, a society where a child could grow up to be Secretary-General of the United Nations, and a nation that is now a regional and global leader.

We thank all those who have stood with the Republic of Korea to keep her safe and strong, especially our Korean American friends, the Korea Society, and generations of Americans in uniform, including my friend, General Colin Powell.

Most of all, we reaffirm the enduring alliance between our countries, an alliance rooted in shared sacrifice, common values, mutual interest, and mutual respect, an alliance that is stronger than ever. And, as we have seen in recent weeks, our alliance is needed more than ever.

The attack on the navy vessel *Cheonan* was an unprovoked act of aggression by North Korea. As I have told President Lee, I and the American people offer our deepest condolences, especially to the families of the 46 sailors who were lost.

To our friends from the Republic of Korea who join you tonight, I say this: You and President Lee have shown extraordinary patience and self-restraint. You have shown the world what true strength and confidence looks like. And you have the full support of your friend and ally, the United States of America.

In the days ahead, our Governments will continue to consult closely, and I look forward to meeting with President Lee this month in Toronto. Together, we will ensure our readiness and deter aggression. We will work with allies and partners to hold North Korea accountable, including at the United Nations Security Council, making it clear that security and respect for North Korea will never come through aggression, but only by upholding its obligations. And as I said during my visit to Seoul and Osan last fall, the commitment of the United States to the security and defense of the Republic of Korea will never waver.

Going forward, we will pursue our shared vision of our alliance for the 21st century. As the host of the G–20 summit in November and the nuclear security summit in 2 years, the Republic of Korea will continue to assume its rightful place as a leader on the world stage.

And every step of the way, our two nations will be guided by the same sense of solidarity and shared sacrifice that has defined us for 60 years: *Katchi kapshida*—we go together. We go together in these difficult days, and we will continue to go together in the months and years to come.

Thank you, and have a wonderful evening.

NOTE: The President's remarks were videotaped at approximately 4:55 p.m. on May 27 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast at the dinner on June 2 in New York City. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. Paik Sun-yup, former Republic of Korea Army Chief of Staff; Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations; and former Secretary of State Colin L. Powell. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Extension of Benefits to Same-Sex Domestic Partners of Federal Employees

June 2, 2010

Last year, I issued a Presidential memorandum that instructed the Office of Personnel Management and the Secretary of State to extend certain available benefits they had identified to gay and lesbian Federal employees and their families under their respective jurisdictions. Among those benefits were long-term care insurance and expanded sick leave for civil service employees and medical care abroad, eligibility for employment at posts, cost-of-living adjustments abroad and medical evacuation for domestic partners of Foreign Servicemembers. In that same memorandum, I called upon the Federal agencies to undertake a comprehensive review and to identify any additional benefits that could be extended to the same-sex domestic partners of Federal employees under existing law. That process has now concluded, and I am proud to announce that earlier today, I signed a memorandum that requires executive agencies to take immediate action to extend to the same-sex domestic partners of Federal employees a number of meaningful benefits, from family assistance services to hardship transfers to relocation expenses. It also requires agencies that extend any new benefits to employees' opposite-sex spouses to make those benefits available on equal terms to employees' same-sex domestic partners to the extent permitted by law.

While this memorandum is an important step on the path to equality, my administration continues to be prevented by existing Federal law from providing same-sex domestic partners with the full range of benefits enjoyed by heterosexual married couples. That is why today I renew my call for swift passage of an important piece of legislation pending in both Houses of Congress, the "Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act." This legislation, championed by Senators Joe Lieberman and Susan Collins and Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin, would extend to the same-sex domestic partners of Federal employees the full range of benefits currently enjoyed by Federal employees' opposite-sex spouses. I look forward to signing it into law.

Remarks at PBS's "Paul McCartney: The Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song In Performance at the White House"

June 2, 2010

Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. The show's not over. [*Laughter*] To all the tremendous artists from all the genres and backgrounds who've joined us tonight to pay tribute to the one and only Sir Paul McCartney, thank you so much. Stevie Wonder, the Jonas Brothers, Faith Hill, Emmylou Harris, Lang Lang, Herbie Hancock, Elvis Costello, Jack White, Corinne Bailey Rae, David Grohl, and the funnyman, Jerry Seinfeld, give it up for them.

We also want to thank the Gershwin family, as well as the Library of Congress and Dr. James Billington, as well as PBS for helping to put this together. Dr. Billington has done extraordinary work at the Library of Congress, and his deep commitment to preserving America's cultural heritage for future generations is something that we all treasure.

We have a number of Members of Congress, number of dignitaries here tonight. I want to make special mention of our outstanding

Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi. You will not find a bigger supporter of the arts than Nancy Pelosi, and so we're grateful for that.

Even as we gather here tonight to present this annual award for extraordinary contributions to American music and culture—that's right, we stole you, Paul—[*laughter*]—it goes without saying that this has been a very difficult time. We've gone through a difficult year and a half, and right now our thoughts and our prayers are with friends in another part of the country that is so rich in musical heritage, the people of the Gulf Coast, who are dealing with something that we simply have not seen before. And it's heartbreaking. And we reaffirm, I think, together, our commitment to see to it that their lives and their communities are made whole again.

But part of what gets us through tough times is music, the arts, the ability to capture that essential kernel of ourselves, that part of us that sings even when times are hard. And it's fitting that the Library has chosen to present this year's Gershwin Prize for Popular Song to a man whose father played Gershwin compositions for him on the piano, a man who grew up to become the most successful songwriter in history, Sir Paul McCartney.

Now, by its very definition, popular music is fleeting. Rarely is it composed with an eye towards standing the test of time. Rarer still does it actually achieve that distinction. And that's what makes Paul's career so legendary.

It's hard to believe that it's been nearly half a century since four lads from Liverpool first landed on our shores and changed everything overnight. And I have to share this story. While we were sitting here, I learned that the bass that Paul was playing onstage is the same bass that he played at "The Ed Sullivan Show," which he told me it cost him 30 pounds. He says he suspects it's worth a little more now. [*Laughter*]

But the Beatles, they weren't the first rock stars. They'd be the first to say that others had opened that door for them. But they blew the walls down for everybody else. In a few short years, they had changed the way that we listened to music, thought about music, and performed music forever. They helped to lay the soundtrack for an entire generation, an era of endless possibility and of great change.

And over the four decades since, Paul McCartney has not let up, touring the world with the band Wings or on his own, rocking everything from small halls to Super Bowls. He's composed hundreds of songs over the years, with John Lennon, with others, or on his own. Nearly 200 of those songs made the charts—think about that—and stayed on the charts for a cumulative total of 32 years. [*Laughter*] And his gifts have touched billions of lives.

As he later confessed of the Beatles' first appearance on "The Ed Sullivan Show," where he carried that bass out—that one evening that changed everything—Paul said, "Luckily, we didn't know what America was. We just knew our dream of it, or we probably would have been too intimidated."

Tonight it is my distinct pleasure to present America's highest award for popular music on behalf of a grateful nation—grateful that a young Englishman shared his dreams with us—Sir Paul McCartney.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:36 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 3.

Remarks at the United States-India Strategic Dialogue Reception
June 3, 2010

The President. Thank you very much. Good evening, everyone. *Namaste*.

Audience members. Namaste.

The President. I want to thank Secretary Clinton for your outstanding leadership. And I want to thank Minister Krishna for both the kind words and the incredible work that you've put in to trying to strengthen even more and deepen even more the relationship between the two largest democracies in the world.

Secretary Clinton, I think as you may be aware, is a great admirer of India, and I know

the sentiment is shared in return. In fact, I'm told that one of the Secretary's favorite restaurants in Delhi added a new item to the menu—[*laughter*]—the "Hillary Platter." [*Laughter*] This is true. Now, what does it have, chapati? Is it——

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. It's got all kinds of things. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Mr. President, you must try it when you go to India.

The President. I will try this in India. [*Laughter*]

Now, it's been said—and Hillary alluded to this—that there are two kinds of people in the world: those who do the work and those who take the credit. There's a corollary to the saying: Try to be in the first group because there's much less competition. [*Laughter*] It's a lot less crowded. [*Laughter*]

Well, Prime Minister Singh and I are very proud to take credit for our two nations forging an unprecedented partnership through this strategic dialogue. But tonight I wanted to come by and express my gratitude to all of you, not only Secretary Clinton and Minister Krishna, but also everybody in attendance, who are actually doing the hard work of advancing the goals that Prime Minister Singh and I set forward in our bilateral meetings. I want to not only thank Minister Rao—Minister Krishna, but I also want to thank Secretary Rao and members of the Indian delegation; our two wonderful Ambassadors, Meera Shankar—where'd she go?—there she is—as well as my great friend, Tim Roemer; and leaders from across my administration.

And I want to thank everybody who's here from India and the United States who works every day to bring our countries even closer together, leaders in business, in civil society, academia, faith groups, especially our many friends from our very strong, very proud, very vibrant Indian American community.

I was just telling Minister Krishna that right before I came here, I was congratulating the National Spelling Bee champion, who was a young—Indian American young lady. And her parents could not have been prouder. And it just was a wonderful reminder of how strong the bonds between our two countries are.

Michelle and I were honored to welcome Prime Minister Singh and Mrs. Kaur to the White House for the very first official state visit of my Presidency. It was a state visit that demonstrated that our relations with India are at the highest of priorities for my administration and for me, personally, as President of the United States.

I said then that India is a leader in Asia and around the world. It's a rising power and a responsible global power. That's why I firmly believe that the relationship between the United States and India will be a defining partnership in the 21st century.

The new National Security Strategy that I released last week makes this absolutely clear: A fundamental pillar of America's comprehensive engagement with the world involves deepening our cooperation with 21st-century centers of influence, and that includes India.

Moreover, the relationship between the United States and India is fundamentally unique because, as our strategy explains, we share common interests, but we also share common values as the world's two largest democracies and as countries that are rich in diversity, with deep and close connections among our people.

In other words, the United States values our partnership not because of where India is on a map, but because of what we share and where we can go together. India is indispensable to the future that we seek, a future of security and prosperity for all nations. That's why a third of my Cabinet has already visited India, not only for the chapatis. [*Laughter*] That is why officials from across my administration are part of this strategic dialogue. That's why I want to thank you for the progress that we've made together since Prime Minister Singh's visit.

We're deepening our economic cooperation on finance and investment and the trade that creates jobs in both of our countries. And I look forward to working with Prime Minister Singh and our fellow G–20 partners this month in Toronto as we work to foster economic growth that is both balanced and sustained.

With our agreement on fuel reprocessing, we're moving ahead with our civil nuclear agreement. We're expanding our green partner-

ship to promote green buildings, energy efficiency, and the sustainable development that creates jobs and reduces poverty. And as we strive to implement our Copenhagen commitments, we'll be working together to ensure a successful climate conference in Mexico later this year.

We're cooperating more closely than ever before against transnational threats. This includes, as Minister Krishna alluded to, making progress for the Afghan people and preventing terrorism, whether it's in Manhattan or in Mumbai. It includes securing vulnerable nuclear materials, a goal we advanced at our Nuclear Security Summit, where I thanked Prime Minister Singh for committing India to building a new center of excellence for nuclear energy and security. And our efforts include a stronger global nonproliferation regime where all nations live up to their obligations.

We're broadening partnerships between our people, especially in science, technology, and global health. More students are taking advantage of our expanded Fulbright-Nehru program. We're working to expand ties between our universities and community colleges. And we're partnering on agriculture and research to reduce global hunger and to share India's incredible progress with other countries.

Finally, as global partners, we're going to sustain this momentum at the highest levels. During his state visit, the Prime Minister graciously invited me and my family to visit India this year, and I happily accepted. And as I confirmed to him when we spoke last week, I'm delighted to announce tonight that I plan to visit India in early November, so—[*applause*]. I look forward to advancing our partnership, to experiencing all that India and its people and its incredible ancient culture have to offer—and I intend to create an "Obama Platter." [*Laughter*]

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Yes. As I look ahead to my visit, I've got another quote that matches up pretty well with Mark Twain's. This is a scholar from Europe who traveled to India more than a century ago, and he said, "Whatever sphere of the human mind you may select for your special study, whether it be language, or religion, or mythology, or philosophy, whether it be law or customs, primitive art or science, you have to go to India." Because, he said, "some of the most valuable and instructive material of the history of man are treasured up in India and India only."

So when it comes to the sphere of our work—building a future of greater prosperity, opportunity, and security for our people—there is no doubt: I have to go to India. [*Laughter*] But even more, I am proud to go to India, and I look forward to the history that we will make together, progress that will be treasured not just by this generation, but by generations to come.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:37 p.m. at the State Department. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of External Affairs Somanahalli Mallaiah Krishna and Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao of India; India's Ambassador to the U.S. Meera Shankar; U.S. Ambassador to India Timothy J. Roemer; and 2010 Scripps National Spelling Bee champion Anamika Veeramani and her parents Alagaiya and Malar Veeramani.

Remarks at K. Neal International Trucks, Inc., in Hyattsville, Maryland
June 4, 2010

The President. Good morning, everybody.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. Well, let me just—please, everybody, have a seat. Have a seat. The—it is wonderful to be here. And I want to make a couple of quick acknowledgments. This guy behind me, you may know him—[*laughter*]—he's the Vice President of the United States, Joe Biden. You got Maryland's Lieutenant Governor, Anthony Brown, is here; got the mayor of Hyattsville, William Gardiner. And of course we've got to acknowledge

the big man here—[*laughter*]—and he is big—[*laughter*]—owner of K. Neal International, Stephen Neal.

Now, I want to thank K. Neal for having us here today, giving us a quick tour and having us look at all these trucks. [*Laughter*] This is a business that has been selling commercial trucks for over 40 years. This company employs workers from all over the greater Washington area. After 2 years of recession that caused so much pain in so many communities, this is also an example of a company that is starting to see business pick up again.

I was talking to Stephen, and he told me that rental and lease sales have improved, that there's a pent-up demand out there for new equipment, and you've added workers over the last few months. And Stephen said if things keep on going well, he'll add more in the months ahead.

Now, we're hearing more and more stories like that all across America. A lot of businesses were hit hard during this downturn, but they're starting to hire again. Workers who were laid off, they're starting to get their jobs back. Companies that were almost forced to close their doors are making plans to expand and invest in new equipment.

And this progress is reflected in the monthly jobs reports that we get each month. We received one today. In May, the economy added 431,000 jobs. Now, this is the fifth month in a row that we've seen job gains. And while we recognize that our recovery is still in its early stages and that there are going to be ups and downs in the months ahead—things never go completely in a smooth line—this report is a sign that our economy is getting stronger by the day.

Now, I want to emphasize that most of the jobs this month that we're seeing in the statistics represent workers who've been hired to complete the 2010 census. Now, these—so these are temporary jobs that are only going to last until the fall, and that may be reflected in future jobs reports. But even if you put those temporary jobs aside, there's no doubt that we saw another month of private sector job growth. And that is obviously critical, because when businesses are hiring again, people start spending again. That in turn gives businesses more and more incentive to grow.

Now, this doesn't mean that the recession is over for the millions of Americans who are still out of work or the millions more who are still struggling to make ends meet. No words, no statistics can take away the pain and the anxiety that a family feels because of this downturn. That can only be relieved with a steady paycheck and the security that a steady job brings.

What these numbers do mean, though, is that we're moving in the right direction. The economic policies that we put in place are working. An economy that was shrinking at a scary rate when I was sworn in as President has now been growing for three consecutive quarters. We were losing 750,000 jobs a month during the winter of last year. We've now added jobs for 6 out of the last 7 months.

The taxpayer money it cost to shore up the financial sector and the auto industry is being repaid. I know it was unpopular, but it was the right thing to do. And both GM and Chrysler are adding shifts and operating at a profit, which nobody would have imagined just a year ago.

The question now is, how do we keep this momentum going? How do we keep adding jobs, raising incomes? How do we keep growing not just our economy, but growing our middle class?

Now, in the short term, we have to keep creating the conditions for companies like K. Neal to succeed, to keep growing, to keep hiring. Because of a bill I signed into law a few months ago, businesses are now eligible for tax cuts for hiring unemployed workers. Companies are also able to write off more of their investments in new equipment. And as part of health reform, 4 million small businesses recently received a postcard in their mailbox telling them that they will be eligible for health care tax cuts this year and that those tax cuts could be worth tens of thousands of dollars to those companies.

I've also urged Congress to cut more taxes for small businesses and pass a small-business lending fund so that small businesses can get the incentives and the credit that they need to create jobs and grow. I believe it's absolutely critical that we extend unemployment insur-

ance for several more months so that Americans who've been laid off, through no fault of their own, get the support they need to provide for their families and they can maintain their health insurance until they're rehired. And we should provide further support so that States are not cutting back on jobs and vital services, as well as incentives to create clean energy jobs.

Now, in the long run—all that's in the short term. That's still part of the emergency effort to help build the economy and grow it coming out of the recession. But in the long run, we need to invest in the technologies and innovation that will lead to the jobs and industries of tomorrow.

So I want to introduce to you to everybody who's here—we've got Dan Ustian, who is the president of Navistar. Dan, stand up. Now, Navistar is a company that sometimes does business with K. Neal International. And for months, Navistar's Indiana manufacturing plant has been working on an electric delivery truck that's fueled entirely by plug-in power. In fact, I visited the plant before it had produced its very first truck. And my understanding, Dan, is——

Daniel C. Ustian. We're ready to go.

The President. We're ready to go. Thanks to the investments that we made in the Recovery Act, it just delivered its first truck a few weeks ago. Now, this is a plant that gave jobs to unemployed factory workers, and they're now part of a cutting-edge industry that will create even more jobs and businesses in the months and years ahead.

That's what the future can look like. If we keep on making investments in research and development, in technology and clean energy, products and industries that we haven't even imagined yet can find a home right here in the United States of America. And if we provide our citizens with the education and training they need to do these jobs, we're again going to see rising incomes and a growing middle class. That's what we can do to make this economy stronger, rebuild it even stronger than it was before.

And I have to say that Joe Biden oversaw the execution of our Recovery Act and hasn't gotten a lot of credit for it, but it has been scandal free; the money has been spent on time.

I was just talking to Stephen, and as he indicated, what the Recovery Act did was to help—during a bad winter, during a tough time—helped him to keep that business, if not growing, then at least stable. And it helped him keep folks on the job that otherwise might have lost their jobs. And Joe deserves a lot of credit for that, so give Joe Biden a big round of applause. [*Applause*]

Vice President Joe Biden. Thank you.

The President. By the way, Joe says he used to be able to drive some of these trucks. [*Laughter*]

Vice President Biden. That's true. Had my shoulder—[*inaudible*].

The President. But I would suggest he not—not to lend him a car right—that was a long time ago. [*Laughter*]

Vice President Biden. Hey, man.

The President. Now, let me tell you what we can't do. We can't go backwards. What we can't do is go back—now that we're starting to climb out of this hole that was dug for us, we can't go back to the very same policies that failed us in the last decade, the same policies that led us into that hole.

Think about it. We've already tried scaling back our investments in clean energy and education and innovation so that we could give tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans and the biggest corporations, and that didn't work. We already tried putting industry insiders in charge of oversight. Didn't work. We already tried stripping away rules and regulations that kept Wall Street banks and oil companies in bounds. We let them play by their own rules instead, and it didn't work.

So we already know where these ideas led us. And we're going to have a choice as a nation moving forward. We're going to be able to return, if we want, to the failed economic policies of the past, policies that gave us record deficits and declining incomes and sluggish job growth even before the recession, policies that led, in fact, to us almost going into a depression. We can take that road again, or we can decide we want to move forward. We can

keep building a stronger economy. We can keep pursuing the policies that have started to create jobs again, policies that invest in companies like K. Neal, policies that invest in companies like Navistar, policies that invest in our people and in our future.

So I don't know about you, I don't want to go backwards. I want to move forward. And I believe that the American people want to move forward as well. This economy hasn't returned to prosperity yet, but we're heading in the right direction. There are going to be some ups and downs. There are going to be some months where people start worrying that maybe we're not out of the hole yet. But if we remain determined, if we stick to it, if we stay the course of investing in our people and businesses like K. Neal that are the heart and soul of America, then I'm absolutely positive we can succeed. And with your help, with the hard work and ingenuity of workers and entrepreneurs like the ones at this company, I'm absolutely positive we're going to have a brighter future.

So thanks for the great work you do. Thanks to Joe Biden for the great work that he does. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:43 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Stephen W. Neal, president and chief executive officer, K. Neal International Trucks, Inc. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Honoring the 2009 Major League Soccer Champion Real Salt Lake
June 4, 2010

Hello, everybody. Please have a seat. Well, welcome to the White House. And congratulations on winning your first MLS Cup championship and for bringing the State of Utah its first professional sports title in almost 40 years. That's a pretty big deal. You can give them a round of applause for that again.

I want to acknowledge the Senator from the great State of Utah, Senator Bennett, who is here. He is incredibly proud of this team—too tall to play soccer. [*Laughter*]

I want to congratulate Dave Checketts for his leadership and for dedicating his career to expanding the world of professional sports. And, of course, I want to congratulate the players and coaches from Real Salt Lake.

I know that this team had a pretty unlikely journey to get here. You qualified for the playoffs on the last day of the season with a losing record. [*Laughter*] That's cutting it a little close, guys. [*Laughter*] You beat your biggest rival, took down the defending champions on your way to the title game. And with the cup on the line, you held two of the game's biggest stars scoreless in regulation and went on to win in a shootout, all of which goes to show that in Major League Soccer, there's no such thing as a foregone conclusion.

Now, you did it because, in the words of Coach Kreis—and I have to say this is one of the rare coaches that I see in these events who I think might be able to still play—[*laughter*]—he looks very fit. [*Laughter*] But Coach Kreis said, "We believe in each other as much as everybody disbelieved in us." For this group, the team really is the star. This is a team that shows up every day, puts in an honest effort no matter what the critics say or how steep the odds. And last season, that attitude paid off.

For a group that prides itself on unity, I'm a little hesitant to acknowledge any individuals. But there are a few people who did an exceptional job of helping this team go all the way.

I want to congratulate Robbie Findley for becoming Salt Lake's alltime leading scorer and for being named to this year's World Cup roster. So give Robbie a big round of applause. Where is he?

Team member. South Africa.

The President. He's already left. I just realized I met Robbie last week, when the World Cup team was here. I thought he might be stopping by. [*Laughter*]

We are incredibly proud, obviously, of everyone who's going to be representing our country this month. Joe Biden will be leading the American delegation to the World Cup, and the rest

of us are going to be cheering them on here at home.

But it is because of the efforts of Robbie and the rest of the folks here today that soccer continues to get more popular every year in the United States. And as the father of soccer-playing daughters, I can tell you that it shows no signs of slowing down.

I want to recognize Nick Rimando for being named MVP of the championship game and for being such a force in goal for this team. And, of course, I want to congratulate Coach Kreis for becoming the youngest MLS manager ever to win the cup—just 2 years after retiring—see, I wasn't wrong—[*laughter*]—just 2 years after retiring as the third leading scorer in league history—and for doing it with such a diverse group of players.

This team includes members from Argentina, Armenia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Haiti, Holland, Jamaica, and the United States. And so besides overcoming language and cultural barriers, this is also a team that understands their responsibilities aren't limited to the soccer field or even our own borders.

And that's why yesterday afternoon they put on a clinic to teach local kids some soccer skills, while also raising awareness about the threat of malaria around the globe. They helped educate young people about the importance of preventing disease and how we can do our part to help the less fortunate, even if they live thousands of miles away.

So congratulations to all of you for an outstanding season, for the championship. To everybody back in Salt Lake, cherish your team. And best of luck this season. All right?

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:05 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to David W. Checketts, owner, Jason Kreis, head coach, Robbie Findley, forward, and Nick Rimando, goalkeeper, Real Salt Lake; and David Beckham, midfielder, and Landon Donovan, forward, Los Angeles Galaxy.

Remarks Following a Briefing on the Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico and an Exchange With Reporters in New Orleans, Louisiana

June 4, 2010

The President. Well, I want to thank everybody who participated in this meeting. Most of the folks here were in the meeting that we had last week. One of the encouraging signs is that, at least with respect to Louisiana, it seems that we've made some progress.

The most obvious area of progress was, coming out of the meeting last week, trying to bridge what seemed to be differences with respect to the berm, the barrier islands that Governor Jindal had proposed, and we now have that authority, and dredging is beginning. And now we want to make sure that BP is paying up, but it seems like we're making progress on that front.

I know that a lot of the press may be curious about what's happening in terms of the attempts to cap the well. I don't want to go into the technical details here. I'd prefer Thad to give an update when he has had a chance to talk directly with command and control about what's happening there. But it does appear that the cap, at least for now, is holding, that some hydrocarbons are being sent up to the surface, and that they are slowly ratcheting up the amount of oil and gas that's being extracted. They're doing it carefully so that they don't dislodge or disrupt the cap in some fashion.

We will know more over the next 24 to 48 hours. And it is way too early to be optimistic. But we're just going to keep on monitoring it, and Thad will give you a more thorough briefing when he knows more.

We spent a lot of time here just talking about the logistics of the response on the shore as oil begins to come in. And everybody here has particular concerns because we've got limited resources. We're trying to get more boom, for example, into the places that are needed. We deployed initially a lot of boom here in Louisiana. That meant that some in Alabama wasn't where it was supposed to be. Governor

Riley has been appropriately concerned—that's a mild way of putting it—about what's being done with respect to Alabama plans. And what I told him was, is that Thad Allen will be meeting with him individually with respect to the Alabama plan, and if he's not satisfied with the answers that are given over the course of this weekend, then he's going to call me and we're going to meet and sort this out.

Here in Louisiana, where the oil has hit most rapidly, there are still areas where, for example, the mayor here was talking to fishermen; they want to try to build up some barriers to estuaries and areas that are particularly vulnerable. Thad Allen is going to be following up with each of the parish presidents in terms of figuring out what's going on.

One of the things that we've done to make sure that organizationally things are working the way they should is we now have a Coast Guard official who is stationed with each parish president and we actually have a BP representative who is stationed with each parish president so that they have direct access to making sure that any information, any problems that they've got are immediately being shot up to Thad and he can respond quickly. And we want to set that up not just in Louisiana, but that's true in Alabama as well as in Florida. We want county equivalents to have that same kind of representation and rapid response.

We also talked about claims. And this is an area where I think everybody has a lot of concerns. My understanding is, is that BP has contracted for $50 million worth of TV advertising to manage their image during the course of this disaster. In addition, there are reports that BP will be paying $10.5 billion—that's billion with a "b"—in dividend payments this quarter.

Now, I don't have a problem with BP fulfilling its legal obligations. But I want BP to be very clear, they've got moral and legal obligations here in the Gulf for the damage that has been done. And what I don't want to hear is, when they're spending that kind of money on their shareholders and spending that kind of money on TV advertising, that they're nickel-and-diming fishermen or small businesses here in the Gulf who are having a hard time.

Now, we've assigned Federal folks to look over BP's shoulder and to work with State and local officials to make sure that claims are being processed quickly, fairly, and that BP is not lawyering up, essentially, when it comes to these claims.

They say they want to make it right. That's part of their advertising campaign. Well, we want them to make it right. And what that means is that if a fisherman got a $5,000 check, and the next time he goes in, because it's a new month, suddenly BP is saying, well, we need some documentation and this may take 6 months to process or 60 days to process or 30 days to process, for that matter, that fisherman, with all his money tied up in that boat, just may not be able to hang on for another 30 days. He may lose his boat and his livelihood.

We've heard from one of the parish presidents about a shrimp processing plant. They've got a bunch of shrimp on ice so they're selling inventory, but they're not bringing any new product in. And BP says to them, well, you know what, your sales don't seem to have declined. And they try to explain, yes, but we've had to lay off all our workers because we're not bringing any new shrimp in and our cupboards are going to be bare in the next several weeks. BP has got to be able to anticipate that.

So the key point I'm making here is this has been a disaster for this region, and people are understandably frightened and concerned about what the next few months and the new few years may hold. I have, absolutely, confidence about the resilience of this area long term, but if we can make sure that BP is doing the right thing on the front end, it's going to make it an awful lot easier for us to fully recover on the back end. And by the way, it may end up being cheaper for BP.

And so Thad, who's interacting with BP on a regular basis, I think, is emphasizing this. My administration is emphasizing it. I want them to hear directly from me and I want the public to hear from me: They need to make sure that they are following through on these claims in a expeditious, fair way. And if they're not, then we are going to stay on them about it.

We've already submitted one bill, and they haven't said that they're not paying it, so I don't

want to anticipate problems. But we are already starting to see at the local level folks experiencing problems. And we don't want those problems to build up; we want to nip that at the bud right now.

And the fact that BP can pay a $10.5 billion dividend payment is indicative of how much money these folks have been making. And given the fact that they didn't fully account for the risks, I don't want somebody else bearing the costs of those risks that they took. I want to make sure that they're paying for it. All right?

The last point I wanted to make is we did talk about what the environmental quality is down here right now. Lisa Jackson has been down here all week, and she went all across the country—or all across the State of Louisiana. She's going to be monitoring what's going on in Alabama and Florida as well.

So far, the air quality, water quality is continually being tested and doesn't seem to be much elevated above normal levels. But I want to emphasize something that she just told us, and that is, people who are onsite involved in cleanup, they have to be mindful of the fact that we're dealing with toxins here. This could be—this could make people very sick if they're not careful. They've got to get the appropriate training. They need the appropriate equipment. If they get sick, we now have health centers that are stationed at each of these points.

Lisa, do you want to talk about that briefly?

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. Yes, sir. We have health and safety officers and stations at each muster point. So if someone does come back in and feels in any way that they've been exposed, or even if they just don't feel well, the first thing to do is to report it, sir, so that we have a record of it, we can track it down, and we can ensure that they're not in any way penalized for reporting and making sure that they put their health and the health of their family first.

The President. Okay. Again, I want to just emphasize, everybody down here—every local official, every State official—is working as hard as they can. Our Federal teams are working as hard as they can. There are still going to be glitches in the response. There are still going to be arguments and disagreements between local and State, State and Federal, between everybody and BP, between States and States in terms of how we're allocating some of these resources. But I think that Thad Allen has committed to me and the people of the Gulf that we're going to cut through any bureaucratic redtape, any problems that we've got, and we will fix problems that have been identified.

And that was the commitment I made last week. Some of the problems have been fixed; some new ones have resurfaced. We'll fix those too. And we'll keep on coming back until we have dealt with an unprecedented crisis.

But I'm very thankful to everybody for the constructive meeting and the constructive approach that I think everybody is taking in terms of solving this problem.

All right. Thank you, everybody.

Moratorium on Offshore Oil Drilling

Q. Mr. President, what did you say to the parish presidents about the difficulty—the economic difficulties from the drilling moratorium?

The President. We had a conversation about that as well, and what I told them is very simple. When I made the decision to issue the moratorium, we knew that that would have an economic impact. But what I also knew is, is that there was no way that we can go about business as usual when we've discovered that companies like BP, who had provided assurances that they had fail-safe, backup, redundant systems, in fact, not only didn't have fail-safe systems but had no idea what to do when those fail-safe systems broke down.

Now, I announced this week that Bob Graham and Bill Reilly, two respected individuals who have experience both on the environmental side as well as in the energy sector, are going to be examining over the next 6 months what went wrong, but more important, forward looking, how do we, in fact, increase domestic oil production without seeing the kinds of disasters that we are all witnessing on television day in, day out.

I think Governor Jindal, I know other parish presidents, expressed concern about the immediate economic impact. And what I said to

them is the same thing I said to Graham and Reilly, which is, if they can front-load some of the analysis of what went wrong and how you would solve what has happened and what can happen, and you can do that more quickly than 6 months, then let me know. Don't hold the results of your review for 6 months and then tell me. Tell me when you find out.

But what I told the folks in this room was I'm not going to cut corners on it, and I'm not going to press them to move faster than it would take to do an accurate, independent job based on sound science, because I do not want to see this thing repeated again. And the American people don't, and I promise you the people of the Gulf don't want to see it either.

And as difficult as it may be, it's important for us to do this right, because if we don't do it right, then what you could end up seeing is an even worse impact on the oil industry down here, which is so important to so many jobs.

And I think everybody here emphasized—and I want to be clear—I didn't hear anybody here saying that they want unsafe operations on these rigs, and they certainly don't want to see a repeat of this disaster. They did ask, "Can we do it faster?" And what I said to them was the same thing that I said to Graham and Reilly, which is, you do it as fast as it takes to do it right.

All right? Thank you, everybody.

BP p.l.c. Payments

Q. Do you want BP to pay that dividend? Are you calling on them not to?

The President. Thank you, guys.

I want to make sure that they are paying the folks in Louisiana for the havoc that they've wreaked, and the folks in Alabama and the folks in Florida. I don't want them nickel-and-diming people down here. I want them to abide by their obligations to their shareholders; I want them to abide by the obligations to the people down here as well.

All right. Thank you, folks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:29 p.m. at Louis Armstrong International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Piyush "Bobby" Jindal of Louisiana; Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG, in his capacity as national incident commander for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill; Gov. Robert R. Riley of Alabama; Mayor Mitchell J. Landrieu of New Orleans, LA; and D. Robert Graham and William K. Reilly, Co-chairs, National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling.

Remarks in a Discussion With Members of the Business Community in Grand Isle, Louisiana
June 4, 2010

The President. Everybody knows the mayor. The mayor's gathered up a group of local businesspeople. Butch, for example, owns a marina. Terry?

Terry Vegas. Shrimp boat.

The President. Shrimp boat. Floyd?

Floyd Lasseigne. Oyster fisherman.

The President. Oyster fisherman. And Patti has a convenience store; Chris is the owner of this—the bait shop.

And so we were just talking about the economic impact that this is having. And just to give you a sense of perspective, Terry's been shrimping out here for 46 years. His grandfather did it before him. And right now things are completely shut off for him.

Floyd, his—he leases the oyster beds from the State. The State now, obviously—and properly so—has said, you can't be pulling seafood out of these waters right now. He's got oil that's starting to seep in into these oil—oyster beds where he's got leases, and as a consequence, Floyd's trying to figure out how long this damage is going to last.

Mr. Lasseigne. I'm a fourth generation, and I got a son; that's a fifth generation. So you know, sir, we've been—some of these leases been—[*inaudible*]—been in the family for 100 years.

The President. Butch was talking about the marina and making the point that these 3, 4 months are basically when all the business comes down. And normally, he—all his slips would be full right now—sounds like about only a third of them are full, and it may get worse from there.

Dudley A. "Butch" Gaspard, Jr. All our charter boat guys are hurting real bad too, because all the charter boat business is shut down. They make a living off of taking people out fishing.

The President. So right now, Butch isn't taking a salary so he can pay his employees, but he doesn't know how long that's going to last.

Then you got Patti, who owns a convenience store. Obviously, that store is dependent on these guys—the boats coming in, filling up with gas, buying ice, buying soft drinks. So she's down 85 percent on her business right now.

So this is just a sampling of what's happening out here. And part of what we talked about was what we can do to prevent oil from coming into these areas. Part of what we talked about is—in terms of the relief effort—can we deploy folks who've got boats here to help save their livelihoods right where they are, as opposed to having to go to other places. And so I'm going to ask Admiral Allen to make sure that he's looking at where people are being deployed, where vessels are being deployed, to make sure the people who know the waters best end up being hired there.

And the final thing is, we've got to talk about—what we talked about up in New Orleans—which is, are we making sure that claims are being processed effectively. And right now, after that initial $5,000 check that BP wrote, the claim center's been taking in claims, but it sounds—based on what I'm hearing—that there's a lot of process, but not much actual action, and so we're going to see if we can do something better on that.

But the main point I think I want to make—and, Mayor, feel free to chime in on this—is these are communities that have had a way of life for generations, and what people are concerned about right now is not just the damage done in the short term—because these are some tough folks. They've been through hurricanes and—Butch and Terry——

Participant. Low prices.

The President. Low prices——

Participant. High cost of fuel.

The President. Terry was talking about how, if the walls stay up on a building around here, a hurricane comes, you wash out the mud, and a week later, everybody's back in business. So these are folks who are used to hardship and know how to deal with it. But what they're concerned about right now is, is this going to have a lasting impact that they can't recover from? And that's why Thad and the rest of the Federal team is so committed to making sure that everything that can be done will be done.

This is going to be bad no matter what we do. But we can hopefully minimize the damage, but it requires good coordination between the State, Federal, and local, and it requires BP to make sure that, as I said up in New Orleans, folks aren't getting nickled-and-dimed, and that we're doing what we need to do early to prevent the worst-case scenario from happening later.

So, Mr. Mayor, anything you want to add?

Mayor David Camardelle. Well, again, the main concern is to block these five passes that we talked about. The barges are available, Admiral, right here and all along the coast, from Venice to Harvey Canal, all the way back to Homer. They're standing by, and hopefully, we can get the President to get on BP—between both of you guys—so we can put some barges there temporary to block these passes so we can save our neighboring parish, Lafourche Parish, St. Charles Parish, Orleans Parish, Jefferson Parish, Plaquemines Parish. And just—and Jefferson Parish, where we live at—if we can block them five passes right now, these fishermen can tell you, okay, we can save—continue to saving the rest of the 2 million acres of oyster leases.

We have $2 billion worth of seafood that comes out behind me, right in this estuary—$2 billion worth. We have a billion dollars of recreational license, recreational fishing that generates to the marinas, to all the stores, all the way across Louisiana. But these guys, this woman here with the convenience store, if

we lose the estuaries in the back, we're history. And they'll tell you that.

We're born and raised—our grandfathers, grandmothers—we made a living right here behind us. There's no reason why this shrimp boat should be tied up. It ought to have skimmers on it to make sure that we can block the oil until we put these booms. And I'm asking you to——

The President. We're going to work.

Mayor Camardelle. ——push BP to do it.

The President. Now, the—last week, when I was talking to the mayor, he started choking up just talking about the fact that out of his own pocket, he was having to provide some help and some loans to his buddies, to fishermen, folks in the area. That's what we should be able to prevent. There's oil washing in, but people can help each other. And the company that's responsible can make sure that it's responding quickly and effectively.

And when the mayor told me that story, it was, I think, an example of what's happening all across this Gulf Coast. And it's going to be multiplied not just in Louisiana, but in Alabama, in Mississippi, in Florida. There are small communities like this all across the Gulf, and they've got to make sure that their voice is being heard day in, day out.

And I know that they've got a fierce advocate in Thad Allen. But I wanted you to know that behind Thad Allen stands the President of the United States.

Mayor Camardelle. Yes, sir.

The President. All right?

Mayor Camardelle. And like I said, since the last time you've been here, the Coast Guard is unbelievable. Admiral, I want you to know that. You guys are really working 24 hours for us. And you did push BP. And like I said, I'm very emotional because I'm still giving—I'm not going to cut their water off, I'm not going to cut their electricity off, and I'm not going to cut their gas off. I have one of the businesses right now that has a $5,200 electricity bill, and I'm calling energy to make sure not to cut them off.

When these businesspeople come up to you and say, "It's time to help," it's not easy. And I—Patti can tell you, I—the night before last, I told her that, "I'm going to keep you strong. I'm going to try to bring you more business." Butch calls me: "David, we need more boats. Get some more vessel of opportunities." He's fighting to save his oysters. I'm trying to keep Grand Isle alive, to try to get tours. I opened the beach Memorial Sunday at 3 o'clock—the people were calling me—so the marinas can sell a towel so these young kids can lay on the beach.

And then, watching the oil coming across the shore, and it's—they—some people think I'm better than God, you know? That's how serious this is. They'll tell you, "I live right down the street. I've been averaging 2 hours of sleep, just worrying and looking at the ceiling fan and wondering what's going to happen tomorrow and praying to God that no more oil comes on the beach."

So like Terry said earlier, his wife is sick. I bring seven people a day to—[*inaudible*]—in New Orleans in a van to cross that long bridge you crossed, and putting gas in the truck to make sure that we can keep the help. And we help each other. And we don't have no money, it don't matter. We help each other. That's what we do.

The President. Well, that's supposed to be what the entire United States does——

Mayor Camardelle. Exactly.

The President. ——is helping each other.

Mr. Vegas. We're not bitter at the oil companies for what's happening. We're just bitter at those that cut the corners and cause the havoc that we're having right now.

Participant. It's not getting cleaned up fast enough.

Participant. We thrive on the oil companies down here, and we enjoy the business.

Mayor Camardelle. We support them.

The President. Well, I think the point with the oil companies is they've got to support you the same way you support them. And they've got to make sure that—because there are a lot of folks in the oil business who do the right thing and who aren't cutting corners. We've just got to make sure that we find out what happened and that those who are responsible are held responsible, that we fix whatever's wrong. We're still going to need the oil production, but we've got to make sure that we do it in the right way, because we just can't have a situation like this happen again.

Participant. Can't have that happen all the time, no.

Participant. Have to follow the rules.

Participant. Just tell the truth.

Participant. That's right.

Participant. From day one, they lied to us—BP. They said, 1,000 barrels a day. Come to find out, they say, it's 2,000—put the tube in there, it was 5,000. Oh, it's 5,000? Now it's, what, 12,000 to 19,000 barrels a day? Just tell the people the truth, you know? That's all we want.

Mayor Camardelle. Like I said, the biggest shrimp dock in America is right here in Grand Isle; it's Blanche's Seafood. And he's completely shut down. They'll tell you, the boats are tied up. How many boats he has right now, about 100? Close to 100 boats just tied up. And you've got the Vietnamese families, you've got the true Cajun people here, and they're just sitting on the deck of the boat and just waiting on the vessel of opportunity.

And I want to respect the Admiral and BP, where, you know, they're trying. It's just since you left, they've made a big change. Since you came to me, you made a big change, and we support you for that. But we're just worried. You hear us here; we're worried. And we don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. And that's why we depend on you—both of you guys—to make sure that—and you heard them today. We don't want to be on food stamps—none of my people—we want to just untie the boat, be able to see your two daughters right here and kiss them in the evening and daddy's going to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 5 p.m. at Camardelle's Seafood. In his remarks, he referred to Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG, in his capacity as national incident commander for the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. Participating in the discussion were Dudley A. "Butch" Gaspard, Jr., coowner, Sand Dollar Marina and Sand Dollar Motel; Terry Vegas, shrimper; Floyd Lasseigne, oyster fisherman; Patti W. Rigaud, owner, A Better Buy Shell; and Chris J. Camardelle, owner, Camardelle's Seafood. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Statement on the Death of William Miranda Marin
June 4, 2010

Michelle and I were saddened to hear about the passing of William Miranda Marin. Willie will be remembered for the passion with which he served as an Adjutant General of the Puerto Rico National Guard, as a government executive committed to economic development, and as mayor of a municipality that became a model of innovative government and citizen participation. His devotion to the people he represented earned him respect from supporters and opponents alike and touched countless lives. Michelle and I will always remember the warmth with which he received us in Puerto Rico, hosting Michelle at his pride and joy, the beautiful Botanical Gardens of Caguas. His legacy lives on in those he helped to empower who continue the work of expanding opportunity for all Puerto Ricans and all Americans.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Carmen, his children William Edgardo, Luis Alexander, and Jose Juan, his grandchildren, and his entire family.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

The President's Weekly Address
June 5, 2010

I'm speaking to you from Caminada Bay in Grand Isle, Louisiana, one of the first places to feel the devastation wrought by the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. While I was here, at Ca-

mardelle's Live Bait shop, I met with a group of local residents and small-business owners, folks like Floyd Lasseigne, a fourth-generation oyster fisherman. This is the time of year when he ordinarily earns a lot of his income, but his oyster bed along the north side of Grand Isle has likely been destroyed by the spill.

Terry Vegas has a similar story. He quit the eighth grade to become a shrimper with his grandfather. Ever since, he's earned his living during shrimping season, working long, grueling days so that he could earn enough money to support himself year round. But today, the waters where he's spent his years are closed. And every day, as the spill worsens, he loses hope that he'll be able to return to the life he built. "You can put a price on a lost season," he's said, "but not a lost heritage."

The effects of the spill reach beyond the shoreline. I spoke with Patti Rigaud. For 30 years, she's owned a small convenience store, a store opened by her father. She depends on the sales generated by tourism each summer. But this year, most of the boats that would line these docks are nowhere to be seen. Dudley Gaspard, who owns the Sand Dollar Marina and Hotel, has been hit hard as well. Normally this time of year, rooms are filling up and tackle is flying off the shelves. But he too has been devastated by the decline in tourism and the suspension of fishing in the waters off the Louisiana coast.

Their stories are familiar to many in Grand Isle and throughout the Gulf region. Often, families have been here for generations, earning a living and making a life that's tied to the water, that's tied to the magnificent coasts and the natural bounty of this place. Here, this spill has not just damaged livelihoods, it's upended whole communities. And the fury people feel is not just about the money they've lost. They've been through tough times before. It's about the wrenching recognition that this time their lives may never be the same.

These folks work hard. They meet their responsibilities. But now, because of a manmade catastrophe, one that's not their fault and beyond their control, their lives have been thrown into turmoil. It's brutally unfair. It's wrong. And what I told these men and women, and what I have said since the beginning of this disaster, is that I'm going to stand with the people of the Gulf Coast until they are made whole.

That's why from the beginning, we mobilized on every front to contain and clean up this spill. I've authorized the deployment of 17,000 National Guard troops to aid in the response. More than 20,000 people are currently working around the clock to protect waters and coastlines. We've convened hundreds of top scientists and engineers from around the world. More than 1,900 vessels are in the Gulf assisting in the cleanup. And more than 4.3 million feet of boom have been deployed, with another 2.9 million feet of boom available, enough to stretch over 1,300 miles. And 17 staging areas are in place across Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida to rapidly defend sensitive shorelines. In short, this is the largest response to an environmental disaster of its kind in the history of the country.

We've also ordered BP to pay economic injury claims, and we will make sure they pay every single dime owed to the people along the Gulf Coast. The Small Business Administration has stepped in to help businesses by approving loans and allowing deferrals of existing loan payments. And this week, the Federal Government sent BP a preliminary bill for $69 million to pay back American taxpayers for some of the costs of the response so far.

In addition, after an emergency safety review, we're putting in place aggressive new operating standards for offshore drilling. And I've appointed a bipartisan commission to look into the causes of this spill. If laws are inadequate, laws will be changed. If oversight was lacking, it will be strengthened. And if laws were broken, those responsible will be brought to justice.

Now, over the last few days, BP has placed a cap over the well, and it appears they're making some progress in trying to pump oil to the surface to keep it from leaking into the water. But as has been the case since the beginning of this crisis, we're prepared for the worst, even if we hope that BP's efforts bring better news than we've received before. We also know that regardless of the outcome of this attempt, there will still be some slippage [spillage]* until the relief wells are completed. And there will continue to be a massive cleanup ahead of us.

These are hard times in Louisiana and across the Gulf Coast, an area that's seen more than its fair share of trouble. But what I've seen are communities absolutely determined to fight through this disaster as they have before, to preserve not just a way to make a living, but a way of life.

And we will fight alongside them, until the awful damage that has been done is reversed, people are back on their feet, and the great natural bounty of the Gulf Coast is restored.

Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:15 p.m. on June 4 at Camardelle's Live Bait and Boiled Seafood in Grand Isle, LA, for broadcast on June 5. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 4, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 5. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on the Nomination of James R. Clapper, Jr., To Be Director of National Intelligence

June 5, 2010

The President. Good morning, everybody. As President, I have no higher priority than the safety and security of the American people. And in an interconnected world where dangers can emerge suddenly, we have to protect ourselves against the full range of threats, from a terrorist network bent on striking our homeland to nations and violent extremists seeking weapons of mass destruction to transnational threats such as cybercriminals and narcotraffickers.

To keep America safe, my administration is strengthening and integrating every element of our national power: military and economic; diplomacy and development; homeland security, law enforcement, and intelligence. And this final element, timely, accurate intelligence, is uniquely important because it is critical to all the others.

Now, as President, I also depend on the best available intelligence for daily decisions that I make every day. In particular, I depend on the Director of National Intelligence. As DNI, Dennis Blair continued the extraordinary service that defined his entire career. During his tenure, our intelligence community became more integrated and agile, and I will always be grateful to Denny for his sense of purpose and his sense of service.

Today I am proud to announce my choice for the next Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper. With four decades of service to America, Jim is one of our Nation's most experienced and most respected intelligence professionals.

As Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, he has successfully overseen the military and civilian intelligence personnel and budgets that make up the bulk of our 16-agency intelligence community. He's improved information sharing, increased intelligence support to our troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, upheld civil liberties, and he played a key role in our effort to update and reorient our intelligence community to meet the threats of our time.

As Director of two critical organizations, the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency, and during a distinguished career in the Air Force, Jim developed an intimate understanding of our human and technical collection programs. He possesses a quality that I value in all my advisers: a willingness to tell leaders what we need to know, even if it's not what we want to hear. And Jim is a forceful champion of his fellow intelligence professionals, never forgetting what it was like to risk his own life during two combat tours during the Vietnam war.

As DNI, Jim will be my principal intelligence adviser and the leader of our intelligence community. Our intelligence communi-

* White House correction.

ty has made great strides since the 9/11 attacks. Guided by good intelligence, we've struck major blows against the leadership of Al Qaida and its terrorist affiliates, and we've disrupted many plots in our country and saved many American lives. But as we saw in the failed attack over Detroit, we need to do even better. We need to constantly evolve and adapt and improve.

That's why I ordered a series of reforms to strengthen intelligence earlier this year, and that's why I'll be looking to Jim to ensure that we have the most capable and efficient intelligence community possible. Intelligence must be collected and analyzed quickly, it must be shared and integrated effectively, and it must be acted upon decisively. That's what I expect as President, and that's what our national security demands.

In short, our intelligence community needs to work as one, integrated team that produces quality, timely, and accurate intelligence. And let's be honest: This is a tough task. But this will be Jim's core mission. He is eminently qualified, and he has my complete confidence and support.

Jim also understands the importance of working with our partners in Congress—as he has said, not merely to appear when summoned, but to keep Congress informed and to seek Members' advice and consent. Not surprisingly, the Senate has voted to confirm Jim for senior positions on four separate occasions, and each time, it has done so overwhelmingly. Given the importance of this position, the urgent threats to our Nation, and Jim's unique experience, I urge the Senate to do so again and as swiftly as possible.

I've spoken to the appropriate Senate leaders, and I've indicated that I expect this nomination to be completed during this work period. This nomination can't fall victim to the usual Washington politics. And as we go forward, my administration will continue to work with Congress to ensure that Jim and all our intelligence professionals have the authorities, resources, and support that they need to succeed.

Finally, let me say to the men and women across our intelligence community: Most Americans may never see your work, but every American is safer because of your service, and we are profoundly grateful. You have chosen to serve America. Now it's America's duty to back you up so you can fulfill the mission that we ask of you and keep this country safe. That's my promise to you as President of the United States, and that's what Jim Clapper will do as Director of National Intelligence.

So, Jim, to you and your family, who joins us here today, thank you for taking on this critical assignment. And with that, I'd invite Jim to say a few words.

Director-designate Clapper. Thank you, sir.

The President. Thank you, Jim.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:44 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Director-designate Clapper.

Statement on the Death of John R. Wooden
June 5, 2010

I'm saddened to hear of the passing of an incredible coach and an even better man, John Wooden. As a basketball fan, I remember fondly his 10 NCAA championships, his unrivaled winning streak at UCLA, and the caliber of players he mentored. But as an American, I salute the way he achieved all that success, with modesty and humility and by wholeheartedly dedicating his life to the betterment of others. Even after he became one of the game's early heroes, he worked as a high school teacher. And for the rest of his life, on and off the court, he never stopped teaching. He never stopped preparing his players and everyone he met to be their best. Despite all the records and the championships, he once said that it wasn't the tournaments or the games he missed the most, it was the practice and the preparation.

He is reunited with his beloved wife Nell now, and my thoughts and prayers are with his

children, James and Nancy, his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and all whose lives were forever changed because John Wooden lived his so well.

Remarks at a Reception Celebrating Ford's Theatre
June 6, 2010

Hello, everybody. It is a pleasure to welcome all of you to the White House. I'm going to be very brief because I know you're all looking forward to heading down the street a little bit later for a wonderful night—and Michelle just mentioned—and the women are wearing heels. [*Laughter*]

That's why I want to take a moment to thank all the performers for taking time out of their busy schedules to share their gifts with us and be part of this wonderful event. I also want to thank the Cabinet officials and Members of Congress who are with us, including Senator Reid. Thank you all for coming and for your support of this wonderful institution.

Tonight is about celebrating the great work at Ford Theatre, what it's done to preserve the legacy of our 16th President and highlight the importance of the arts and education in our own lives and in the life of our Nation.

In many ways, it's impossible to separate the history of America from the history of its music and its spoken word. Soldiers have sung as they marched to war and raised their voices again while laying a brother to rest. Lyrics on a page and voices on a stage have helped connect us across generations and across cultures, backgrounds, and faiths. Our greatest leaders, including Lincoln himself, have drawn inspiration and courage from the arts. And on a personal level, they help each of us express the joys and hardships of life while bringing us closer to each other.

This is especially true during moments of trial, and we have had a lot of trials over the past year and a half. Right now we've got brothers and sisters in the Gulf Coast who are going through an incredibly difficult time in the face of a disaster unlike any that we've ever seen of late. I want to emphasize again that we're going to do everything we can in the weeks and months and years ahead to make things right. And I know everybody here feels the same way.

But tonight we will celebrate not only music and song and performances, but we're also going to be celebrating the incredible legacy of the Ford's Theatre, celebrating some award recipients who are extraordinarily worthy and have done so much to help not just people in this country but all around the world.

So on behalf of Michelle and our entire family, I want to say how grateful I am that all of you are here. Thank you for support the theatre. We are looking forward to a wonderful evening. Good night.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:20 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 7. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Ford's Theatre Gala
June 6, 2010

Please, have a seat. Well, Michelle and I are just thrilled to be part of this spectacular evening. To the performers who lent their voices to this celebration, to the honored guests, to everyone who helped make tonight such a success, I want to say thank you.

I also want to thank the staff and supporters of Ford's Theatre for creating a place where education and the arts can thrive, and where the legacy of our Nation's greatest President will be preserved for generations.

And I especially want to thank the members of one of our Nation's most hallowed fraternities, the men who were recipients of the Medal of Honor. Please give them another round of applause. To each of those men, I want you

to know your heroism is unquestioned. Your stories are inspirational. Your actions above and beyond the call of duty have earned the admiration of a grateful nation. And we are incredibly honored that you could join us here tonight.

It's that kind of heroism that has always defined what this Nation is all about. After all, it was exactly 234 years ago that a group of patriots—farmers and merchants, lawyers, physicians—pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to an improbable experiment called America. They risked everything in the name of a few simple ideas: freedom, equality, and the right to pursue our full measure of happiness.

And even though the odds of success were not great, even though they were opposed by a powerful and far-reaching empire, these Framers had the courage to take the first steps towards what would become the greatest democracy that the world has ever known.

It was a spirit that would echo through time and space, to an Illinois rail-splitter who vowed that a government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the Earth; to a young preacher who believed that, even if he didn't get there with us, we would reach the promised land; and across an ocean, to generations of South Africans who rose up in search of the same inalienable rights that had been put to paper in this country so many years ago.

As a lawyer fighting for the rights of Black South Africans in the age of apartheid, Albie Sachs was thrown in jail without charge and was nearly killed when a bomb took part of his arm and the sight of one eye. Despite that fact, Albie knew he was part of something bigger than himself, and after returning from exile, he helped shape South Africa's Constitution, and held a spot on its nation's Constitutional Court for 15 years.

And then there's Archbishop Desmond Tutu. As a crusader for freedom, a spiritual leader, and chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and a respected statesman, he has become a symbol of kindness and hope far beyond the borders of his native land. Through it all, he has been guided by the belief that, in his words, "My humanity is bound up in yours, and we can only be human together."

There are few people more deserving of the Lincoln Medal, an honor bestowed on those who exemplify the singular focus, dedication, and generosity of spirit of our 16th President. And as we celebrate Independence Day, there are few better examples of how the spirit of our Founding Fathers did more than just create a nation, it inspired people in every corner of the globe yearning to be free.

So I want to congratulate tonight's honorees, and I thank all of you for being part of this extraordinary celebration. We thank all the talent who performed here today. We thank all the supporters of the Ford's Theatre. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:30 p.m. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 7.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting
June 7, 2010

Well, I just completed a meeting with the Cabinet that is directly in charge of dealing with the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. From the beginning, we activated 15 agencies for what is now the largest national response ever to an environmental disaster. And what we wanted to do was make sure that every agency was coordinating and that there was clarity about how we're going to proceed in the coming months.

Now, we have gotten reports that have been confirmed by our independent scientists that the top-hat mechanism that was put in place is beginning to capture some of the oil. We are still trying to get a better determination as to how much it's capturing, and we are pushing BP very hard to make sure that all the facilities are available so that as the oil is being captured, it's also being separated properly, that there are

receptacles for that oil to go, that we have thought through contingencies in case there is an emergency or a hurricane so that these mechanisms are not disrupted, and that there's a lot of redundancy built in.

But here's what we know: Even if we are successful in containing some or much of this oil, we are not going to get this problem completely solved until we actually have the relief well completed, and that is going to take a couple of more months. We also know that there's already a lot of oil that's been released and that there is going to be more oil released no matter how successful this containment effort is. And that's why it's so important for us to continue to put every asset that we have—boom, skimmers, vessels, hiring local folks and local fishermen with their facilities, equipping them with skimmers—getting every asset that we have out there to make sure that we are minimizing the amount of oil that is actually coming to shore.

Now, there are a number of other issues that were raised during this meeting that I just want to touch on. Number one, when I was down in the Gulf on Friday, meeting with fishermen and small-business owners, what is clear is that the economic impact of this disaster is going to be substantial and it is going to be ongoing. And as I said on Friday—and I want to repeat—I do not want to see BP nickel-and-diming these businesses that are having a very tough time.

Now, we've got the SBA in there helping to provide bridge loans, and we've got the Department of Commerce helping businesses to prepare and document the damages that they're experiencing. But what we also need is BP being quick and responsive to the needs of these local communities. We have individuals who have been assigned specifically to ride herd on BP, to make sure that that's happening. We want the people who are in charge of BP's claims process to be meeting with us on a regular basis. But we are going to insist that that money flows quickly, in a timely basis, so that you don't have a shrimp processor or a fisherman who's going out of business before BP finally makes up its mind as to whether or not it's going to pay out. And that's going to be one of our top priorities, because we know that no matter how successful we are over the next few weeks in some of the containment efforts, the damages are still going to be there.

The second thing we talked about quite a bit is the issue of the health of workers who are out there dealing with this spill. So far, we have seen that onshore, we are not seeing huge elevations in toxins in the air or in the water. But that may not be the case out where people are actually doing the work. And we've got to make sure that we are providing all the protections that are necessary. We've put processes in place to make sure that workers out there are getting the equipment and the training they need to protect themselves and their health. But this is something that we're going to have to continue to monitor, because there are a lot of workers out there, and increasingly, we're starting to get individuals who may not be experienced in oil cleanup, because we're trying to get an all-hands-on-deck process. We've got to make sure that they are protected.

Obviously, we're also monitoring very carefully the impact to people who are not working out there, and that's where the Environmental Protection Agency is doing constant monitoring of the air and the water quality. And we are also doing testing on the seafood to make sure that toxins aren't being introduced into the overall population.

A couple of other points I just want to make. Dr. Lubchenco of NOAA reported on convening a scientific conference to make sure that on issues like the plume that's been reported in the news and other questions about how large is this, what kind of damage do we anticipate, et cetera, that we have full transparency, that the information is out there, that it's subject to scientific review so that nobody has any surprises.

And what we're going to continue to strive for is complete transparency in real time so that as we get information, the public as a whole gets information, academics, scientists, researchers get this information in what is going to be a fluid and evolving process.

Let me just make one final point, and I think this was something that was emphasized

by everybody here, and it's something that I want to say to the American people. This will be contained. It may take some time, and it's going to take a whole lot of effort. There is going to be damage done to the Gulf Coast, and there is going to be economic damages that we've got to make sure BP is responsible for and compensates people for.

But the one thing I'm absolutely confident about is that, as we have before, we will get through this crisis. And it—one of the things that I wanted to make sure we understand is that not only are we going to control the damages to the Gulf Coast, but we want to actually use this as an opportunity to reexamine and work with States and local communities to restore the coast in ways that actually enhance the livelihoods and the quality of life for people in that area.

It's going to take some time. It's not going to be easy. But this is a resilient ecosystem. These are resilient people down on the Gulf Coast. I had a chance to talk to them, and they've gone through all kinds of stuff over the last 50, 100 years, and they bounce back. And they're going to bounce back this time. They're going to need help from the entire country. They're going to need constant, vigilant attention from this administration. That's what they're going to get.

But we are going to be—we are confident that not only are we going to be able to get past this immediate crisis, but we're going to be focusing our attention on making sure that the coast fully recovers and that eventually it comes back even stronger than it was before this crisis.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:08 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Commencement Address at Kalamazoo Central High School in Kalamazoo, Michigan

June 7, 2010

The President. Thank you, everybody. Please be seated. Hello, Giants. It is good to be here, and congratulations class of 2010. I am honored to be part of this special occasion.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. And I love you back. Let me acknowledge your extraordinary Governor, Jennifer Granholm. Superintendent Rice, thank you for your inspiring words. Your mayor, Bobby Hopewell, who I understand is a proud Kalamazoo graduate himself.

Thanks to Principal Washington for—not just for the warm introduction, but for his enthusiasm and his energy and his leadership and his nice singing voice. [*Laughter*] Thank you to all the trustees, to the alumni, to the parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, everybody who's been a part of this extraordinary place.

And I want to recognize our student speakers. Cindy, who embodies the best of our traditions in this country—arrived 3 or 4 years ago, Cindy did, and graduates as the valedictorian—this is what is continually replenishing the energy and the dynamism and the innovation of this country, and we could not be prouder of you. Thank you. And to Simon, I'm glad that, according to the Constitution, you can't run till you're 35. [*Laughter*] So I'll be long gone by then. [*Laughter*] But it gives me great confidence to know that we've got such incredible young leaders who are going to be remaking the world in so many different ways.

Now, recently, an article from your local paper, the Kalamazoo Gazette, was brought to my attention. And it ran just after this school had been chosen as one of the six finalists in our Race to the Top Commencement Challenge. And for those who aren't aware of it, this is a contest to highlight schools that promote academic excellence, personal responsibility, and that best prepare students for college and careers. And this article in the Gazette quoted a young lady named Kelsey Wilson—where is—is Kelsey here? She's right over there? Anyway——

Audience members. She's here.

The President. She's over there? Hey, Kelsey. How are you? [*Laughter*]

So Kelsey was quoted as saying, "We're the kind of school that never gets credit for what we do. And our school is amazing." This is what Kelsey said: "Our school is amazing."

Well, Kelsey, class of 2010, members of the Kalamazoo community, I'm here tonight because after three rounds of competition, with more than a thousand schools, and more than 170,000 votes cast, I know—and America knows—what you've done at Kalamazoo Central. You are amazing! We know. We know. Our amazing Secretary of Education Arne Duncan knows. Folks in Washington know, folks across the country know, and hopefully, after tonight, everybody knows.

Now, together as a community, you've embraced the motto of this school district: "Every child, every opportunity, every time"—every time. "Every child, every opportunity, every time," because you believe like I do that every young person, every child, regardless of what they look like, where they come from, how much money their parents have, every child who walks through your schoolhouse doors deserves a quality education. No exceptions.

And I'm here tonight because I think that America has a lot to learn from Kalamazoo Central about what makes for a successful school in this new century. You've got educators raising standards and then inspiring their students to meet them. You've got community members who are stepping up as tutors and mentors, as coaches. You got parents who are taking an active interest in their child's education, attending those teacher conferences, yes, turning off the TV once in a while, making sure homework gets done.

Arne Duncan is here tonight because these are the values, these are the changes that he's encouraging in every school in this Nation. It's the key to our future.

But the most important ingredient is you: students who raised your sights, who aimed high, who invested yourselves in your own success. It's no accident that so many of you have received college admissions letters, class of 2010. That didn't happen by accident. It happened because you worked for it. As the superintendent said, you earned it.

So, Kelsey, I agree with you. What you've done here at Kalamazoo Central is amazing. I am proud of you. Your parents are proud of you. Your teachers, your principal, we're all incredibly proud.

Now, graduates, all these folks around you, I have to say, though, with the cameras and the beaming smiles, they've worked hard to give you everything you need to pursue your dreams and fulfill your God-given talent. Unfortunately, you can't take them with you when you leave here. [*Laughter*] No one is going to go follow you around making sure that you're getting to class on time, making sure you're doing your work. Nobody is going to be doing that for you. Going forward, that's all on you. Responsibility for your success is squarely on your shoulders.

And the question I have for you today is this: What is each—what are each of you going to do to meet that responsibility?

Now, right now you're getting plenty of advice from everybody. Some of it's helpful. [*Laughter*] And so I hate to pile on with advice. But while I'm here—[*laughter*]—what the heck. [*Laughter*] I figure I should offer a few thoughts based on my own experiences, but also based on my hopes for all of you and for our country in the years ahead.

First, understand that your success in life won't be determined just by what's given to you or what happens to you, but by what you do with all that's given to you, what you do with all that happens to you, how hard you try, how far you push yourself, how high you're willing to reach. True excellence only comes with perseverance.

This wasn't something I really understood when I was back your age. My father, some of you know, left my family when I was 2 years old. I was raised by a single mom and my grandparents. And sometimes I had a tendency to goof off. As my mother put it, I had a tendency sometimes to act a bit casual about my future. [*Laughter*] Sometimes I was rebellious. Sometimes I partied a little too much. [*Applause*] Oh, yes, yes—this is a cautionary tale. [*Laughter*] Don't be cheering when I say

that. [*Laughter*] Studied just enough to get by. I thought hard work, responsibility, that's old-fashioned. That's just people wanting to tell me what to do.

But after a few years, after I was living solely on my own and I realized that living solely for my own entertainment wasn't so entertaining anymore, that it wasn't particularly satisfying anymore, that I didn't seem to be making much of a ripple in the world, I started to change my tune. I realized that by refusing to apply myself, there was nothing I could point to that I was proud of that would last.

Now, you come of an age in a popular culture that actually reinforces this approach to life. You watch TV, and basically, what it says is you can be rich and successful without much effort; you just have to become a celebrity. [*Laughter*] If you can achieve some reality TV notoriety, that's better than lasting achievement. We live in a culture that tells you there's a quick fix for every problem and a justification for every selfish desire. And all of you were raised with cell phones and iPods and texting and e-mails, and you're able to call up a fact or a song or a friend with the click of a button. So you're used to instant gratification.

But meaningful achievement, lasting success, it doesn't happen in an instant. It's not about luck. It's not about a sudden stroke of genius. It's not usually about talent. It's usually about daily effort, the large choices and the small choices that you make that add up over time. It's about the skills you build and the knowledge you accumulate and the energy you invest in every task, no matter how trivial or menial it may seem at the time.

Now, you've got an alum who plays for the Yankees, I hear. He's supposed to be pretty good. Now, Derek Jeter wasn't born playing shortstop for the Yankees. He got there through years of effort. And his high school baseball coach once remarked, "I'm surprised he still doesn't have blisters and that I don't have the blisters on my hands from hitting ground balls just for Derek. He always wanted more: 'How about one more turn in the batting cage? Or 25 more ground balls?'"

Thomas Edison tested more than 6,000 different materials for just one tiny part of the light bulb that he invented. Think about that: six thousand tests. J.K. Rowling's first Harry Potter book was rejected 12 times before it was finally published. Mozart was a musical prodigy, but he practiced for hours each day, accumulating thousands of hours at the piano by the time he was just 6 years old. I understand that your boys' basketball team did pretty good. First State champions for the first time in 59 years. That didn't happen by accident. They put in work. They put in effort.

So today, you all have a rare and valuable chance to pursue your own passions, chase your own dreams without incurring a mountain of debt. What an incredible gift. So you've got no excuse for giving anything less than your best effort. No excuses.

That's my second piece of advice, very simple: Don't make excuses. Take responsibility not just for your successes, take responsibility where you fall short as well.

Now, the truth is, no matter how hard you work, you're not going to ace every class. Well, maybe Cindy will, but—[*laughter*]. But you're not going to ace every class. You're not going to succeed the first time you try something. There are going to be times when you screw up. There will be times where you hurt people you love. There will be times where you make a mistake and you stray from the values that you hold most deeply.

And when that happens, it's the easiest thing in the world to start looking around for somebody else to blame. Your professor was too hard; your boss was a jerk; the coaches was playing favorites; your friend just didn't understand. Your wife—oh, no. [*Laughter*] I'm just messing with Michelle right there. [*Laughter*] That was all in fun. [*Laughter*]

No, but this is an easy habit to get into. You see it every day in Washington—every day—folks calling each other names, making all sorts of accusations on television. Everybody is always pointing a finger at somebody else. You notice that?

Now, this community could have easily gone down that road. This community could have made excuses: Well, our kids have fewer advantages, our schools have fewer resources, how can we compete? You could have spent years

pointing fingers, blaming parents, blaming teachers, blaming the principal, blaming the superintendent, blaming the President. [*Laughter*]

But that's—class of 2010, I want you to pay attention on this because that's not what happened. Instead, this community was honest with itself about where you were falling short. You resolved to do better, push your kids harder, open their minds wider, expose them to all kinds of ideas and people and experiences.

So, graduates, I hope you'll continue those efforts. Don't make excuses. And I hope that wherever you go, you won't narrow the broad intellectual and social exposure you've had here at Kalamazoo Central. Instead, seek to expand it. Don't just hang out with people who look like you or go to the same church you do or share your political views. Broaden your circle to include people with different backgrounds and life experiences. Because that's how you'll end up learning what it's like to walk in somebody else's shoes. That's how you'll come to understand the challenges other people face. And this is not just an academic exercise. It's a way to broaden your ambit of concern and learn to see yourselves in each other.

Which brings me to my final piece of advice for today, and that's to give back, to be part of something bigger than yourselves. Hitch your wagon to something that is bigger than yourselves. I know that so many of you have already served your community through efforts like your Stuff the Bus food drives and groups like Activists for Action. And I commend you for that. But I also know that many of you are the first in your family to go to college. And right about now, you may be feeling all the weight of their hopes and expectations coming down on your shoulders.

And once you start juggling those classes and activities and that campus job, and you get caught up in your own dreams and your own anxieties and dating—[*laughter*]—you may feel like you've got enough on your plate just dealing with your own life. It might be easier to turn the channel when the news disturbs you, to avert your eyes when you pass that homeless man on the street, to tell yourself that other people's problems really aren't your responsibility.

But just think about what the consequence of that approach to life would have been if that's how folks had acted here in this community. What if those Kalamazoo Promise donors had said to themselves, "Well, you know what, I can pay for my own kid's education; why should I have to pay for somebody else's?"

Think about the consequences for our country. What if our Founding Fathers had said, "You know, colonialism is kind of oppressive, but I'm doing okay, my family's doing all right, why should I spend my summer in Philadelphia arguing about a Constitution?"

What if those abolitionists, those civil right workers had said: "You know, slavery is wrong, segregation is wrong, but it's kind of dangerous to get mixed up in that stuff. I don't have time for all those meetings and marches. I think I'm going to take a pass. I hope it works out, but that's not something I want to do."

I want you to think for a minute about the extraordinary men and women who've worn our country's uniform and have given their last full measure of devotion to keep us safe and free. What if they said, "I really do love this country, but why should I sacrifice so much for people I've never even met?" Young men and women in uniform right now are making those sacrifices.

So you and I are here today because those people made a different choice. They chose to step up. They chose to serve. And I hope you will follow their example, because there is work to be done, and your country needs you. We've got an economy to rebuild. We've got children to educate. We've got diseases to cure. We've got threats to face. We've got an oil spill to clean up. We've got clean energy to discover. And it is going to be up to you to meet all of those challenges, to build industries and make discoveries and inspire the next generation. It's going to be up to you to heal the divide that continues to afflict our world.

Now, I'm not saying you got to do it here all at once. But as Theodore Roosevelt once put it, I'm asking you to "do what you can, with what you've got, where you are." And I can guarantee that wherever your journey takes

you, there are going to be children who need mentors and senior citizens who need assistance, folks down on their luck who could use a helping hand.

And once you've reached out and formed those connections, you'll find it's a little harder to numb yourself to other people's suffering. It's a little harder to ignore the national debates about the issues that affect their lives and yours. In the end, service binds us to each other and to our communities and our country in a way that nothing else can. It's how we become more fully American.

That's the reason those donors created the Kalamazoo Promise in the first place, not for recognition or reward but because of their connection to this community, because their belief in your potential, because their faith that you would use this gift not just to enrich your own lives but the lives of others and the life of the Nation.

And I'm told that soon after the Promise was established, a first grader approached the superintendent at the time and declared to her, "I'm going to college." First grader. "I'm going to college. I don't know what it is, but I'm going." [*Laughter*]

We may never know those donors' names, but we know how they helped bring this community together and how you've embraced their promise not just as a gift to be appreciated, but a responsibility to be fulfilled. We know how they have helped inspire an entire generation of young people here in Kalamazoo to imagine a different future for themselves.

And, graduates, today I'm asking you to pay them back by seeking to have the same kind of impact with your own lives, by pursuing excellence in everything you do, by serving this country that you love. I know that you can do it. After all, you are the Giants, and with the education you've gotten here, there's nothing you can't do.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. And God bless the United States of America. And God bless the class of 2010.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:42 p.m. in the Western Michigan University Arena. In his remarks, he referred to Michael F. Rice, superintendent, Kalamazoo Public Schools; Von Washington, Jr., principal, Kalamazoo Central High School; Cindy Lee, valedictorian, and Simon Boehme, salutatorian, Kalamazoo Central High School class of 2010; and Donald Zomer, Sr., former head varsity coach, Kalamazoo Central High School Maroon Giants baseball team.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Wheaton, Maryland

June 8, 2010

The President. Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, it is wonderful to see all of you. I want to thank Fran for that wonderful introduction, and I want to make a few acknowledgements before I make some opening remarks.

First of all, we've got one of the best Secretaries of Health and Human Services that we've ever had in Kathleen Sebelius. Please give her a big round of applause. I want to thank Governor O'Malley for joining us here today, for his terrific efforts. I want to acknowledge our wonderful senior Senator from the great State of Maryland—Barbara Mikulski is here. Ben Cardin couldn't be here, but he's wonderful too, so give him a round of applause. [*Laughter*] We got U.S. Representative Chris Van Hollen here and U.S. Representative Donna Edwards. And I wanted to just let you know, they fought hard on behalf of seniors and on behalf of this health care bill, and I could not be prouder to be joined by them.

I really want to thank Fran for sharing her story with us. I want to thank everybody who's joined us here at the Holiday Park Senior Center. And there are a lot of people who are listening and watching all across America, so I appreciate all of you as well.

I'm looking forward to taking some of your questions, but first, what I want to do is say a

few brief words about the Affordable Care Act that we passed a couple months back and what it means for America's seniors.

It's hard to imagine today, but just two generations ago, millions of our seniors went without basic health care coverage—millions. It wasn't right. It wasn't reflective of our values and who we are. So rather than allow that reality to continue, we made a promise to America's seniors that you can live out your golden years with some basic peace of mind and health coverage that you can count on. That was the promise of Medicare.

Now, the Affordable Care Act renews and strengthens that promise. This new law recognizes that Medicare isn't just something that you're entitled to when you reach 65, it's something that you've earned. It's something that you've worked a lifetime for, having the security of knowing that Medicare will be there when you need it. It's a sacred and inviolable trust between you and your country. And those of us in elected office have a commitment to uphold that trust, and as long as I'm President, I will.

Now, that's why this new law gives seniors and their families greater savings, better benefits, and higher quality health care. That's why it ensures accountability throughout the system so that seniors have greater control over the care that they receive. And that's why it keeps Medicare strong and solvent, today and tomorrow.

Now, you've just heard Fran's story. When Fran was diagnosed with breast cancer, the cost of her medication surpassed the Medicare Part D coverage limit, but it didn't reach the catastrophic coverage threshold. So she found herself in this coverage gap called the doughnut hole, where she was forced to pay the entire costs of the medicine she needed out of pocket. That came to thousands of dollars, forcing her and her husband to cut back everywhere else.

And I think everybody here understands Fran's story is not uncommon. I've heard others like it all across this country, and I read them—read about it when I read letters from so many of you at night. Those stories—your stories—are why we passed this law in the first place, to ensure that we don't have to keep on telling this same story.

Now, this debate got pretty contentious at times last year. I think you remember. [*Laughter*] And just when you were looking for accurate information about what this reform would mean for you, there were a lot of opponents of health care reform generally that sought to deny you that information. And they ran some pretty nasty rumors in hopes that it would scare folks. I know that's hard to imagine in politics—[*laughter*]—but that's what happened.

And we had seen it before. In the 1930s, when more than half of our seniors couldn't support themselves and millions saw their savings vanish, there were a number of opponents who argued that Social Security was going to be socialism. In 1965, plenty of folks warned that Medicare was going to lead to a Government takeover of the health care system, same argument that was made earlier this year and last year. We found out that those warnings had no anchor in reality, and neither do the hysterical claims about this law.

So here's the truth: First and foremost, what you need to know is that the guaranteed Medicare benefits that you've earned will not change, regardless of whether you receive them through Medicare or Medicare Advantage. Your guaranteed benefits will not change. Eligibility won't change. Medicare will continue to cover your costs the way it always has. If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. In fact, we're taking steps to increase the number of primary care physicians so that seniors get the care that they need. And I'm committed to reforming the way in which we compensate doctors under Medicare, because right now it doesn't make any sense. I don't think—some of you may be aware of the fact that we've got this patchwork system where Medicare doctors each year have to see if they're going to get reimbursed properly or not. And we've got to change that, and that's something that I'm committed to doing. And I'm going to keep fighting for doctor pay that is more cost effective and efficient, and I urge Congress to pass a short-term fix today, and

then we need to fix this thing over the long term tomorrow.

So those are the facts. What you'll see through this new law are new benefits, new cost savings, and an increased focus on quality to ensure that you get the care that you need. And we're moving quickly and carefully to implement this law so that you begin to see some of these savings immediately.

Case in point: Beginning this week, tens of thousands of seniors who fall into the doughnut hole, like Fran, will receive a $250 rebate check to help you cover the cost of your prescriptions. That will happen immediately; that's starting now. Each month—[*applause*]—and what's going to happen is, each month, as more seniors hit the doughnut hole, more and more checks will hit the mail, helping more than 4 million seniors by the end of this year. Now, beginning next year, if you fall into the coverage gap, you'll get a 50-percent discount on the brand-name medicine that you need—50 percent. And by 2020—it's being phased in, but by 2020, this law will close the doughnut hole completely. The doughnut hole will be gone. It will be gone.

Now, that's not all. Beginning next year, preventive care—including annual wellness visits for Medicare beneficiaries, certain screening services like mammograms—will be free, because the best way to prevent a serious illness is to diagnose it early.

This law also gives us the power to see to it that insurance companies don't raise your rates just to pad their profits. Last week, Secretary Sebelius reminded insurance companies that we've got the authority to review and reject unreasonable rate increases for Medicare Advantage plans, and she put them on notice that we will exercise that authority.

Finally, because seniors are more frequently targeted by scam artists, we made sure the new law gives us stronger tools to target criminals. And I want to send a notice to all who would swindle and steal from seniors and the Medicare system: We are going to find you, we will prosecute you, and we will ultimately prevent those crimes from happening ever again.

Part of the reason this is so important is because we've been receiving some outrageous reports from around the country of people to try—trying to scam seniors out of Medicare. They'll call asking for a Medicare number or a Social Security number or bank account information, claiming it's necessary to reenroll in Medicare or to sign up for new Medicare cards. Some even go door to door, claiming they're selling new Government policies. It's appalling, and it's infuriating, and we're going to put a stop to it. And that's why today I want to announce a couple of tough new efforts to protect seniors.

At my direction, Secretary Sebelius and Attorney General Holder have expanded efforts across the country to vigorously crack down on criminals who seek to take advantage of seniors and of taxpayer dollars. We've established a joint Health Care Fraud Prevention and Enforcement Action Team, also known as HEAT. [*Laughter*] Yes, you like that? HEAT. This task force is already focusing on certain cities with high rates of questionable Medicare expenses and charged several individuals with fraudulent billing. In addition, they'll continue a series of summits in cities across America with high rates of Medicare fraud, beginning next month in Miami. At these summits, they'll work with State and local officials, health care providers, and others that seniors rely on most to increase awareness of fraud and share information and expertise in identifying fraud.

And finally, we're going to reduce by half the amount of waste, fraud, and abuse in the Medicare system, protecting your Medicare and the American taxpayer's money. In fact, we're looking to eliminate waste everywhere we can. Earlier this morning my Budget Director, Peter Orszag, laid out our new effort to cut wasteful spending across Government, including asking all agencies to identify their worst-performing programs as we put together the next Federal budget.

So that's what this law does. Now, having said that, there—some of the folks who were against health reform in Congress, they still think that none of this should have happened. They don't think you should be getting these rebates, don't think we should be closing this doughnut hole. In fact, you have an entire party out there that's running on a platform of repeal.

They want to roll back all these reform efforts. They say they have their own plan, but

over the last 14 months of debate, they never seriously advanced it. And when you look at it, you can see why. They'd roll back the rebate to help you pay for your medicine if you fall in the doughnut hole. They'd roll back the free preventive care for Medicare recipients. And then, away from seniors, they'd roll back all the insurance provisions that make sure that insurance companies aren't cheating folks who are paying their premiums.

Their plan would let insurance companies continue to deny folks coverage when they get sick. They'd do little to make insurance more affordable. They'd gut the existing consumer protections. They'd put insurance companies back in charge. And some have even filed legislation that would end Medicare as we know it, giving every senior a voucher for health care instead.

Now, I refuse to let that happen. We're not going back; we are going to move forward. That's why I was elected.

So all told, the Affordable Care Act is a law that keeps America's promise to our seniors. And it extends that promise to your children and your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren, because in recent years, we've arrived at one of those moments where we needed to make right a longstanding wrong. Millions of middle class Americans watched our employer-based health care system fray along the edges, leave a lot of people out. A lot of people didn't have Medicare or qualify for Medicaid. They fell into terrible situations. And we decided we were going to stand up, as we've done so many times before, to make sure that everybody got a fair shot. And we're a better nation for it.

And once this reform is fully in effect, middle class families are going to pay less for their health care. Taxpayers won't have to pay higher premiums for trips to the ER by uninsured Americans. Businesses are going to get help with their health care costs; in fact, small businesses are already learning they're eligible for tax credits to cover their workers this year. And the worst practices of the insurance company will end so that they can't deny you coverage because you got a preexisting condition or because you happen to get sick and suddenly they decide it's not convenient to cover you. So this law looks out for future generations by doing more to bring down our long-term deficits than just about anything that we could do.

And in the end, this debate was about whether we're still a nation that keeps its promises to our seniors and gives all of our citizens—not just some of them, but all of them—a chance to reach their dreams. It was about whether we're still a people that are able to meet big challenges. And I'm proud to say that the answer to each of those questions was yes. And as long as I'm President and I've got great allies like the Members of Congress who are here, then this is going to be a promise that America continues to keep.

So thank you very much, everybody. And now I want to take some of your questions. All right. Let me make sure my mike is working. [*Laughter*] Okay.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius. Well, as I told you——

The President. Secretary Sebelius is going to be like Oprah; she's going to run the show here. [*Laughter*]

Secretary Sebelius. But I can't give away cars, I'm afraid. [*Laughter*] So as I told you before, we have lots of people listening from around the country and a number in here, I know, who want to ask questions. So we'll take the first question from the audience.

Yes, ma'am—and if you would say your name and then ask your question to the President.

Medicare Reform

Q. Good morning, Mr. President.

The President. Good morning.

Q. I just joined the Medicare——

Secretary Sebelius. Can you tell us your name?

Q. Yes, I can do that. [*Laughter*] Marikay Crangle, and I live in Arlington, Virginia. I just became eligible for Medicaid 4 weeks ago, and I've joined the program. My question is about——

The President. For Medicare or Medicaid? I want to make sure—Medicare?

Q. Medicare.

The President. Yes.

Q. Did I say Medicaid?

The President. Uh-huh.

Q. Oh, sorry.

The President. That's okay. [*Laughter*]

Q. Medicare. My question is about the doughnut hole. I think all of us appreciate the $250, and I think that will help a lot of folks. But my concern is that it's taking so long. Why 10 years to close the hole completely?

The President. Well, here's what's happening. Essentially, we're going to be phasing this down. And I'll be honest with you, it's just a matter of money. It's very expensive to close this doughnut hole. When the prescription drug plan was originally passed—frankly, we shouldn't have had a doughnut hole in the first place, but once that hole was created, then each year, the budget was assuming that doughnut hole was there. For us to close that right away would have blown a hole through the budget.

So essentially what we said is, how do we provide some immediate assistance to seniors who are falling into the doughnut hole, and then how do we ratchet down the cost to seniors each year so that by the time we get to 2020, the doughnut hole's completely eliminated?

In the meantime, though, as I said—I want everybody to be clear here—you will immediately benefit, first from the $250 check that you receive. Next year, we then phase in 50-percent discount on the prescription drugs that you're paying. And each subsequent year, what you're going to be seeing is, is that the costs are going to be continually reduced.

Now, part of what we still have to do is we still have to work with the drug companies to reduce just the cost of prescription drugs generally. And this is something that Secretary Sebelius takes very seriously. Are there ways that, for example, we can get generics on the market quicker? Are there ways that we can make sure that the patent laws don't prevent new products from getting to the market the way they should? Are there ways that we can do a better job negotiating for better prices? So there are going to be a whole host of things that we're going to be doing. It's not like we're going to be standing still during this 10 years. But what this law does is it guarantees that help and makes sure that a decade from now, it's going to be completely eliminated.

Secretary Sebelius. Thank you, Mr. President. My understanding is we have folks standing by around the country. So the next question will come from the audience. Operator?

Town Hall Telephone Operator. Thank you. Your first call is from Barbara Franklin from Rantoul, Illinois. Barbara, please ask your question.

The President. It's like magic. [*Laughter*]

Medicare Benefits/Medicare Reform

Q. Mr. President, my name is Barbara Franklin. I'm president of the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans. My question is, will the reduction in subsidies to Medicare Advantage plans cause these companies to reduce coverage to senior plans?

The President. Well, it's a great question. Where are you calling from in Illinois?

Q. Rantoul, Illinois.

The President. Rantoul's a great town. [*Laughter*]

Q. Yes. [*Laughter*]

The President. Tell everybody back home I said hi. [*Laughter*]

Q. I sure will.

The President. This has been an area where probably there's been the most misinformation and concern, after the death panels. [*Laughter*] Remember those?

For those who are not familiar with it—and I want to make sure that I explain this as clearly as possible—Medicare provides a guaranteed benefit. And then a while back, a law was passed saying we're going to have a program called Medicare Advantage, in which we pay insurance companies to provide Medicare benefits. All right? So the insurance companies are supposed to manage these Medicare benefits.

There are examples of where Medicare Advantage has been a good deal for some seniors. But overall, what happened to the program is, is that insurance companies were getting paid, on average, a thousand dollars more—a thousand dollars more than the costs of regular Medicare. Okay?

Now, by law, these insurance companies were supposed to be providing additional bene-

fits and better services for this thousand dollars. But a lot of it ended up going to their profits and CEO bonuses and their bottom lines. What's more was you—if you weren't signed up for Medicare Advantage—were still paying higher premiums for somebody else's Medicare Advantage. If you're in regular Medicare, which is about 77 percent—so three out of four of you who are in Medicare are signed up for regular Medicare, and one out of four of you are signed up for Medicare Advantage—those of you who aren't in Medicare Advantage, you're actually paying a higher premium for that extra thousand dollars going to the insurance companies.

Well, that didn't seem like a good deal. That doesn't seem fair. So here's what we did under the law. What we said was, you can maintain Medicare Advantage, but we are going to say to the insurance companies that you can't use this just to pad your profits or to pay higher CEO bonuses. Eighty-five percent of what you spend has to actually be for health services. We're going to review the rates that are applied. We're going to set a rate that is fair and appropriate so that Medicare Advantage isn't costing people who aren't in Medicare Advantage.

So those are the changes that we've made. Now, that is, by the way, where we are obtaining a number of the savings in Medicare; it's by eliminating some of these insurance subsidies that were unnecessary for the program. But we have not eliminated Medicare Advantage, and insurance companies can still make money operating a well-managed Medicare Advantage program that helps to manage and coordinate the prescription drugs and the dental and all that stuff. So for administrative convenience, Medicare Advantage may still end up being a useful program for some people. We just want to make sure that that money is not just a big giveaway to the insurance companies.

And this was costing Medicare, overall, I think, around 17 to 18 billion dollars every year. That's billion with a "b," right? So part of the way that we pay for the improved benefits and doughnut hole is to say, we're going to take some of that money from the insurance companies—and they'll still be able to make money. And they're—so seniors who are under a Medicare Advantage plan that is doing a good job have nothing to worry about. If you're signed up for a Medicare Advantage program that is wasting money, then we're going to be just telling those insurance companies, you got to stop wasting the money. And that, I think, is something that everybody expects us to do, is overseeing a program so that it lasts over the long term.

Anything you want to add there, Kathleen?

Secretary Sebelius. I think the President did a great job answering that question. Is there—let's take the next one from the audience. Sir, in the back.

Primary Care Physicians/Medicare Reimbursement

Q. My name is Pat Conover, I'm 69 years old, and I have heart disease, high blood pressure, and incurable fast-growing prostate cancer. I have a couple of other chronic conditions and special concerns as a transgender person. And in addition, I'm allergic to some of the drugs that would most be used to treat my conditions. I'm actually doing the wise things for myself, and I'm still productive in several ways. One of the big reasons for my sustained good health is my primary care physician, Dr. Gail Povar. In addition to being a good doctor, she is an outstanding advocate in coordinating for my sometimes complex care. I believe significantly more money can be saved in Medicare by directing more resources to primary physicians for coordination and patient advocacy, and less to the complex organizational programs that have the same purpose. Instead of buying expensive football teams, what we need is more archers. [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, let me—I'm not going to comment on football—[*laughter*]—because the—are most people around here Ravens fans or Redskins fans?

Audience members. Redskins!

Audience members. Ravens! [*Laughter*]

The President. I mean, I'm just not—I just wanted to make sure. [*Laughter*] You know, I don't know. See, this is why I didn't want to talk about football. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]—Navy.

The President. And we got a Navy person here, right here. [*Laughter*]

This issue of primary care physicians is absolutely critical, and it has the promise of making such a big difference in the overall health of everybody, from children to seniors. It used to be that most of us had a family doctor. You would consult with that family doctor. They knew your history, they knew your family, they knew your children, they helped deliver babies, they—and as a consequence, what happened was, is that everybody got regular checkups and could anticipate a lot of the problems that are out there.

Now, in these big medical systems, so often what happens is, is that you're shuttled around from specialist to specialist. Oftentimes people don't have a primary care physician that they're comfortable with, so they don't get regular checkups, they don't get regular consultations, preventable diseases end up being missed, and you don't have the kind of coordination that's necessary between all these different specialists, right?

So you go to one doctor; they take a test. Then you go to the hospital; they have you take the same test. A lot of errors occur because there's not communications between these various specialists. And it adds a lot of cost, because each time that test is being taken, they're charging Medicare if you're on Medicare, and if you're not on Medicare, they're charging the insurance company. And that is part of what is adding to all these costs.

So what we've been trying to do—and this was a major focus of the health reform bill—is, how do we get more primary physicians, number one, and number two, how do we give them more power so that they are the hub around which a patient-centered medical system exists, right?

And first step is getting more primary care physicians. I mean, sadly, a lot of young medical students, they'd love to go into primary care, but primary care physicians don't get paid as well as specialists. So they say to themselves, you know what, I don't want to—I've got all these medical school bills that I got to pay; I've got to become a plastic surgeon or something. And so part of the bill was to, through loan forgiveness programs and other mechanisms, make it more enticing for young medical students to go into primary care, build up the pool of primary care physicians.

Number two is increasing the reimbursements for primary care. Right now you've got a situation where if a primary care physician says to a patient, you know what, you need to lose some weight because you're at risk of diabetes, and I've got a good exercise program that makes sense, and here's a dietician that you should talk to, sometimes Medicare may not reimburse that consultation. But they'll reimburse the $30,000 foot amputation because—after somebody gets the disease.

Well, that doesn't make sense. So changing our reimbursement system to encourage preventive care and encourage what primary care physicians do is probably going to be the single most important thing that we can do to assure that you and those of you who have good primary care physicians continue to get that kind of care.

Last point I'll make—and I just want to go back to this point that I made during my remarks—about a decade ago, I guess—and, Barbara, correct me if I'm getting the timing wrong—but about a decade ago, Congress—not our Congress but a previous Congress—[*laughter*]—made the decision that the way we were going to actually cut Medicare—or cut the rising costs of Medicare was to say to doctors and providers, we're going to cap you at a certain level, and if you don't, tough luck.

And in theory, it sounded good, but it wasn't very well thought through. And so what happened was, each year, costs for doctors went up and the reimbursements didn't. And eventually, it got so bad that Congress then started saying, you know what, this isn't realistic. So each year, they'd kind of do a patchwork fix on this thing. And the formula for reimbursing Medicare doctors would be adjusted, but it would only be adjusted for a year or adjusted for 2 years. But it wouldn't get adjusted permanently.

And what's happened is, over time, it's built up so that now each year, you end up having this emergency where unless Congress passes a bill right away, suddenly Medicare doctors are going to get a 21-percent cut in their reim-

bursements because all that health care inflation had built up over time. Well, we're now in this situation again. And we've got to fix this permanently.

Now, in the meantime, temporarily, we got to make sure that your doctor is getting reimbursed so that they can stay in business and keep their doors open. And my administration has worked very closely with doctors to try to see if we can get this fixed short term, but ultimately we're going to have to get it fixed long term.

What we want is a system where doctors are reimbursed for the right things: We want them reimbursed for quality; we want them reimbursed for how good care you can get—you're giving patients. We don't want doctors just to be reimbursed for how many tests they do or how many procedures they do, because sometimes that may mean that they're not giving the best care. We want quality, not quantity.

So there are adjustments we need to make over the long term in how we reimburse doctors. But what we shouldn't do is have this guillotine hanging over their heads every year, where they're having to figure out, am I am going to get reimbursed or is suddenly my income going to drop by 20 percent? Because what will happen is more and more people will say, I don't want to be a Medicare doctor; I don't want to be a primary care physician for somebody on Medicare because it's going to make my income unstable. That's something that we've got to fix.

Okay?

[*At this point, Secretary Sebelius made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Secretary Sebelius. Operator, if you are still there—it's hard because we can't see, so I assume you're still there—is there another question from the audience listening in?

Town Hall Telephone Operator. Your next call is from Barbara Call from Denver, Colorado. Barbara, please ask your question.

Assisted Living Choices for Senior Citizens

Q. Mr. President, this is Barbara Call.

The President. How are you?

Q. I'm a participant of—[*inaudible*]. I would like to have you answer a question.

The President. I'm all ready.

Q. Okay. For needing health care reform, I am concerned about how any health care changes will impact seniors and choice around alternatives to having to go live in a nursing home. My friends and I want to live independently.

The President. Well, it is a great question, and let me just say, you sound like a woman after my grandmother's heart—[*laughter*]—because she—some of you know my grandmother passed away a couple years ago. She helped raise me, so I was very close to her. And she lived in Hawaii, and when—after my grandfather passed away, she had the same little apartment she had had when I had been growing up over there. And we kept on trying to say, you know, listen, why don't you move to Chicago? And she said, "What am I, an idiot"—[*laughter*]—"that I am going to trade 80 degrees and trade winds for Chicago winter?"

But she was always very proud and insistent. And until the end of her life, she insisted on making sure that she could live in her apartment. And there are all kinds of different options for different people. The key is we want to give choice to seniors, what's best for them. Some people love living in a retirement facility. Some people want to stay in their own house. Some people want a mix of options, and so if they can get some help that comes in, that may be the best option.

And what we tried to do, not just in this law, but what we're trying to do generally—and I want Secretary Sebelius to fill in some of the specifics on this—is to increase the number of options that are available for people and make sure that we are reimbursing through Medicare not just for the traditional choices of, if you're in a nursing home, then you're going to do it one way or another, but are there other ways that people can get maybe a nurse who comes in or maybe somebody who's cleaning an apartment for—once a week. That's what my grandmother did, for example. And it made all the difference, because she couldn't always reach to some of the places—Barbara's all nodding; she can relate to that. [*Laughter*]

So those are the kinds of innovations and flexibility that we want to introduce into the system. Some of this will be facilitated by the new law; some of it will be facilitated by the ongoing improvements that we want to institute over the next several years. So it's not going to happen all at once, but—go ahead.

[*Secretary Sebelius made brief remarks.*]

The President. Good.

Secretary Sebelius. Yes, sir. And, again, if you would say your name, that would be great.

Health Care Reform/Medicare/Social Security

Q. I'm Ben Williamowsky. I'm a senior citizen who lives in Maryland—Silver Spring, Maryland. And I want to thank——

Secretary Sebelius. Nice to see you again, Doctor. It's lovely to have you here.

Q. Nice to see you. And I want to thank Secretary Sebelius and the President for allowing me the opportunity to be here and ask this question. And I'm asking it more on behalf of my children, who are in their late fifties and sixties, and my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren. But I have heard from some of my friends who are—who spread the myths, who are against the health care bill no matter what it says. Of course, they were—told me about the death panel, of course, which is now dead. [*Laughter*]

But the—one of the things that they bring up—and I heard this same argument in 1965—that with providing Medicare—at this point, we may not be concerned with this at our ages, but our children may be—that we will soon, with the program the way it is, that Medicare and Social Security will soon run out of money. Now, I'm—as I say, that concern is not so much for me at my age, but for my children and their children.

The President. Well, it is a wonderful question, so let me talk just about the finances of the health care bill, Medicare, and I'll throw in Social Security in there.

We have a genuine long-term problem. And I can describe it very simply: We've got a population that's getting older. So you're going to see a bulge in the number of people who are using Medicare and Medicaid, more recipients, fewer workers to support those programs. We've got more money going out and less money coming in. And that's going to worsen over time.

Now, that has nothing to do with the health care bill. That has to do with the fact that we've got an aging population and health care inflation—the cost of—the additional cost of health care each year is going up much faster than overall inflation and how fast wages and taxes, et cetera, are growing, right? So you've got this gap between how much we're going to need for Medicare and Social Security versus how much is actually coming into the programs.

That has to be fixed. Now, one way to fix it would be to just say, we're just going to cut benefits. If there's going to be a gap between how much Medicare is going to cost and how much we actually have, we just say, you know what, each of you, we're going to have to eliminate some benefits. You get less—fewer prescription drugs. You got to pay higher copays. You got to—certain procedures won't be covered or maybe some people won't be covered or we'll raise the eligibility when you qualify for Medicare. I mean, there are a bunch of adjustments that could be made that essentially come down to cutting benefits. That's one way of dealing with rising costs of Medicare.

Another way, which we think is the smarter way, is to say, where are we getting good value for our money? Where are we not getting good value for our money? How can we design Medicare so that we're reducing the costs going—that are skyrocketing, but people are actually getting better care? Are there ways that we can do that?

For example, can we have one test instead of five tests—have that one test e-mailed to everybody so that Medicare's not paying for five tests? Can we arrange so that because we've got a good primary care physician, you make one visit to the doctor's office, and all the specialists come to that one office, as opposed to you having to make five different visits? Are there ways in which we can use best practices for certain diseases so that we're catching them sooner—it's cheaper to care for than when you've really gotten sick?

So what we tried to do in this health care bill is actually see how can we make the health care system as a whole smarter, more efficient for everybody, including young people—not just for seniors, because obviously health starts—the healthier you are when you're younger, odds are the healthier you're going to be as you get older. So are there ways that we can—through preventive care, better efficiencies, better management—make the health care system overall more effective? Because if we can do that, then that starts controlling the costs of Medicare, and it won't go bankrupt as quick.

A lot of those changes are what we introduced in our health care bill, okay? Now, in addition, the health care bill overall, because of us eliminating some of those subsidies to insurance companies that I mentioned, actually are going to save a billion—or a trillion dollars out of our deficit over the long term. A trillion, that's with a "t." That's a lot of money.

So when you hear arguments out there that, well, you know what, we couldn't afford this health care bill, folks who are saying that, they didn't read the bill, because according to the Congressional Budget Office, this will actually reduce the deficit, reduce costs by making the system smarter, making it more efficient. That, in turn, means that Medicare will be there longer.

Now, the one thing I want to say about both Medicare and Medicaid, though: This health care bill alone doesn't solve all our problems, and I don't want to overadvertise. The truth of the matter is, it's very hard to change a health care system that involves millions of patients, tens of thousands of doctors, hospitals, all those systems all across the country; trying to manage that all from the top is just too hard.

What we try to do is create new incentives, find who's doing the best job treating what, advertise those best practices so that other people start adapting them, and over time, that trickles throughout the system so that the system overall gets more efficient. That's what we're trying to do, and that's going to take some time. It's not going to happen overnight. It's going to happen over the course of a decade, maybe two decades in some cases, before we're actually going to be able to solve this problem overall.

But what I want you to tell those friends of yours is that the long-term fiscal implications of Medicare, the only way to fix those are to, what's called, bend the cost curve, make health care more efficient.

The other alternative, which is often the one that is presented by our Republican colleagues, is to essentially voucherize the system. I mean, that's been the main proposal that they've got that was presented during this debate in terms of saving Medicare. And what that basically means is, you know what, we're going to give you a set amount—let's just hypothetically—we'll give you $5,000; you go buy your own health insurance on the private market instead of getting Medicare.

But think about it. What happens—you get $5,000, and it turns out the costs are $10,000? That comes out of your pocket. And then the next year, the costs are $12,000, and maybe they gave you an adjustment on—inflation adjustment, so now you get $5,500, but the cost for the same quality care you're getting under Medicaid is $12,000.

I mean, there's an easy way to make it look like you're solving the problem: You just dump it on other people. And what we're trying to do is actually solve the problem by making the health care system more efficient. That's going to be harder, but it's fairer, it's more just, it's going to keep the commitment and the promise of Medicare for years to come. Okay?

Secretary Sebelius. Thank you, Mr. President. Operator, we have time for one more from the world out there. [*Laughter*]

Town Hall Telephone Operator. Your next question comes from Dennis Yurkas from Las Vegas, Nevada. Dennis, please go ahead and ask your question.

Continuation of Health Care Coverage/Health Care Reform

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Hi, Dennis.

Q. How are you, sir?

The President. Good.

Q. I am a retiree who's a member of the International Union of Painters and Allied

Trades who is currently drawing my health insurance from COBRA. Since the Federal subsidy for my employer is in danger of being discontinued, and I have confirmed my former employer will not offer COBRA if the subsidy is discontinued, what am I supposed to do, and how does the new health care law help me now to get health care, especially since my wife is dealing with some very serious health issues?

The President. Dennis, can I just ask you the—so you don't yet qualify for Medicare; you're getting COBRA because your employer is not—you're not on the job right now, is that what's going on?

Q. Correct.

The President. Okay. The—well, here's what happened, is because of just this terrible recession that we had, we knew that a lot of folks were going to be losing their jobs. I mean, when I took office, 750,000 people per month were losing their jobs. We're now—because of the Recovery Act, the great work that Congress did—we're now gaining jobs again every month, but we have that 8 million job hole that was created because of the recession, and that's going to take some time to fill. So you've got a lot of people like Dennis out there—people in construction, people in the trades—a lot of folks who were laid off, who not only are struggling to pay their bills, but they were in danger of losing their health care because they got it through the job.

Now, there's been a program around for a long time called COBRA; some of you know about it. The idea is that you're, by law, allowed to keep your health insurance even if you lose your job, just by paying the premiums. Here's the catch, though: If the premiums are $1,000 a month, you weren't paying those; now you've lost your job, so you've got even less money. A lot of people couldn't afford COBRA.

So one of the most important things we did in the Recovery Act—and a lot of people don't realize this, but this was hugely important to so many Americans, including Dennis, as you just heard—was through the Recovery Act, we said that we are going to subsidize 65 percent of the costs of what your premiums were so that you can keep your health insurance even as you're looking for a job and trying to get back on your feet. So if your premium for your family was a thousand dollars a month, now it only cost you $350 a month.

We have sustained that for a year and a half now, and we think it's important to sustain it for at least another 6 months because there's still a lot of folks who are out of work. The economy is improving, but the unemployment rate is still high. This is being debated in Congress right now.

And so, Dennis, the answer is, what we need is to make sure that Congress follows through on its commitment to go ahead and maintain COBRA until people are working at a higher rate again.

Now, that's not a long-term solution to Dennis's question, though. The problem is that for a lot of folks like Dennis, once COBRA ran out, before this crisis and before the Recovery Act, they were just out of luck. If you didn't have a job, you didn't have health insurance, because buying health insurance in the private marketplace as an individual is prohibitively expensive. If you don't—if you're not part of a big pool that can negotiate with the insurance companies, they jack up your rates; you're paying 20 percent more or 30 percent more than you would be paying if you were working for a big company.

In some cases, if you got a preexisting condition, you just can't get health insurance at all. Some of you have been through this. Some of you, if you haven't yet qualified for Medicare, are going through it right now. There are a lot of early retirees who aren't yet qualified for Medicare, but they've lost their job; they've got enough savings to support themselves, but they don't have enough savings to be paying these huge medical bills.

So the whole idea behind the health reform bill was, let's put you in a pool so you get the same leverage that somebody else does. Let's—even if you're on your own or you're a small-business owner, let's give you the same negotiating power that somebody who works at Google has, so—or another example, if you're a Federal worker, you're a part of a pool, and you get a great deal.

So the way the health care bill is structured is this: If somebody like Dennis—even after CO-

BRA is—he's no longer eligible for COBRA, somebody like Dennis could sign up to be part of a pool where they got the best, lowest rates possible. Kathleen Sebelius, as Secretary of Health and Human Services, would be overseeing what these policies were that were offered. You'd have a choice of plans. It wouldn't be one size fits all. If you were—had—if Dennis had a bigger family and he had—he mentioned his wife, so he wanted to have a certain kind of better insurance, he could pay a little bit more. If he was young and single and feeling healthy, he could have a cheaper version. But the point is, he'd get the benefit of being part of this big pool. That's the main concept behind this health care reform bill.

If you still couldn't afford it—and there's some people who, if they're making minimum wage, they're not making a lot of money, they still couldn't afford the premium, even though it's a much better deal than what they could get on their own—then we're going to provide tax credits, provide subsidies to help people pay for their insurance.

Now, all of this doesn't go into effect until 2013. And I'll anticipate the question earlier: How come it's taking so long? [*Laughter*] In this case, it's not just a question of money, it's also a question of just setting it up right. I mean, we're talking about 30 million people suddenly getting insurance. That's—you've got to set it up in a way that is efficient, isn't subject to fraud. So we had to phase that in to do it right over a certain number of years.

But the key is, by 2014, which is right around the corner, what you're going to see is a situation where somebody like Dennis, even if his COBRA eligibility has lapsed, he's going to know, have the confidence, have the security, that he can look after himself and his wife when it comes to their health care needs.

And that is something that has existed in every other industrialized country in the world except the United States—up until this year. Think about that. We're the wealthiest nation on Earth; every other country had that basic security except us.

And what we did was we didn't do anything radical. We didn't—contrary to our critics, this wasn't socialized medicine. We built off the private, employer-based system that we already had. But we said, you know what, we're going to fill these gaps so that everybody has some security, so that you have no parent out there who's thinking, I'm not sure I can afford to take my child to a doctor, even though she's not feeling well; there's nobody out there who, they lose their job at 55 and suddenly are thinking, you know what, for 10 years I've got to go without health insurance; there's nobody out there who, because they had a preexisting condition—if somebody like Fran, who had been stricken with breast cancer, who right now, if Fran was working rather than retired and tried to get insurance right now, she might be prohibited. She might not be able to get health insurance.

Well, that's just not—that's not right. It's not reflective of the values of our country. That's why we changed it. And that's why we are going to fight any effort to go back to a system that doesn't work for the American people and doesn't work for our seniors.

Thank you so much, everybody. God bless you.

Secretary Sebelius. Thank you, Mr. President.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:41 a.m. at Holiday Park Multiservice Senior Center. In his remarks, he referred to Holiday Park resident Frances L. Garfinkle; Gov. Martin J. O'Malley of Maryland; and talk show host Oprah Winfrey.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Western Balkans
June 8, 2010

To the Congress of United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the Western Balkans emergency is to continue in effect beyond June 26, 2010.

The crisis constituted by the actions of the persons engaged in, or assisting, sponsoring, or supporting (i) extremist violence in the Republic of Macedonia and elsewhere in the Western Balkans region, or (ii) acts obstructing implementation of the Dayton Accords in Bosnia, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 of June 10, 1999, in Kosovo, or the Ohrid Framework Agreement of 2001 in Macedonia, that led to the declaration of a national emergency on June 26, 2001, in Executive Order 13219, and to amendment of that order in Executive Order 13304 of May 28, 2003, has not been resolved. The acts of extremist violence and obstructionist activity outlined in Executive Order 13219, as amended, are hostile to U.S. interests and pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to the Western Balkans and maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 8, 2010.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Actions and Policies of Certain Members of the Government of Belarus and Other Persons that Undermine Democratic Processes or Institutions in Belarus
June 8, 2010

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency and related measures blocking the property of certain persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Belarus are to continue in effect beyond June 16, 2010.

Despite the release of internationally recognized political prisoners in the fall of 2008 and our continuing efforts to press for further reforms related to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in Belarus, serious challenges remain. The actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other

persons to undermine Belarus democratic processes or institutions, to commit human rights abuses related to political repression, and to engage in public corruption pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared to deal with this threat and the related measures blocking the property of certain persons.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 8, 2010.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the Congressional Picnic
June 8, 2010

Hello, everybody. Well, how's the food? We could not have a more beautiful day for this annual picnic, and we are just thrilled that all of you had a chance to get over. I know that folks were running a little bit late, many of you because of votes. But, you know, the fact of the matter is, is that we have had as tough a year and a half as America has seen in a couple of generations, and that's meant that Congress has had to do more on a whole range of issues.

Right now, obviously, we're looking at what's happening in the Gulf with deep concern, and that's going to put more additional pressure on Congress to work with States and the administration to help deal with this tragedy and this crisis.

It is important, though, given the incredible sacrifices that so many of you have made and frankly, from my perspective, just as important are the sacrifices that your family makes—you being away, you missing family events—that every once in a while, we have an opportunity to get together and for me to say thank you to you for your incredible devotion to the country, regardless of party, and for both Michelle and I to say to your families how grateful we are for your service, and hopefully, to have a little bit of time for fun and for fellowship and to remind ourselves of what's so important in life.

So I'm thrilled to see all the young people here who are here today. And we hope that you have a wonderful time.

Band, you guys are great as always. Chefs, I think people are all voting with their mouths around here. I suspect there's not going to be a lot of leftovers.

And on behalf of Michelle and myself, we hope that you enjoy the evening, and we are grateful to all of you for being here.

So thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:26 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority and an Exchange With Reporters
June 9, 2010

President Obama. Hello, everybody. Be careful, careful.

Before I begin, I know that there was just a vote in the United Nations Security Council. I'm going to comment on that separately; I don't want to detract from the topic at hand here. So for reporters who are interested in that issue, I will be making a statement about that after our session here.

I just want to thank President Abbas for being here and his delegation. We just concluded some very productive discussions on this issue. I commended President Abbas for the excellent work that he and Prime Minister Fayyad

have been engaged in over the last several years in strengthening the security as well as improving the economic situation for his people. He's done so through hard work and dedication, and I think the whole world has noticed the significant improvements that we've seen as a consequence of his good administration.

But obviously, there is a lot of work that remains to be done so that we can create a two-state solution in the Middle East in which we have an Israel that is secure and fully accepted by its neighbors and a Palestinian people that have their own state, self-determination, and the ability to chart their own destiny.

Now, we've just gone through a difficult period in the region. We saw the tragedy with the flotillas, something that I think has drawn attention all around the world to the ongoing problems in Gaza. As part of the United Nations Security Council, we were very clear in condemning the acts that led to this crisis and have called for a full investigation. And it is important that we get all the facts out. But what we also know is that the situation in Gaza is unsustainable. I think, increasingly, you're seeing debates within Israel recognizing the problems with the status quo. And so President Abbas and I had very extensive discussions about how we could help to promote a better approach to Gaza.

We agree that Israelis have the right to prevent arms from entering into Gaza that can be used to launch attacks into Israeli territory. But we also think that it is important for us to explore new mechanisms so that we can have goods and services and economic development and the ability of people to start their own businesses and to grow the economy and provide opportunity within Gaza.

And so we are going to be working hand in hand to make sure that we come up with a better approach and urge Israel to work with all parties involved—Egypt, the Palestinian Authority, and the international community—to find a resolution to this issue.

In the meantime, the United States, which is already the biggest humanitarian aid donor in Gaza, is going to be announcing an additional $400 million in assistance for housing, school construction, business development, not only in Gaza, but also in the West Bank, because we think it's important for us to reaffirm once again our commitment to improving the day-to-day lives of ordinary Palestinians.

Now, what we also discussed, though, and what we will continue to work on over the next several months is the fact that not only is the status quo with respect to Gaza unsustainable, the status quo with respect to the Middle East is unsustainable. It is time for us to go ahead and move forward on a two-state solution that will affirm the needs of Israeli citizens and will affirm the needs of Palestinian—Palestinians who are desperate for a homeland.

We have had very productive proximity talks. Senator Mitchell—who is here, I think, standing in the back—has been very active, working with both the Palestinians and the Israelis to try to start moving this process forward. And I want to thank President Abbas for participating in these proximity talks, even under some difficult circumstances. He has shown courage and tenacity in wanting to resolve this issue. And we believe that with Israelis and the Palestinian Authority coming together, making clear that a peaceful, nonviolent solution that recognizes both the security needs of Israel as well as the legitimate aspirations of Palestinians is the right way to go, can yield real progress in the coming months.

It's important that we understand the sense of urgency that the Palestinian people feel in this process. Obviously, you've got organizations like Hamas that have not recognized Israel, that have not renounced violence, who are calling for a different approach. And we think it's important that, given President Abbas's commitment to a peaceful, diplomatic solution to these issues and, I think, the desire of people both in Israel and Palestine—Palestinian Territories for a peaceful solution, that we move forward. And the United States is going to put its full weight behind those efforts.

Now, I did share with President Abbas, in order for us to be successful in these next several months, that both sides have to create an environment, a climate that is going to be conducive to an actual breakthrough. And that means, on the Israeli side, curbing settlement activity and recognizing some of the progress that has been made by the Palestinian Authority when it

comes to issues like security. It means, on the Palestinian side—and I was very frank with President Abbas—that we have to continue to make more progress on both security as well as incitement issues. And if we can, over the next several months, try to lift up what are the honest and legitimate concerns of both sides, and if both Palestinians, Israelis can recognize that they have a common interest in moving off of what has been this dead end, then I believe that potentially we can make significant progress before the end of the year.

So I just want to let President Abbas know that I said when I took office this was an issue that I cared deeply about and I was willing to spend a lot of time and energy and political capital on—that commitment has not wavered. And I think the American people want to see a resolution of this issue that is equitable. We will continue to work side by side with you, as well as the Israelis, to resolve this in a way that is good for the children and future generations both in Israel and in a future Palestine.

So thank you very much.

President Abbas. Thank you, sir.

President Obama. Thank you.

President Abbas. Thank you, Mr. President. And we, indeed, have just held very important discussions that touched on the political process as well as the very important latest development that happened in Gaza.

Of course we value and deeply appreciate all the efforts of the United States, as well as the effort of President Obama, in all the assistance and help for pushing forward the economic and security levels. And we have reached a satisfactory picture of the economic and security levels. Yet we are determined to keep pushing forward in our efforts to bring it up to the next level.

And I also appreciate the attention and the determination of President Obama in seeing that we push forward the political process as soon as possible. And I assert and I affirm that we will not give up on this endeavor ahead of us, because it is in our interest, it is in the interest of Israel, in the interest of the world, and also, most of all, in the interest of the United States.

We know that time is of essence, and we know that we must not miss this opportunity. We affirm the importance of bringing about peace and security in the region.

And I would like to thank President Obama for the support that he will give to Gaza, and we have just talked about that now. This is a positive signal of the United States that the United States cares about the suffering of the people in Gaza and about the suffering of the Palestinian people.

And we also see the need to lift the Israeli siege of the Palestinian people, the need to open all the crossings, and the need to let building material and humanitarian material and all the necessities go in to the Palestinian people.

And also, we appreciate the attention given to the formation of an investigation committee that would investigate what happened in the latest events, the events of what we call the "Freedom Flotilla" or the "Freedom Fleet."

And I say in front of you, Mr. President, that we have nothing to do with incitement against Israel, and we're not doing that. What we care about is to live in coexistence with Israel in order to bring about the independent Palestinian state that will live side by side with Israel in peace and stability.

We adopt and we affirm the Arab Peace Initiative that was adopted in summits—in Arab summits as well as in summits held by Islamic countries. Fifty-seven Arab and Islamic countries have said that they would recognize Israel if Israel withdrew from the occupied Arab land.

Mr. President, we thank you, and we express our deep respect for all your efforts, specifically on the peace process and bringing about peace in the Middle East. We know the two-state solution you said is in the—is a critical interest of the United States. This is a slogan that we are proud of, and we will pursue very seriously our efforts in order to bring about peace in the Middle East.

President Obama. Thank you.

President Abbas. Thank you very much.

President Obama. Thank you.

We got time for, I think, two questions. So on the U.S. side, we're going to call on Matt Spetalnick of Reuters.

U.N. Security Council Resolution on Iran Sanctions

Q. Yes. Mr. President, I know you're going to be making a statement later on Iran, but I just wondered if——

President Obama. Yes, so don't waste that question on that.

Q. You're not going to answer anything—[*inaudible*].

President Obama. I'll do that at the next one.

Israel/Gaza Freedom Flotilla Incident/Blockade of the Gaza Strip

Q. Did President Abbas ask you to take a tougher line with Israel over the Gaza aid flotilla raid, and will you, in fact, do so, an outright condemnation of Israel's actions? And do you support Israel's insistence on doing a flotilla investigation on its own, perhaps with some foreign involvement, or are you in favor of the U.N. proposal for a fully independent inquiry?

President Obama. Well, let me take the second question first. What the U.N. Security Council called for was a credible, transparent investigation that met international standards. And we meant what we said; that's what we expect.

I think everybody—people in Israel, people in Turkey, people within the Palestinian Territories, certainly people here in the United States—want to know the facts of this tragedy, what led to it, how can we prevent it in the future. And I think I've said to the Israelis directly, and certainly my team has communicated the fact that it is in Israel's interest to make sure that everybody knows exactly how this happened so that we don't see these kinds of events occurring again. And we expect that the standard that was called for in the U.N. Security Council to be met.

With respect to the issue of taking a tougher line, I think President Abbas and I spent most of our time discussing how do we solve the problem. One of the things that we see is that so often rhetoric, when it comes to issues in the Middle East, outstrip actually solving issues. And our conversation was focused on how do we actually allow more goods, more services into Gaza? How do we allow businesses to thrive? How can we get construction moving? How can we put people to work in Gaza?

The Palestinian Authority is already doing a number of things inside of Gaza, providing employment opportunities, providing assistance to people directly. The United States is already providing assistance. But the status quo that we have is one that is inherently unstable. And I think the Israelis have come to recognize that.

The question now is, how do we create a different framework so that people in Gaza can thrive and succeed, so that extremists are isolated, as opposed to having an excuse for engaging in violent activities, but also, how do we do it in a way that Israel's legitimate security concerns are met?

We—and I think President Abbas agrees with this—recognize that Israel should not have missiles flying out of Gaza into its territories. And so there should be a means by which we are able to stop the flow of arms that could endanger Israel's security. At the same time, we're doing so in a way that allows the people in Gaza to live out their aspirations and their dreams both for themselves and their children. And that's something that we're going to spend a lot of time focusing on. And we've already begun some hardheaded discussions with the Israelis in achieving that.

Middle East Peace Process/Blockade of the Gaza Strip/Aid to Gaza

[*At this point, a reporter asked part of a question in Arabic. She continued in English as follows.*]

Q. And, Mr. President, if I may ask you a question——

[*The interpreter privately translated the first part of the question for President Obama.*]

President Obama. Okay, I was just finding out what you were asking him. [*Laughter*]

Q. I can translate that to you, if you want.

President Obama. Okay.

Q. I just asked him that there is talk that the administration wants to move from proximity talk to direct negotiation, what the Palestinian Authority wants to see as a condition to move to that stage.

And if I may ask you, the European Union has proposed opening of the Gaza crossing. Would you endorse that, with the EU supervision?

And the money you talked about now, the $400 million, what mechanism—who is going to distribute this money? Because in the past, that's been a problem regarding the money.

President Abbas. With regards to the transitioning from the proximity talks to the direct talks, we did not say—we are not saying—we are not saying that we have conditions. What has happened is that we agreed that should a progress be achieved, then we would move on to direct talks. We are working in order to make progress. President Obama is working for that to see progress. And we—this is what we have.

President Obama. Okay. With respect to the aid to Gaza, I'll let my team give you the details in terms of how that will be administered and how the money will begin to flow.

With respect to the broader issue of lifting the blockade, as I said before, I think the key here is making sure that Israel's security needs are met, but that the needs of people in Gaza are also met. And it seems to us that there should be ways of focusing narrowly on arms shipments, rather than focusing in a blanket way on stopping everything, and then, in a piecemeal way, allowing things into Gaza.

So if we can get a new conceptual framework—and I'll be talking to my European counterparts as well as Egypt and Israel and the Palestinian Authority—it seems to me that we should be able to take what has been a tragedy and turn it into an opportunity to create a situation where lives in Gaza are actually directly improved.

But let me make this final point: That in the long run, the only real way to solve this problem is to make sure that we've got a Palestinian state side by side with an Israel that is secure. And so we're going to be dealing with these short-term problems, but we also have to keep our eye on the horizon and recognize that it's that long-term issue that has to be focused on. So many of the immediate problems in front of us have to do with the fact that we haven't solved this broader problem.

Okay? Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Salam Fayyad of the Palestinian Authority; and U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell. President Abbas spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Remarks on the United Nations Security Council Resolution on Iran Sanctions

June 9, 2010

All right. Good afternoon, everybody. Today the United Nations Security Council voted overwhelmingly to sanction Iran for its continued failure to live up to its obligations. This resolution will put in place the toughest sanctions ever faced by the Iranian Government, and it sends an unmistakable message about the international community's commitment to stopping the spread of nuclear weapons.

For years, the Iranian Government has failed to live up to its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It has violated its commitments to the International Atomic Energy Agency. It has ignored U.N. Security Council resolutions. And while Iran's leaders hide behind outlandish rhetoric, their actions have been deeply troubling. Indeed, when I took office just over 16 months ago,

Iranian intransigence was well established. Iran had gone from zero centrifuges spinning to several thousand, and the international community was divided about how to move forward.

Yet this day was not inevitable. We made clear from the beginning of my administration that the United States was prepared to pursue diplomatic solutions to address the concerns over Iranian nuclear programs. I extended the offer of engagement on the basis of mutual interest and mutual respect. And together with the United Kingdom, with Russia, China, and Germany, we sat down with our Iranian counterparts. We offered the opportunity of a better relationship between Iran and the international community, one that reduced Iran's political isolation and increased its economic integration with the rest of the world. In short, we offered the Iranian Government the prospect of a better future for its people, if and only if it lives up to its international obligations.

So there is no double standard at play here. We've made it clear, time and again, that we respect Iran's right, like all countries, to access peaceful nuclear energy. That is a right embedded in the NPT, a treaty that has to serve as the safeguard against a world in which more nations acquire the world's most deadly weapons and international law is treated as an empty promise. That NPT treaty was signed by all the parties involved, and it is a treaty that the United States has sought to strengthen from the day I took office, including through our own commitments to reduce America's nuclear arsenal.

So let me repeat: We recognize Iran's rights. But with those rights come responsibilities. And time and again, the Iranian Government has failed to meet those responsibilities. Iran concealed a nuclear enrichment facility in Qom that raised serious questions about the nature of its program. Iran further violated its own obligations under U.N. Security Council resolutions to suspend uranium enrichment. Instead, they're enriching up to 20 percent. It has failed to comply fully with IAEA's requirements. Indeed, Iran is the only NPT signatory in the world—the only one—that cannot convince the IAEA that its nuclear program is intended for peaceful purposes.

That's why the international community was compelled to impose these serious consequences. These are the most comprehensive sanctions that the Iranian Government has faced. They will impose restrictions on Iran's nuclear activities, its ballistic missile program, and, for the first time, its conventional military. They will put a new framework in place to stop Iranian smuggling and crack down on Iranian banks and financial transactions. They target individuals, entities, and institutions, including those associated with the Revolutionary Guard, that have supported Iran's nuclear program and prospered from illicit activities at the expense of the Iranian people. And we will ensure that these sanctions are vigorously enforced, just as we continue to refine and enforce our own sanctions on Iran alongside our friends and our allies.

The strong resolution that was passed today benefited from strong international support. In voting for it, we were joined by nations from Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America, including Russia and China. And these sanctions show the united view of the international community that a nuclear arms race in the Middle East is in nobody's interest and that nations must be held accountable for challenging the global nonproliferation regime. The Iranian Government must understand that true security will not come through the pursuit of nuclear weapons. True security will come through adherence to international law and the demonstration of its peaceful intent.

We know that the Iranian Government will not change its behavior overnight, but today's vote demonstrates the growing costs that will come with Iranian intransigence. Now, I want to be clear: These sanctions do not close the door on diplomacy. Iran continues to have the opportunity to take a different and better path. I would like nothing more than to reach the day when the Iranian Government fulfills its international obligations, a day when these sanctions are lifted, previous sanctions are lifted, and the Iranian people can finally fulfill the greatness of the Iranian nation.

Indeed, these sanctions are not directed at the Iranian people. As I said in Cairo, for decades, the Iranian Government has defined it-

self in opposition to my country. But faced with the opportunity to find a new way forward, one that would benefit its own people, the Iranian Government has chosen instead to remain a prisoner of the past.

Saturday will mark 1 year from the day that an election captivated the attention of the world, an event that should have been remembered for how the Iranian people participated with remarkable enthusiasm, but will instead be remembered for how the Iranian Government brutally suppressed dissent and murdered the innocent, including a young woman left to die in the street.

Actions do have consequences, and today the Iranian Government will face some of those consequences. Because whether it is threatening the nuclear nonproliferation regime or the human rights of its own citizens or the stability of its own neighbors by supporting terrorism, the Iranian Government continues to demonstrate that its own unjust actions are a threat to justice everywhere.

I want and hope for the people of Iran that the Government of Iran will make a different choice. It can make a different choice and pursue a course that will reaffirm the NPT as the basis of global nonproliferation and disarmament, a course that will advance Iran's own security and prosperity and the peace of the wider world. Today's sanctions are yet another signal that if the Iranian Government continues to undermine the NPT and the peace that it protects, then Iran will find itself more isolated, less prosperous, and less secure.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:44 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Message to the Congress Reporting on Export Licenses for Exports to China
June 9, 2010

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to the authority vested in me by section 902(b)(2) of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1990 and 1991 (Public Law 101–246)(the "Act"), and as President of the United States, I hereby report to the Congress that it is in the national interest of the United States to terminate the suspensions under section 902(a)(3) of the Act with respect to the issuance of permanent munitions export licenses for exports to the People's Republic of China insofar as such restrictions pertain to the LightScanner® 32 System used for gene mutation genotyping for individualized cancer treatment. License requirements remain in place for these exports and require review on a case-by-case basis by the United States Government.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 9, 2010.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Congressional Leaders
June 10, 2010

Well, I want to thank all these leaders for engaging in a very substantive conversation, and I'm going to be relatively brief in summarizing it. Obviously, at the top of our list was our continued response to the crisis in the Gulf and what's happening with the oil spill. We gave them an update on all the measures that are being taken, the single largest national response in United States history to an environmental disaster. But we had a frank conversation about the fact that the laws that have been in place have not been adequate for a crisis of this magnitude. The Oil Pollution Act was passed at a time when people didn't envision drilling 4 miles under the sea for oil.

And so it's going to be important that—based on facts, based on experts, based on a thorough examination of what went

wrong here and where things have gone right, but also where things have gone wrong—that we update the laws to make sure that the people in the Gulf, the fishermen, the hotel owners, families who are dependent for their livelihoods in the Gulf, that they are all made whole and that we are in a much better position to respond to any such crisis in the future. So that was a prominent part of the discussion, and I was pleased to see bipartisan agreement that we have to deal with that in an aggressive, forward-leaning way.

Even as we deal with that crisis, we've still got an economy that's on the mend, but there are a lot of people out there who are still out of work. There are a lot of families who are still struggling to pay the bills. And so a major part of our discussion was how could we continue to build on the progress that's been made in the economy and, in particular, how can we make sure that has an impact on job growth and the day-to-day improvements that people are seeing in their own lives.

A couple of things that we discussed was passing the package of tax extenders and unemployment insurance and so forth that is important to give families confidence that they're going to be able to get back on their feet, but also give businesses confidence in terms of what their tax structure is going to look like going forward.

A prominent area that we want to see movement on, hopefully in this work period, is on small businesses. They are the primary drivers of jobs in our economy. We are still seeing problems for small businesses when it comes to being able to obtain loans to expand or hire new people or just maintain their inventories. And so we've got a package of measures that have been worked on, on a bipartisan basis, that would help in terms of capitalizing small firms, that would eliminate capital gains taxes for startups and small businesses. Those measures need to be put in place. We need to get that done because the work of repairing this economy is not complete.

We think that it is important, during this work period, to finish the financial regulatory bill. The financial markets, I think, deserve certainty, but more importantly, in my mind, consumers and the American people deserve to know that there's a regulatory framework that is in place that protects consumers, investors, ordinary folks, and assures taxpayers that they never again are put in a position where they've got to bail out somebody because of their irresponsible acts.

And we also think that it's important to complete a supplemental, a package that ensures that our young men and women who are in uniform fighting in Afghanistan get all the support that they need.

So we're going to have a busy agenda going forward. There are some immediate things that we have to deal with. There are also some medium- and long-term issues that we've discussed that have to be dealt with. The one that was prominent was the issue of how we deal with debt and deficits. And there were actually some very constructive conversations around the table about ways that we could start making significant progress, not necessarily even waiting for the financial commission on some steps. For example, I've already called for a 3-year freeze on discretionary spending. There was a good conversation among the leadership in terms of how we adhere to that number. And there were some other creative suggestions, both from Republican and Democrats, about further progress that we could make on that front.

In that same category of thinking about the next generation, I want to close by just talking about my personal belief that we have to move on an energy agenda that is forward looking, that creates jobs, that assures that we are leaders in solar and wind and biodiesel, that recognizes that we are going to be reliant on fossil fuels for many years to come, that we are going to still be using oil, and we're still going to be using other fossil fuels, but that we have to start planning now and putting the infrastructure in place now, putting the research and development in place now so that we end up being leaders in our energy future.

I'm actually going to have a group of CEOs this afternoon who've come in from a wide range of different industries, people from Bill Gates of Microsoft to the former chairman of DuPont, who have come up with a series of rec-

ommendations about how we need to move much more aggressively on the energy agenda.

And although, obviously, our immediate task is to deal with a crisis that is affecting millions of people down in the Gulf, we can't keep our eye off the importance of having an energy policy that meets the needs of the next generation and ensures that the United States is the leader when it comes to energy policy. We are not yet that leader, and that's what I want us to do. And so I very much appreciate all the leaders here today who have been very constructive in wanting to explore how we can move that forward.

All right. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:14 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to William H. Gates III, chairman, Microsoft Corporation; and Charles O. "Chad" Holliday, Jr., former chairman and chief executive officer, DuPont. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Day of Portugal, Camoes, and the Portuguese Communities
June 10, 2010

I join the American people in extending my best wishes to all who celebrate Portugal Day, also known as the Day of Camoes, Portugal, and the Portuguese Communities. The United States and Portugal enjoy a strong friendship built upon common values, and our two nations continue to work together to promote peace, stability, and development around the world. While this day marks the passing of Portugal's greatest poet, Luis Vaz de Camoes, it is also a day to recognize and celebrate Portugal's history and accomplishments. Here at home, Portuguese Americans have greatly contributed to our Nation, adding their culture and heritage to our own.

Statement on the Anniversary of the Equal Pay Act
June 10, 2010

On June 10, 1963, President John F. Kennedy signed into law the Equal Pay Act, which sought to end wage discrimination on the basis of sex. At the time, women were paid 59 cents for every dollar earned by men. Forty-seven years later, pay parity remains far from reality, as women in the United States still only earn 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. For women of color, this gap is even wider. This remains unacceptable, as it was when the Act was signed. All women and their families deserve equal pay. Women now make up nearly half of the Nation's workforce, most homes have two working parents, and 60 percent of all women work full time. As we emerge from one of the worst recessions in American history, when families are struggling to pay their bills and save for the future, pay inequity only deepens that struggle and hampers our economy's ability to fully recover.

But we have taken some important steps to address this inequality. I am proud that the first bill I signed into law was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which restored the right to seek a remedy for women who, like the law's namesake, face wage discrimination during their careers. In my State of the Union Address, I pledged to crack down on violations of equal pay laws, and I've created the National Equal Pay Enforcement Task Force, bringing together Federal agencies to improve the enforcement of equal pay laws. We've also increased funding for Federal agencies charged with enforcing equal pay laws and other civil rights statutes. The agencies themselves have taken steps to address disparities. For instance, the Department of Labor Women's Bureau is conducting research and analysis, providing technical assistance, and building partnerships to increase women's incomes, narrow the wage gap, and reduce income in-

equality. And the White House Council on Women and Girls is actively working to close the wage gap.

More needs to be done. I appreciate the House acting on the Paycheck Fairness Act early last year, and I renew my call to the Senate to modernize and strengthen the Equal Pay Act by closing loopholes, providing incentives for compliance, and barring certain types of retaliation against workers by employers. On this anniversary of the Equal Pay Act, let us all renew and redouble our efforts.

Statement on Senate Action on Energy Legislation
June 10, 2010

I commend the Senate for rejecting the resolution put forward by Senator Murkowski, which would have increased our dependence on oil by blocking efforts to cut the harmful pollution that contributes to climate change. Today's vote is yet another reminder of the urgent need to pass legislation that would help America transition to a 21st-century clean energy economy that would create jobs, strengthen our national security, and protect our environment for our children. Today the Senate chose to move America forward towards that clean energy economy, not backward to the same failed policies that have left our Nation increasingly dependent on foreign oil.

NOTE: The statement referred to S.J. Res. 26.

Remarks on Small-Business Legislation
June 11, 2010

Good morning, everybody. I just finished a meeting with these small-business owners and a few of their workers. And we talked about some of the economic challenges facing these folks. And we talked about the ways that our government can make it easier for smaller firms to hire and to grow.

These men and women know how important it is because historically, small businesses have created roughly two out of every three new jobs in our country. And to replace the millions of jobs lost in the recession, we're going to need to make sure that small companies are able to open up and expand and add names to their payroll. Small businesses will help lead this economic recovery. And that's why we will continue to stand by them.

But ensuring that small businesses can thrive is about more than just economic success. It's also about who we are as a people. It's about a nation where anybody who's got a good idea and a willingness to work hard can succeed. That's the central promise of America. It's that promise that has drawn millions of people to our shores. It's what drives workers to become their own bosses. It's what propels some basement inventor to bring a new concept to market.

That's what led two guys, Bobby Pancake and Steve Wheat—their real names—who are here today, to take a chance and try their hand at actually running restaurants. Obviously, they'd have to be restaurateurs, named Pancake and Wheat. They worked for a restaurant chain for years, but they decided to leave the corporate offices and open up their own franchises. In fact, Bobby and Steve told me they recently opened up their sixth location. And Terry Haney, the general manager of one of their locations, is also here.

This same promise of being able to build your own dreams and be your own boss led Prachee—Prachee Devadas to come to this country, become a citizen, and open up what's become a successful technology services company. Prachee told me that when she started, she had just one employee. Today, she employs more than a hundred people, including her husband Anand, who is here today.

So the fact is that small businesses all across the country are hiring people, making a difference in their communities, giving back to their

communities, but they've also been especially hard hit by the recession. From the middle of 2007 to the end of 2008, small businesses lost 2.4 million jobs. And because banks shrunk from lending in the midst of this financial crisis, it's been particularly difficult for small-business owners to take out loans to open up shop or expand. It's been hard to finance inventories and payroll and new equipment.

Now, I've said before and I'll repeat, Government can't guarantee success for these companies, but it can knock down barriers that prevent owners from getting loans. Government can't create private sector jobs, but it can create the conditions for small businesses like these to grow and to hire more people. That's what's guided much of our economic agenda.

So let me be specific. Last year, we enacted seven tax cuts for America's small businesses—seven tax cuts. So far, the Recovery Act has supported over 68,000 loans to small businesses, which translates into nearly $29 billion in new lending. More than 1,300 banks and credit unions that had not made SBA loans since before the financial crisis are now lending again. More than $8 billion in Federal Recovery Act contracts are now going to small businesses. In fact, Prachee has been able to add 20 part-time and full-time workers because of the Recovery Act.

In addition, as a result of a bill I signed into law a few months ago, businesses are now eligible for tax cuts when they hire. When they hire unemployed workers, they're eligible for tax cuts. Companies are also able to write off more of their investments in new equipment. And as part of the health reform package, 4 million small-business owners recently received a postcard in their mailboxes from the IRS, and it was actually good news: It told them that they could be eligible for a health care tax credit this year that could be worth perhaps tens of thousands of dollars to these small businesses.

So these and other steps are making a difference. Little more than a year ago, the economy was in freefall. Today, it's growing again. Little more than a year ago, the economy was losing an average of 750,000 jobs per month. It's now been adding jobs for 5 months in a row. But even though we are in the process of digging ourselves out of this recession, we're still in a pretty deep hole. Millions of our family members, our friends, our neighbors are still looking for work; they're still faced with the prospects of long-term unemployment. Credit is still less available than it should be, particularly to small businesses.

As small-business owners like Prachee and Bobby and Steve will tell you, we may be recovering but we're not yet recovered. We have to keep moving forward. And that's why I'm urging Congress to swiftly approve a set of tax breaks and lending incentives to spur hiring and growth at small businesses. The legislation that's being debated right now would eliminate capital gains taxes for small investment—for investments in small firms, which will help move capital to these companies across America. It will provide tax relief to small startups to encourage folks to open up businesses as well.

To foster more credit, the package would create the small business lending fund I proposed in my State of the Union Address to help underwrite loans through community banks. And we'd create a new State small-business credit initiative because States facing budget shortfalls are scaling back lending to small firms and manufacturers. That's working against our recovery. I'm also urging Congress to expand and extend successful SBA programs—by increasing loan limits, for example—something that could benefit people like Bobby and Steve.

In fact, since the start of my administration, we've been hearing from small businesses that want to retain and hire more employees, but they need additional credit. And we've been hearing from small community banks that want to lend more to small businesses, but they need additional capital. So this bill helps fulfill both needs. And to help us create jobs without adding to our deficit, we're making the tough choices to pay for these proposals.

So I'm hopeful that the House will pass these measures next week, and that the Senate will follow as soon as possible with both support from Democrats and Republicans. And I'm eager to sign this tax relief and additional

lending into law. That's how we can continue to move our economy forward, to continue on the path from recession to recovery, but also ultimately to prosperity.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:02 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Robert Pancake II and Steven Wheat, managing partners of the Buffalo Wild Wings Grill & Bar franchise group High 5 LLC; Terry Haney, general manager, Buffalo Wild Wings Grill & Bar restaurant in Dover, DE; and Prachee J. Devadas, founder, CEO, and president, Synergy Enterprises, Inc., and her husband Anand Devadas. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Flash Flooding Near Langley, Arkansas
June 11, 2010

Michelle and I would like to extend heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of those who lost their lives during this horrible flash flood, and we offer our prayers for those who anxiously await news of loved ones still missing. State and local first-responders continue their critical lifesaving efforts on the ground. I have instructed FEMA to be in close contact with Arkansas Emergency Management officials and to report back concerning any unmet needs, and I will ensure that FEMA continues to coordinate with our State and local partners throughout this tragedy. When natural disasters strike, our first-responders are on the frontlines providing emergency assistance and keeping our communities safe. Many of them are showing true bravery today, and for that I thank them.

Statement on Philippine Independence Day
June 11, 2010

On behalf of the American people, I send my best wishes to all those who celebrate the 112th Anniversary of Philippine Independence Day, here in America, in the Philippines, and around the world. Our two countries share a common history and values, and we continue to partner to promote peace and development. Here in America, many Americans can trace their roots to the Philippines, and they are all an important part of the American identity. I am confident that our nations, sharing in our democratic principles, will continue our strong friendship and cooperation.

Statement on Russia Day
June 11, 2010

On behalf of the American people, I extend my best wishes to all those who observe Russia Day. On June 12, 1992, the first Congress of the Russian Federation declared a new sovereign nation. But the relationship between our peoples goes back much further. This year, we celebrated the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II, and it was the joint Allied forces that defeated fascism. Today, our two nations continue in our strong partnership, mutual respect, and friendship, and I am proud of the new START Treaty and our joint efforts to reduce our nuclear arsenals. Beyond that, our two nations continue to expand our commercial and economic ties. Here in America, many Americans can trace their origins to Russia, and all of them are an important part of our national identity.

Statement on World Day Against Child Labor
June 11, 2010

Childhood is a time that should be spent in classrooms and on playgrounds, but for 215 million children around the world, it is a time spent working, often in dangerous and deplorable conditions. And while reports indicate that child labor continues to decline, much work remains to be done.

I applaud my Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis, who has helped increase our efforts to address child labor abroad and here at home. My administration is committing $60 million this year to support efforts to reduce child labor around the world. The Department of Labor has also taken steps to improve protections for child workers in the United States, and we have dramatically increased our child labor law enforcement efforts. And this week, the Department of State and the Department of Labor jointly hosted a conference on child labor that demonstrated our intention to take a whole-of-Government approach to this issue. Participants from multiple Federal agencies and the National Security Council, alongside NGOs and multilateral organizations, all reaffirmed a commitment to take action against child labor in the year ahead. We must address the root causes of child labor by ensuring access to education for all children and helping families to secure sustainable livelihoods and to overcome the poverty that contributes to child labor. On this World Day Against Child Labor, all of us must recommit ourselves to creating a world where our children have a brighter future, free of exploitive labor.

The President's Weekly Address
June 12, 2010

More than a decade ago, Congress set up a formula that governs how doctors get paid by the Medicare program. The intent was to slow the growth of Medicare costs, but the result was a formula that has proposed cutting payments for America's doctors year after year after year. These are cuts that would not only jeopardize our physicians' pay but our seniors' health care.

Since 2003, Congress has acted to prevent these pay cuts from going into effect. These votes were largely bipartisan, and they succeeded when Democrats ran Congress and when Republicans ran Congress, which was most of the time.

This year, a majority of Congress is willing to prevent a pay cut of 21 percent, a pay cut that would undoubtedly force some doctors to stop seeing Medicare patients altogether. But this time, some Senate Republicans may even block a vote on this issue. After years of voting to defer these cuts, the other party is now willing to walk away from the needs of our doctors and our seniors.

Now, I realize that simply kicking these cuts down the road another year is not a long-term solution to this problem. For years, I've said that a system where doctors are left to wonder if they'll get fairly reimbursed makes absolutely no sense. And I am committed to permanently reforming this Medicare formula in a way that balances fiscal responsibility with the responsibility we have to doctors and seniors. In addition, we're already taking significant steps to slow the growth of Medicare costs through health insurance reform, not by targeting doctors and seniors, but by eliminating 50 percent of the waste, fraud, and abuse in the system by 2012. This not only strengthens Medicare, it saves taxpayer dollars.

I'm absolutely willing to take the difficult steps necessary to lower the cost of Medicare and put our budget on a more fiscally sustainable path. But I'm not willing to do that by punishing hard-working physicians or the millions of Americans who count on Medicare. That's just wrong. And that's why in the short term, Congress must act to prevent this pay cut to doctors.

If they don't act, doctors will see a 21-percent cut in their Medicare payments this week. This week, doctors will start receiving these lower reimbursements from the Medicare program. That could lead them to stop participating in the Medicare program, and that could lead seniors to lose their doctors.

We can't allow this to happen. We have to fix this problem so that our doctors can get paid for the lifesaving services they provide and keep their doors open. We have to fix this problem to keep the promise of Medicare for our seniors so that they get the health care they deserve. So I urge Republicans in the Senate to at least allow a majority of Senators and Congressmen to stop this pay cut. I urge them to stand with America's seniors and America's doctors.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:15 p.m. on June 11 in the Lower Cross Hall at the White House for broadcast on June 12. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 11, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 12. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Small-Business Legislation
June 12, 2010

Dear _____:

We are at a critical juncture on our nation's path to economic recovery. I know that each of you is committed to continuing our efforts to help America's families and businesses turn the comer on the deepest and most painful recession America has experienced since the Great Depression. While our efforts over the past 18 months have helped break the freefall and restore growth, it is essential that we continue to explore additional measures to spur job creation and build momentum toward recovery, even as we establish a path to long-term fiscal discipline.

Given the urgency of the continued economic challenges we face, I am writing to urge swift action on several critical priorities that will give our Nation's small businesses added impetus to hire and grow and address the devastating economic impact of budget cuts at the state and local levels that are leading to massive layoffs of teachers, police and firefighters.

As you know, America's small businesses are key drivers of job creation. They have been at the forefront of the dramatic change in the trajectory of private sector job growth we have experienced over the past eighteen months. At the beginning of 2009, our economy was losing over 700,000 jobs per month. Through the first five months of 2010, nearly 500,000 private sector jobs have been created. While this is good news for those who have found work and for businesses large and small that are once again beginning to expand and add more workers, it is cold comfort for the millions of others who want to get back to work.

This is why the extenders legislation being considered in the Senate is so important. It includes provisions like tax cuts to keep research and development jobs in the United States and extends lending programs through the Small Business Administration so that our Nation's small business owners have access to the capital they need to grow their businesses and create jobs.

The small business legislation that I have called for includes a new lending initiative to help creditworthy firms access loans through community banks and innovative state partnerships. It also calls for the complete elimination of capital gains on small business investments so that small business owners have even greater incentives to expand and create good jobs in their communities. Also important are proposals to bolster our infrastructure and create clean energy jobs here in the United States, including the Home Star program of rebates for home improvements and additional tax credits for clean energy manufacturing here in America, both of which have the potential to unlock private sector investment. All of these targeted, temporary measures are directed at spurring

private investment and are cost-effective ways of spurring job creation.

I believe that these targeted investments to help our Nation's small businesses grow and create jobs will boost the economic recovery. I am concerned, however, that the lingering economic damage left by the financial crisis we inherited has left a mounting employment crisis at the state and local level that could set back the pace of our economic recovery. Because this recession has been deeper and more painful than any in 70 years, our state and local governments face a vicious cycle. The lost jobs and foreclosed homes caused by this financial crisis have led to a dramatic decline in revenues that has provoked major cutbacks in critical services at the very time our Nation's families need them most. Already this year, we have lost 84,000 jobs in state and local governments, a loss that was cushioned by the substantial assistance provided in the Recovery Act. And while state and local governments have already taken difficult steps to balance their budgets, if additional action is not taken hundreds of thousands of additional jobs could be lost.

If we allow these layoffs to go forward, it will not only mean hundreds of thousands fewer teachers in our classrooms, firefighters on call and police officers on the beat, it will also mean more costs helping these Americans look for new work, while their lost paychecks will mean less tax revenues and less demand for the products and services provided by other workers.

That is why the actual cost of saving state and local jobs is likely to be 20 to 40 percent below their budgetary cost. The increased matching for Medicaid FMAP currently being considered in the Senate as well as the Teacher Firing Prevention Fund that I have called for would help prevent these layoffs at the state and local level while keeping classroom sizes down and maintaining vital education, health and public safety services. These measures are among the most cost-effective ways of promoting economic growth, as measured by the Congressional Budget Office and numerous independent experts. And they can be designed with appropriate safeguards to ensure that they achieve their objective of keeping people working, rather than rewarding states for poor past policy choices.

Because the urgency is high—many school districts, cities and states are already being forced to make these layoffs—these provisions must be passed as quickly as possible. In addition, we should take steps to continue the Recovery Act program that has already helped millions of unemployed workers pay for continuing their health care coverage.

Taken together, these measures to jump-start private sector job creation, avoid massive layoffs at the local and state levels and help the unemployed are critical and timely ways to further the economic recovery and spur job creation. At this critical moment, we cannot afford to slide backwards just as our recovery is taking hold. We must take these emergency measures.

While robust economic growth is essential for achieving deficit reduction, we must also take additional steps to establish a fiscally sustainable budget path over the medium- and long-term. That is why, as we move forward, we must continue to work to ensure that investments are made as efficiently as possible. I have called for a three year freeze in non-security discretionary spending—which the Democratic and Republican Congressional leadership embraced at our bipartisan meeting—and a fee on the largest Wall Street firms to eliminate any increase in the cost of TARP to the deficit. In recent weeks, I have also proposed additional measures to discipline the budget process with expedited rescissions, agency incentives to identify ways to save money, and a process to better use our federal property and sell off the property we do not need.

Ultimately, reining in our deficit will take major steps, including the effective implementation of health reform and laying the conditions for the success of the bipartisan fiscal commission.

Only through this approach of aggressive and well-designed targeted and temporary actions, alongside measures to ensure a sustainable and responsible long-term budget outlook, will we be able to fulfill our economic potential. I know you share my sense of urgen-

cy and look forward to working closely with Congress as we continue our efforts to jump-start job creation and restore fiscal discipline in Washington.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, and House Minority Leader John A. Boehner; and Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid, and Senate Minority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell.

Remarks Following a Briefing on the Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico in Gulfport, Mississippi

June 14, 2010

I'm going to make a longer statement later in Alabama, so I—just very quickly, I just want to thank Governor Barbour and the first lady of Mississippi for hosting us; want to thank Governor Jindal for flying in; and we have members of the congressional delegation here in Mississippi, as well as a range of local and State officials.

Admiral Allen provided a detailed report about what was being done specifically here in Mississippi and fielded a range of questions and suggestions about how responses can continually improve. One of the things that came out of the—this discussion is how do we make sure that there's effective coordination in terms of skimmers, vessels of opportunity that are out in the water right now. Can we make sure that they are responding as quickly as possible to the oil before it starts getting closer to shore?

And there are a range of issues having to do with communications. Are there—do they—some of these smaller vessels have radios on them? Have we done a effective inventory of which ones are large enough and have enough trained personnel that they can actually lay boom or they can engage in skimming? Which ones should be deployed more as sentinels to identify where, in fact, the oil may be coming in? I think there was a very useful conversation. Captain Steve Poulin, who is the local incident commander, had gathered a lot of these suggestions and is going to be moving on them in the days to come.

We also talked about claims to make sure that people here in Mississippi, but throughout the region, are going to be adequately compensated for the damages and the losses that they're experiencing right now. There are still problems with them. I think as everybody is aware, I'm going to be meeting with the chairman and other officials from BP on Wednesday. And so we're gathering up facts, stories right now so that we have an absolutely clear understanding about how we can best present to BP the need to make sure that individuals and businesses are dealt with in a fair manner and in a prompt manner. And again, there were suggestions on that front as well.

So I just want to thank everybody here that's involved. Folks around the table here have been working 24/7. The Governors, they've been on a constant state of full alert and have been putting in a lot of time and a lot of energy working with Thad Allen to make sure that in dealing with this disaster, we are minimizing the short-term impacts and we're making sure that we've got the resources to fully recover.

Last point I'm going to make, and this is something that's been repeatedly emphasized: Here in Mississippi—but it's true in Florida, it's true in Alabama, and it's true in portions of Louisiana—there's still a lot of opportunity for visitors to come down here, a lot of beaches that are not yet affected or will not be affected. And we just want to make sure that people who have travel plans down to the Gulf area remain mindful of that, because if people want to know what can they do to help folks down here, one of the best ways to help is to come down here and enjoy the outstanding hospitality.

So all right? And I'll be making longer comments when I get to Alabama this afternoon. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:56 a.m. at U.S. Coast Guard Station Gulfport. In his re-

marks, he referred to Gov. Haley R. Barbour of Mississippi and his wife Marsha; Gov. Piyush "Bobby" Jindal of Louisiana; Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG, in his capacity as national incident commander for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill; Capt. Steven D. Poulin, USCG, commanding officer, Sector Mobile; Carl-Henric Svanberg, chairman of the board, Anthony B. Hayward, group chief executive, Robert W. Dudley, managing director, and Rupert Bondy, group general counsel, BP p.l.c.; and Lamar McKay, chairman and president, BP America, Inc.

Remarks During a Discussion With Community Members in Gulfport
June 14, 2010

[*The President's remarks were joined in progress.*]

The President. ——the problem is, most of this stuff had been tested with a much smaller amount of oil. And so the amounts of dispersants, for example, were much lower. We really have never seen up to a million——

Participant. Gallons

The President. ——gallons of dispersant put out there. And so we already provided some waivers, because our attitude was, given the toxicity, given how toxic the oil was already—it's a matter of the lesser of two evils—it was better to go ahead and put that out. And we tested it for safety, and the EPA has been involved in that.

But the point I made earlier is the one that I think we have to focus on, and that is that the technologies generally, whether it's dispersants, boom, skimming devices, they really haven't developed much over the last 30, 40 years. We're using the same stuff—the industry is using the same stuff that the industry was using 40 years ago. And we've got to—part of the review that we're doing involves making sure that whether it's private industry or a public-private partnership that people start developing better mechanisms to respond to this kind of disastrous situation

But for the press pool, I just want to thank the business owners as well as the mayor and the Governor and first lady for talking to Thad and myself.

As you can see, this is a spectacular beach. You've got Missy, who's got a wonderful inn, the Edgewater Inn, and George [Scott],* he's got a terrific restaurant—what's the name of the restaurant?

Scott Weinberg. The Blow Fly Inn.

The President. And Missy was mentioning she has already seen a 40-percent drop in her occupancy since this crisis occurred, partly because of cancellations of large groups that were planning to stay there.

It just gives you a sense—and those folks who were going to stay at Missy's would have been eating at George's [Scott's],* so it gives you a sense of the kind of potential economic impact that a crisis like this can have on individual business owners. And obviously, they've got to make payroll, and they've got employees, and it trickles down and has an impact on them as well.

So we are going to be working with business owners like this, with Governors and mayors to make sure that they are made whole as a consequence of this crisis. But we also want to make sure that we are in this for the long haul. And the full effects of this may not be known immediately. They may not be known 3 months from now and may not be fully known for another 6 months or a year. And we just want to make sure we've got structure in place so that people like Missy and George [Scott]* are adequately dealt with. That's going to be a top topic of mine when I meet with the BP officials on Wednesday. And so I just want to say

* White House correction.

how much I appreciate them sharing their stories.

All right? Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:45 p.m. at the Chimneys Restaurant. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor George Schloegel of Gulfport, MS; Gov. Haley R. Barbour of Mississippi and his wife Marsha; Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG, in his capacity as national incident commander for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill; and Missy Bennett, owner, Edgewater Inn.

Remarks Following a Tour of Theodore Industrial Port and an Exchange With Reporters in Theodore, Alabama
June 14, 2010

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. I just had to—a chance to tour this staging facility here at Theodore along with Admiral Allen and Governor Riley. I also want to acknowledge that Congressman Jo Bonner and a number of our elected officials are here, and they just received an extensive briefing about what is taking place.

It is from this staging area and 16 others like it all across the Gulf Coast that our response to the oil spill is being carried out. Now, I saw, and many of you had an opportunity to see, what is being done to repair and decontaminate boom, to train volunteers, and to help with the cleanup efforts. And their hard work and their sense of purpose on behalf of the people of Alabama as well as the Gulf Coast is inspiring.

I had a chance during the discussions with the State and local officials to reiterate to them what I've been saying all across the coast, and that is that we want to coordinate at every level—Federal, State, and local—to make sure that we are leaving no stone unturned in terms of our ability to respond to this crisis.

Now, what I've heard from a number of local officials during my trip today is what I've heard from folks on each of the four visits that I've made to this region since the Deepwater Horizon explosion happened in April. There's a sense that this disaster is not only threatening our fishermen and our shrimpers and our oystermen, not only affecting potentially precious marshes and wetlands and estuaries and waters that are part of what makes the Gulf Coast so special, there's also a fear that it can have a long-term impact on a way of life that has been passed on for generations.

And I understand that fear. The leaders and the officials who are with me understand it. Governor Riley understands it. He has been a regular presence on our daily coordinating calls and a relentless advocate for Alabama throughout this process. And we are absolutely committed to working with him and all the local officials who are behind us to do everything in our power to protect the Gulf way of life so that it's there for our children and our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren.

Now, everybody here has had experiences dealing with disasters. As we were flying over from Mississippi via helicopter, you could see the footprints of buildings that had been decimated from Katrina. But in some ways, what we're dealing with here is unique because it's not simply one catastrophic event, it's an ongoing assault whose movements are constantly changing. That's what makes this crisis so challenging. It means that it has to be constantly watched, it has to be tracked. We're constantly having to redeploy resources to make sure that they're having maximum impact. And we also need to make sure that we are constantly helping folks who have been hurt by it, even as we're stopping the oil from spreading into more and more areas.

So that means that this response effort has to happen on a bunch of different tracks. It means containing as much of the oil as we can as quick as we can. After seeing an initial oil collection plan from BP, we went back to them and said that they need to move faster and more aggressively. And they have now come back with a plan to accelerate steps to contain over 50,000 barrels a day by the end of June, 2 weeks earlier than they had originally suggested. Their revised plan also includes steps to better prepare against extreme weather events and other un-

foreseen circumstances in the months ahead, addressing another one of our concerns. And we're going to continue to hold BP and any other responsible parties accountable for the disaster that they created.

Dealing with the aftermath of this spill also means protecting the health and safety of the folks who live and work here in Theodore, here in Alabama, and here on the Gulf Coast. As part of this effort, I'm announcing a comprehensive, coordinated, and multiagency initiative to ensure that seafood from the Gulf of Mexico is safe to eat. Now, I had some of that seafood for lunch, and it was delicious. But we want to make sure that the food industry down here, as much as possible, is getting the protection and the certification that they need to continue their businesses. So this is important for consumers who need to know that their food is safe, but it's also important for the fishermen and processors who need to be able to sell their products with confidence.

So let me be clear: Seafood from the Gulf today is safe to eat, but we need to make sure that it stays that way. And that's why, beyond closing off waters that have been or are likely to be exposed to oil, the FDA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are increasing inspections of seafood processors, strengthening surveillance programs, and monitoring fish that are caught just outside of restricted areas. And we're also coordinating our efforts with the States, which are implementing similar plans.

These safety measures are on top of steps that we've taken to protect workers who are involved in the cleanup efforts. And part of the training that you observed here today involves making sure that workers are sticking to the protocols that are put in place so that when they are out there on the waters or here on land working with potentially toxic materials, that they're taking that seriously and that they're not cutting corners on safety, because we don't want tragedies on top of the tragedy that we're already seeing.

Officials from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration are inspecting all the staging areas like this one. They're boarding vessels off the coast to make sure that BP is complying with its safety obligations. If they see a problem, they'll work with BP to resolve it as quickly as possible. And we're also monitoring air and water across the Gulf Coast for hazardous chemicals and pollutants that could endanger oil spill workers or anybody else, so we can act swiftly should any health risks arise.

Now, these health and safety measures are just part of our overall effort to deal with the spill. All in all, we are confronting the largest environmental disaster in our history with the largest environmental response and recovery effort in our history. Over 27,000 personnel are working to safeguard our coasts and protect endangered wildlife. More than 5,400 skimmers, tugs, barges, and other vessels, some of which you saw as we came into this facility, are currently responding to the spill. Over 2 million feet of containment boom and over 3 million feet of absorbent boom are being used to contain the spill, and millions of more feet are available.

In addition, we have authorized the deployment of 17,500 National Guardsmen and women to assist in the response effort. So far, only about 1,600 have been activated, and the rest stand ready to help whenever our Governors choose to call on them.

Across the Gulf Coast, guardsmen are supporting local, State, and Federal authorities in a number of ways, from reconnaissance to hazardous material training. Guard aircraft are also assisting in the response and helping to coordinate the vessels that are out on the water. Here in Alabama in particular, about 200 of the roughly 450 guardsmen who've been activated have received specialized training to assist BP with claims processing. So put simply, this is a multipurpose force that's prepared to handle almost any challenge, and I hope our Governors put them to good use.

So the full resources of our Government are being mobilized to confront this disaster. But it's not only important for everyone from the Federal Government on down to do all we can, it's also important for us to work together to make sure our efforts are well coordinated. That's why Governor Riley and the other Gulf Coast Governors have been on a daily call with my administration, 7 days a week, since this di-

saster occurred. That's why we're going to continue to work hand in hand with State and local authorities on every front, from containing as much oil as possible to protecting our coasts, until we put this tragic ordeal behind us.

Now, I can't promise folks here in Theodore or across the Gulf Coast that the oil will be cleaned up overnight; it will not be. It's going to take time for things to return to normal. There's going to be a harmful effect on many local businesses, and it's going to be painful for a lot of folks. Folks are going to be frustrated, and some folks are going to be angry. But I promise you this: that things are going to return to normal. This region that's known a lot of hardship will bounce back, just like it's bounced back before. We are going to do everything we can, 24/7, to make sure that communities get back on their feet. And in the end, I am confident that we're going to be able to leave the Gulf Coast in better shape than it was before.

So, Governor Riley, I appreciate all your efforts. To all the local officials here who've been working so hard, we appreciate what you do each and every day.

And let me just make one last comment about our Coast Guard and about our national incident coordinator, Thad Allen. Thad Allen was about to retire, and he has answered the call on behalf of this country and is working as hard as anybody in this country right now to help deal with this crisis. Members of the Coast Guard have been doing outstanding work each and every day, and so I just want to say to all of them that the country is proud of you, grateful to you. Keep up the good work.

All right. Thank you very much, everybody.

President's Meeting With BP p.l.c. Chairman Carl-Henric Svanberg

Q. Mr. President—[*inaudible*]?

The President. I want to take this one question because there's been some reports in the news. I'm going to be meeting with the BP p.l.c. chairman and a number of officials on Wednesday. We have begun preliminary conversations about how do we structure a mechanism so that the legitimate claims that are going to be presented, not just tomorrow, not just next week, but over the coming months, are dealt with justly, fairly, promptly.

So far, we've had a constructive conversation, and my hope is, is that by the time the chairman and I meet on Wednesday, that we've made sufficient progress, that we can start actually seeing a structure that would be in place. But it's too early now at this point, Major [Major Garrett, FOX News], for me to make an announcement. By Wednesday, though, my hope is, is that we've made some progress on this front.

All right?

Oil Spill Skimming Equipment and Vessels

Q. Mr. President—[*inaudible*]?

The President. I'm going to let Thad Allen, who's the national incident coordinator, address this very quickly because we talked about it during our meeting.

Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill National Incident Commander Thad W. Allen. First of all, we have a number of different types of skimming equipment. Some are offshore deep-draft vessels; the skimming equipment is organically built into it. We have other skimming arrays that are towed with boom systems, and we have shallow water skimmers that are deployed inshore. They become the major resource of effectiveness to try and fight this battle offshore, and we know what we're doing near the wellhead. We have to push the enemy, if you will, back 20 or 30 miles offshore and do maximum skimming there.

We have over 400 of those skimming vessels that are actually organically contained skimming equipment. Our goal is to take the smaller equipment that's flexible, put it on vessels of opportunity, and then coordinate better with our local, State partners, including National Guard overflights, local fishermen's associations, and so forth, mass our effect and get it pointed up with a command and control system that can attack it on all levels.

The President. All right.

Oil Spill Skimming Equipment and Vessels

Q. What about those vessels of opportunity? There are a lot of local fishermen that say they're not being——

The President. This is an issue—and you're only going to get two questions. This is an issue that's come up across the Gulf. Keep in mind what we're talking about with vessels of opportunity—that could range from a big shrimp boat to just a little recreation boat that somebody has brought up.

So each of them is going to have different capacity. Some of them are going to be able to take skimming equipment of the sort that Admiral Allen discussed and actually place it on the boat. Some of them aren't going to have that capacity, but maybe they can act as sentinels to spot oil or maybe some of them are just shuttling supplies back and forth to these ships.

So what we're doing now is we're taking inventory of all the vessels that have presented themselves to determine which ones can go out in deep water—they've got radio, they've got full equipment, they can actually lay out boom, they can engage in skimming—which ones aren't able to do that, and that process is going to be coordinated. But keep in mind, we've got to do this across four States. And what that means is, is that at any given time, as Thad indicated, the priority might be, we just want to get some stuff out 20 miles before it starts coming in closer, which means you're not going to see necessarily a lot of skimmers close in because every resource that we have is being deployed further out.

But one of the key points that we made with the regional incident commander is we've got to make sure that we've got a full inventory, we know exactly what the capacity of each of these boats are, we've made sure that people are being trained, and we're matched up folks who are trained with these vessels, and we start actually putting them to work as quickly as possible.

All right?

Gulf Coast Region Beaches

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Well, look, I've seen a number of beautiful beaches. I saw some in Mississippi. We saw some beaches flying over. But I'll be honest with you that we're going to stop as much of the oil from coming in as possible. That's our number-one job.

It turns out that if the oil hits the beaches, that's actually probably the easiest to clean up. So it's a concern obviously for tourism, it's a concern for an entire Gulf region that economically depends on the tourist season and this period of time when people are out of school. But those beaches will recover because those big globs of oil, when they hit the beaches, we can send a bunch of people out there and scoop them up, dispose of it properly, and those beaches will look pretty pristine a year or 2 years from now.

The biggest concern we have actually are the marshes, the estuaries, the wetlands, where if you start seeing that oil seeping in, that not only can kill oyster beds and other vitally important seafood and ecosystems, but even the repair efforts in those areas can actually destroy the ecology in the region.

So we're having to coordinate with the best scientists we've got available. Thad Allen is working with NOAA and all the other agencies to make sure that we are grading priorities in terms of areas that have to be protected first and foremost because they may have the most difficult time to recover. And that means that sometimes—for example, in Mississippi, where I just came from, they just made a decision they're not putting any boom in front of the beaches, because the fact of the matter is, if the oil hits there, it's bad, but it's temporary, whereas in some of these other areas it could end up being permanent.

All right? Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:05 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Robert R. Riley of Alabama; Gov. Charles J. Crist, Jr., of Florida; Gov. Piyush "Bobby" Jindal of Louisiana; Gov. Haley R. Barbour of Mississippi; and Capt. Steven D. Poulin, USCG, commanding officer, Sector Mobile. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Resignation of Edward B. Montgomery as Director of Recovery for Auto Communities and Workers
June 14, 2010

I want to thank Dr. Ed Montgomery for his dedicated service to my administration and the country. Over the last year, Ed has crisscrossed the country in a tireless effort to cut through redtape and speed the economic recovery for those hit hardest by the auto industry's struggles. The results of his efforts have been felt in auto towns across America, from the factories being put back to use years ahead of schedule to the workers retraining for jobs in emerging industries.

While Ed will be missed, my administration's commitment to autoworkers and communities remains strong. The work of the White House Council on Auto Communities will continue under the direction of Secretary Solis and NEC Director Larry Summers, and we will move quickly to find a replacement for Dr. Montgomery.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to North Korea
June 14, 2010

To the Congress of United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13466 of June 26, 2008, is to continue in effect beyond June 26, 2010.

The existence and the risk of proliferation of weapons-usable fissile material on the Korean Peninsula constitute a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency and maintain certain restrictions with respect to North Korea and North Korean nationals.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 14, 2010.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 15. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Following a Briefing on the Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico in Pensacola, Florida
June 15, 2010

We just had a very useful discussion. And I want to thank Governor Crist and the congressional delegation as well as our owner here, Mike Pinzone, of this wonderful facility overlooking this beautiful beach. I want to also thank the mayor of Pensacola for his hospitality.

What we've done is to try to find out from local business owners, local officials, as well as State officials like Alex Sink and Senator LeMieux and others, how the response can be most effective here, specifically in Florida. And when you look out over this unbelievable beach,

one of the things that you can see is that so far, at least, this beach has not been affected.

This is a still place that's open for business and welcoming to vacationers, and people can have a wonderful holiday here, and I know the mayor wants to emphasize that. But there are obviously fears about the oil that is offshore.

And what we emphasized was that we're going to be doing everything we can, make sure that there are skimmers out, there are booms out, and a response to keep the oil offshore. But even if we do the best possible job on that, what the mayor described, what Mike described as a local business owner here, is that they're still being affected by perceptions, that visitors have dropped off as much as 40 percent in this area, and that has an impact on the entire economy. You saw the same thing yesterday when we were in Alabama and Mississippi.

So a couple of things that we've done: Number one, to make sure that there is a nimble and effective local response, Thad Allen has now assigned deputy incident commanders to each of the individual States. So Florida will have its own deputy incident commander, as Mississippi and Alabama do.

In addition to the sites in Houma and in Mobile, we're also going to set up an incident management team in Tallahassee, here in Florida. All this is designed to make sure that on the Federal response, we are able to work and make decisions at a local level in response to the suggestions of people who know their communities best and know their waters best. And my expectation is, is that we're going to see a lot of good ideas coming from the local area that we can implement right away, as opposed to waiting until it goes all the way to the top.

But the other thing that we're hearing here is the same thing we heard yesterday, which is, businesses need help right now. I'm going to be addressing this, this evening, the issue of how we can make sure that claims to businesses that have been affected are responded to quickly and fairly.

I'll be meeting with BP chairmen and officials tomorrow to discuss the stories that I've heard from people like Mike. Mike has put in all the paperwork. In fact, he has documented more than amply the fact that his business has been deeply affected by this crisis, but he hasn't received the compensation that he needs to make sure that his business stays open.

And I told Mike—and I want every businessperson here in Florida to know—that I will be their fierce advocate in making sure that they are getting the compensation they need to get through what is going to be a difficult season. But what I described for them is the fact that if we can get through this season, cap this well, mitigate the damage—we're not going to eliminate it completely; there's going to be damage to the shoreline—but if we can reduce it as much as possible, help businesses get through this season, clean it up, by the time we get to next season, there's no reason why this beach behind us is not going to be as beautiful as ever, and Pensacola and other coastline communities across Florida will be thriving as they always have.

So the key right now is just to make sure that people like Mike are helped, that they're able to get through what's going to be a tough time. And I've told him and I've told the Governor and all the other Florida officials here that we're not going to go away. We're just going to keep on at this until we are able to not only get back to normal but maybe even get better than it was before this crisis.

So I appreciate everybody's input, and we look forward to continuing to work with you on this enormous challenge.

All right? Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:48 a.m. at the Fish Sandwich Snack Bar. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Charles J. Crist, Jr., and Chief Financial Officer Adelaide "Alex" Sink of Florida; Mayor Michael C. Wiggins of Pensacola, FL; Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG, in his capacity as national incident commander for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill; and Carl-Henric

Svanberg, chairman of the board, Anthony B. Hayward, group chief executive, Robert W. Dudley, managing director, and Rupert Bondy, group general counsel, BP p.l.c.; and Lamar McKay, chairman and president, BP America, Inc. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at Naval Air Station Pensacola in Pensacola
June 15, 2010

Thank you. Well, hello, Pensacola! It is great to be here. I want everybody, first of all, to give a big round of applause to Chief Elison Talabong for leading us in the pledge and singing our national anthem; to Lieutenant Commander Randy Ekstrom for the wonderful invocation.

I want to thank your outstanding local leaders for welcoming me here today, including Captains Chris Plummer, Mike Price, and Brad Martin. Give them a big round of applause. And your great senior enlisted leaders, including Master Chief Mike Dollen, give them a big round of applause.

I want to thank all the spouses and families who are joining us here today. You hold our military families together, so we honor your service as well.

Now, it is great to be here in Pensacola, America's oldest naval air station, the cradle of naval aviation. We've got Navy—all the students of the Naval Air Technical Training Center. We've got Training Wing Six, maybe a few Blue Angels. We've got the United States Marines in the house, maybe a few Air Force and Army too.

Now, I don't know how many could be here, because they're out there on the water right now, responding to the spill, but I want to thank all the folks at Coast Guard Station Pensacola for their outstanding work. And I know somebody who is especially proud of them, and that's the former Commandant of the Coast Guard, who postponed his retirement to answer his country's call once more and coordinate the Federal response effort to the spill, and that's Admiral Thad Allen. Please give him a big round of applause.

Now, I was just down at the Pensacola Beach Gulf Pier, at the Fish Sandwich Snack Bar. Now, I don't know if any of you ever checked it out. It's a nice spot. We were there with some of Florida's State and local leaders to discuss the situation here. I want to acknowledge the hard work that's being done by the Governor of Florida, Charlie Crist; Florida's Chief Financial Officer, Alex Sink; Senators Bill Nelson, George LeMieux; Representatives who are here today—we got Jeff Miller and Corrine Brown and Ted Deutch. Please give them a big round of applause. We've got Escambia County Commissioner Grover Robinson and Pensacola Mayor Mike Wiggins. Thank you very much for your outstanding efforts.

I know all of you join me in thanking these leaders and their communities—because they're your neighbors—for the incredible support that they give all the men and women and your families here in Pensacola. So we're grateful to you.

But this is my fourth visit to the Gulf Coast since the start of this spill. Yesterday I was over in Gulfport, Mississippi; Theodore, Alabama; and now Pensacola, assessing the situation, reviewing the response, seeing what needs to be done better and faster, and talking with folks—whether fishermen or small-businesspeople and their families—who are seeing their lives turned upside down by this disaster.

Here in Pensacola, the beautiful beaches are still open. The sand is white, and the water is blue. So folks who are looking for a good vacation, they can still come down to Pensacola. People need to know that Pensacola is still open for business. But that doesn't mean that people aren't angry, that doesn't mean that people aren't scared, that doesn't mean that people have concerns about the future. We all have those concerns. And people have every right to be angry. Those plumes of oil are off the coast. The fishing waters are closed. Tar balls have been coming ashore. And everybody is bracing for more.

So I'll say today what I've been saying up and down the coast over the last couple of days and

over the last month. Yes, this is an unprecedented environmental disaster; it's the worst in our Nation's history. But we're going to continue to meet it with an unprecedented Federal response and recovery effort, the largest in our Nation's history. This is an assault on our shores, and we're going to fight back with everything that we've got.

And that includes mobilizing the resources of the greatest military in the world. Now, here at Naval Air Station Pensacola, you've been one of the major staging areas. You've helped to support the response effort. And I thank you for that, and I know the people of Pensacola thank you for that. And all along the Gulf Coast, our men and women in uniform—Active, Guard, and Reserve—from across the country are stepping up and helping out.

There are soldiers on the beaches putting out sandbags and building barriers and cleaning up the oil and helping people process their claims for compensation from BP. There are sailors and marines offering their ships and their skimmers and their helicopters and miles of boom. There are airmen overhead, flying in equipment and spraying dispersant. And of course, there are coast guardsmen and women on the cutters, in the air, working around the clock.

And when I say this is the largest response of its kind in American history, I mean it. We've got more than 5,000 vessels onsite: skimmers, tugs, barges, dozens of aircraft. More than 27,000 personnel are on the scene, fighting this every day, putting out millions of feet of boom and cleaning the shores.

All told, we've authorized the deployment of 17,500 National Guardsmen to respond to this crisis. And so far, only about 1,600 have been activated, and that leaves a lot of guardsmen ready to help. And if our Governors call on them, I know they'll be ready, because they're always ready.

So I want the people of this region to know that my administration is going to do whatever it takes, for as long as it takes, to deal with this disaster. That includes the additional actions I announced yesterday to make sure that seafood from the Gulf is safe to eat. It includes steps we've taken to protect the safety of workers involved in the cleanup. It includes the new command structure I announced this morning to make sure States and local communities like Pensacola have the autonomy and the resources that they need to go forward.

And that includes something else: Making sure BP pays for the damages that it has caused. Because this isn't just an environmental disaster; for many families and communities, it's an economic disaster. Here in Pensacola and the panhandle, tourism is everything. And when the tourists stay home, it ripples out and hits folks across these communities: the charter boats, the hotels, the restaurants, the roadside stores, the shops, the suppliers, the dive shops. And if your inland waters are contaminated, if the bays and bayous are contaminated, it could be devastating, changing the way of life down here for years to come.

And I'm going to speak to the Nation tonight about this. But let me say to the people of Pensacola and the Gulf Coast: I am with you; my administration is with you for the long haul to make sure BP pays for the damage that it has done and to make sure that you are getting the help you need to protect this beautiful coast and to rehabilitate the damaged areas, to revitalize this region, and to make sure that nothing like this ever happens again. That is a commitment I am making to the people of Florida and people all across this Gulf.

Now, that spirit of resolve and determination and resilience, that's the same spirit we see in all of you, in the men and women in uniform, the spirit we'll need to meet other challenges of our time. Obviously, the news has been dominated lately by the oil spill, but our Nation is at war, and all of you have stepped forward. You volunteered. You took an oath. You stood tall, and you said, "I will serve."

And here at Pensacola, you're carrying on the proud tradition of naval aviation that spans a century. Here at the Barrancas National Cemetery, our heroes from yesterday's wars are still inspiring us. And like generations before you, you're no strangers to sacrifice. Our prayers are with the families and friends of the crews that you lost in that training exercise 2

months ago. Today we send out our thoughts and prayers to all the folks from Pensacola on the frontlines at this very moment, including Iraq and Afghanistan. They are making us incredibly proud.

And so are you. As naval aviators and naval flight officers, you'll soon earn your "Wings of Gold." And many of you will prove yourselves as indispensable aircrews—the mechanics, the engineers, the electricians, the maintenance crews—people's lives depending on what you do each and every day.

I know you're looking ahead to your first operational tours, to join the fleet and your squadrons. And within weeks, some of you may find yourselves serving on a carrier deck in the Arabian Sea or working a busy flight line in Afghanistan. And as you begin your careers, as you look ahead to a life of service, I want you to know, on behalf of the American people, that your Nation thanks you, your Nation appreciates you, your Nation will stand with you every step of the way.

And as your Commander in Chief, I want you to know something: I will not hesitate to use force to protect the American people or our vital interests, but I will also never risk your lives unless it's absolutely necessary. And if it is necessary, we are going to back you up to the hilt with the strategy and the clear mission and the equipment and the support that you need to get the job done right. That's my promise to every one of you, every man and woman who wears America's uniform.

That includes the right strategy in Iraq, where we're partnering with the Iraqi people for their long-term security and prosperity. And thanks to the honor and that heroism of our troops, we are poised to end our combat mission in Iraq this summer, on schedule.

As we end the war in Iraq, we're pressing forward in Afghanistan. We're working to break the momentum of the Taliban insurgency and train Afghan security forces, strengthen the capacity of the Afghan Government, and protect the Afghan people.

We will disrupt and dismantle and ultimately defeat Al Qaida and its terrorist affiliates. And we will support the aspirations of people around the world as they seek progress and opportunity and prosperity, because that's what we do as Americans.

As you meet the missions we ask of you, we're going to make sure you're trained and equipped to succeed. That's why we halted reductions in the Navy. That's why we increased the size of the Marine Corps. That's why we're investing in the capabilities and technologies of tomorrow. And as we come up on the 100th anniversary of naval aviation next year, we're committed to the next generation of aircraft. We're going to keep you the best trained, best led, best equipped military that the world has ever known.

Some of that is about technology. But the most important thing in our military is our people, it's all of you. And as you advance through the ranks and start families of your own, we want to be there for your loved ones too. This is one of the defining missions of the First Lady, Michelle Obama. On Sunday, she visited the Navy-Marine Corps team and their families at Camp Pendleton. And they had a tough week, because five outstanding marines from Pendleton gave their lives last week in Afghanistan. And during her visit, Michelle had a message for their families and for all military families: America is going to keep faith with you too.

When a loved one goes to war, that family goes to war. That's why we're working to improve family readiness and increase pay and benefits, working to give you more time between deployments, increasing support to help spouses and families deal with the stresses and the separation of war.

But this can't be the work of Government alone. As Michelle has been saying, 1 percent of Americans may be fighting our wars, but 100 percent of Americans need to be supporting our men and women and their families in uniform. You guys shouldn't be carrying the entire burden. That's why Michelle is challenging every sector of American society to support our military families, and not just now, with our Nation at war, but at every stage of your lives.

So we're improving care for our wounded warriors, especially those with posttraumatic stress and traumatic brain injury. We're funding the post-9/11 GI bill to give you and your families the chance to pursue your dreams. We've

made a historic commitment to our veterans with one of the largest percentage increases to the VA budget in the past 30 years.

Those are concrete actions we've taken to meet the commitment I have to you and that the American people have to you. Because you've always taken care of America, America needs to take care of you. And that's my main message here today. We're all in this together. In our country, there isn't a military world and a civilian world. We're all Americans. There's not Democrats and Republicans, when you take the long view, we're all Americans. We all rise and fall together. And we all need to do our part to get through the challenges we face as a people.

So yes, we're emerging from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Too many folks are still out of work here in Florida and around the country. Yes, we're a nation at war with adversaries who will stop at nothing to strike our homeland and would kill innocent people, women and children, with no compunction. Yes, we're now battling the worst economic—environmental disaster in American history. Any one of these challenges alone would test our country. Confronting them all at once might overwhelm a lesser nation.

But look around you. Look at the person standing next to you. You look around and you see the strength and resilience that will carry us through. You look at this installation and the forts that have stood watch over this bay and its people for centuries, through the rise and fall of empires, through a terrible Civil War, and as a nation healed itself, we became a beacon to the world. We've endured.

All of these men and women in uniform, all of you represent the same spirit of service and sacrifice as those who've gone before, who defeated fascism, defeated tyranny, prevailed in a long cold war over communism. And now, in our time, you've toppled regimes based on terror and dictatorship, and you've given new hope to millions of people. You've earned your place among the greatest of generations.

And look at the people of this city and this region—fishermen who've made their lives on the water, families who've lived here for generations, hard-working folks who've had to endure more than their share—tough economic times and hurricanes and storms that forced so many families and communities to start over from scratch. But they never gave up. They started over, and they rebuilt stronger than before.

As Americans, we don't quit. We keep coming. And none of these challenges we're facing are going to be easy. None of them are going to be quick. But make no mistake: The United States of America has gone through tough times before and we always come out stronger. And we will do so again.

And this city and this region will recover. It will thrive again. And America's military will prevail in the mission to keep our country safe. And our Nation will endure from these trials stronger than before. That is the history of the United States of America. That is the legacy of our Armed Forces. And I promise you that we will not falter.

Past generations have passed on this precious gift to us, and future generations are depending on us. And as I look out on each and every one of your faces, I'm absolutely confident that you will meet that challenge.

God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to CPO Elison Talabong, USN, aviation ordnance chief, and Capt. Michael K. Price, USN, commanding officer, Naval Air Technical Training Center Pensacola; Lt. Cmdr. Randy Ekstrom, USN, chaplain, Capt. Christopher W. Plummer, USN, commanding officer, and Command Master Chief Petty Officer Michael F. Dollen, USN, Naval Air Station Pensacola; Capt. Bradley A. Martin, USN, commanding officer, Center for Naval Aviation and Technical Training; and Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG, in his capacity as national incident commander for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Global Deployments of United States Combat-Equipped Armed Forces

June 15, 2010

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am providing this supplemental consolidated report, prepared by my Administration and consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93–148), as part of my efforts to keep the Congress informed about deployments of U.S. Armed Forces equipped for combat.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN SUPPORT OF U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM OBJECTIVES

Since October 7, 2001, the United States has conducted combat operations in Afghanistan against al-Qa'ida terrorists and their Taliban supporters. It has also deployed combat-equipped forces to a number of locations in the U.S. Central, Pacific, European, Southern, and Africa Command areas of operation in support of those and other overseas operations. Operations and deployments remain ongoing. Previous such operations were reported consistent with Public Law 107–40 and the War Powers Resolution. These operations, which the United States has carried out with the assistance of numerous international partners, have been successful in seriously degrading al-Qa'ida's capabilities and brought an end to the Taliban's leadership of Afghanistan. United States Armed Forces are actively pursuing and engaging remaining al-Qa'ida and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. The total number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan is approximately 87,000, of which more than 62,000 are assigned to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. The U.N. Security Council most recently reaffirmed its authorization of ISAF for a 12-month period from October 13, 2009, in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1890 (October 8, 2009).The mission of ISAF, under NATO command and in partnership with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, is to conduct population-centric counterinsurgency operations, enable expanded and effective Afghan National Security Forces, support improved governance and development in order to protect the Afghan people, and promote sustainable security. Presently, 46 nations contribute to ISAF, including all 28 NATO Allies.

The United States continues to detain several hundred al-Qa'ida and Taliban fighters who are believed to pose a continuing threat to the United States and its interests. The combat-equipped forces deployed since January 2002 to Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, continue to conduct secure detention operations for the approximately 180 detainees at Guantanamo Bay under Public Law 107–40 and consistent with principles of the law of war.

In furtherance of U.S. efforts against terrorists who pose a continuing and imminent threat to the United States, its friends, its allies, and U.S. forces abroad, the United States continues to work with partners around the globe, with a particular focus on the U.S. Central Command's area of operations. In this context, the United States has deployed U.S. combat-equipped forces to assist in enhancing the counterterrorism capabilities of our friends and allies, including special operations and other forces for sensitive operations in various locations around the world. In addition, the U.S. forces headquarters element in Djibouti provides command and control support as necessary to U.S. forces in the Horn of Africa region. The United States is committed to thwarting the efforts of al-Qa'ida and its affiliates to carry out future acts of international terrorism and we have continued to work with our counterterrorism partners to disrupt and degrade the capabilities of al-Qa'ida and its affiliates. As necessary, in response to the terrorist threat, I will direct additional measures in the exercise of the right of the United States to self-defense and to protect U.S. citizens and interests. It is not possible to know at this time the precise scope or the duration of the deployments of U.S. Armed Forces necessary to counter the terrorist threat to the United States.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN IRAQ

Since the expiration of the authorization and mandate for the Multinational Force in Iraq in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1790 on December 31, 2008, U.S. forces have continued operations to support Iraq in its efforts to maintain security and stability in Iraq pursuant to the bilateral Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities during Their Temporary Presence in Iraq, which entered into force on January 1, 2009. These contributions have included, but have not been limited to, assisting in building the capability of the Iraqi security forces, supporting the development of Iraq's political institutions, improving local governance, enhancing ministerial capacity, and providing critical humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to the Iraqis. The U.S. contribution of forces to the Iraq mission fluctuates overtime, depending on the conditions in theater as determined by the commanders on the ground; the present U.S. contribution is approximately 95,000 U.S. military personnel in Iraq.

MARITIME INTERCEPTION OPERATIONS

As noted in previous reports, the United States continues to conduct maritime interception operations on the high seas in the areas of responsibility of each of the geographic combatant commands. These maritime operations are aimed at stopping the movement, arming, and financing of certain international terrorist groups.

U.S./NATO OPERATIONS IN KOSOVO

The U.N. Security Council authorized Member States to establish a NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) on June 10, 1999. The original mission of KFOR was to monitor, verify, and, when necessary, enforce compliance with the Military Technical Agreement between NATO and the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (now Serbia), while maintaining a safe and secure environment. Today, KFOR deters renewed hostilities and, with local authorities and international institutions, contributes to the maintenance of a safe and secure environment.

Currently, 24 NATO Allies contribute to KFOR. Seven non-NATO countries also participate by providing military and other support personnel. The United States contribution to KFOR is about 1,074 U.S. military personnel, or approximately 11 percent of the total strength of approximately 9,300 personnel. The United States forces participating in KFOR have been assigned to the eastern region of Kosovo but also have operated in other areas of the country based on mission requirements. The principal military task of U.S. KFOR forces is to help maintain a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement.

I have directed the participation of U.S. Armed Forces in all of these operations pursuant to my constitutional and statutory authority as Commander in Chief (including the authority to carryout Public Law 107–40 and other statutes) and as Chief Executive, as well as my statutory and constitutional authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States. Officials of my Administration and I communicate regularly with the leadership and other Members of Congress with regard to these deployments, and we will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

Address to the Nation on the Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico
June 15, 2010

Good evening. As we speak, our Nation faces a multitude of challenges. At home, our top priority is to recover and rebuild from a recession that has touched the lives of nearly every American. Abroad, our brave men and women in uniform are taking the fight to Al Qaida wherever it exists. And tonight I've returned from a trip to the Gulf Coast to speak with you about the battle we're waging against an oil spill that is assaulting our shores and our citizens.

On April 20, an explosion ripped through BP Deepwater Horizon drilling rig about 40 miles off the coast of Louisiana. Eleven workers lost their lives; 17 others were injured. And soon, nearly a mile beneath the surface of the ocean, oil began spewing into the water.

Because there's never been a leak this size, at this depth, stopping it has tested the limits of human technology. That's why just after the rig sank, I assembled a team of our Nation's best scientists and engineers to tackle this challenge, a team led by Dr. Steven Chu, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist and our Nation's Secretary of Energy. Scientists at our national labs and experts from academia and other oil companies have also provided ideas and advice.

As a result of these efforts, we've directed BP to mobilize additional equipment and technology. And in the coming weeks and days, these efforts should capture up to 90 percent of the oil leaking out of the well. This is until the company finishes drilling a relief well later in the summer that's expected to stop the leak completely.

Already, this oil spill is the worst environmental disaster America has ever faced. And unlike an earthquake or a hurricane, it's not a single event that does its damage in a matter of minutes or days. The millions of gallons of oil that have spilled into the Gulf of Mexico are more like an epidemic, one that we will be fighting for months and even years.

But make no mistake: We will fight this spill with everything we've got for as long as it takes. We will make BP pay for the damage their company has caused. And we will do whatever's necessary to help the Gulf Coast and its people recover from this tragedy.

Tonight I'd like to lay out for you what our battle plan is going forward: what we're doing to clean up the oil, what we're doing to help our neighbors in the Gulf, and what we're doing to make sure that a catastrophe like this never happens again.

First, the cleanup: From the very beginning of this crisis, the Federal Government has been in charge of the largest environmental cleanup effort in our Nation's history, an effort led by Admiral Thad Allen, who has almost 40 years of experience responding to disasters. We now have nearly 30,000 personnel who are working across 4 States to contain and clean up the oil. Thousands of ships and other vessels are responding in the Gulf. And I've authorized the deployment of over 17,000 National Guard members along the coast. These service men and women are ready to help stop the oil from coming ashore. They are ready to help clean the beaches, train response workers, or even help with processing claims, and I urge the Governors in the affected States to activate these troops as soon as possible.

Because of our efforts, millions of gallons of oil have already been removed from the water through burning, skimming, and other collection methods. Over 5½ million feet of boom has been laid across the water to block and absorb the approaching oil. We've approved the construction of new barrier islands in Louisiana to try to stop the oil before it reaches the shore, and we're working with Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida to implement creative approaches to their unique coastlines.

As the cleanup continues, we will offer whatever additional resources and assistance our coastal States may need. Now, a mobilization of this speed and magnitude will never be perfect, and new challenges will always arise. I saw and heard evidence of that during this trip. So if something isn't working, we want to hear about it. If there are problems in the operation, we will fix them.

But we have to recognize that despite our best efforts, oil has already caused damage to our coastline and its wildlife. And sadly, no mat-

ter how effective our response is, there will be more oil and more damage before this siege is done. That's why the second thing we're focused on is the recovery and restoration of the Gulf Coast.

You know, for generations, men and women who call this region home have made their living from the water. That living is now in jeopardy. I've talked to shrimpers and fishermen who don't know how they're going to support their families this year. I've seen empty docks and restaurants with fewer customers, even in areas where the beaches are not yet affected. I've talked to owners of shops and hotels who wonder when the tourists might start coming back. The sadness and the anger they feel is not just about the money they've lost, it's about a wrenching anxiety that their way of life may be lost.

I refuse to let that happen. Tomorrow I will meet with the chairman of BP and inform him that he is to set aside whatever resources are required to compensate the workers and business owners who have been harmed as a result of his company's recklessness. And this fund will not be controlled by BP. In order to ensure that all legitimate claims are paid out in a fair and timely manner, the account must and will be administered by an independent third party.

Beyond compensating the people of the Gulf in the short term, it's also clear we need a long-term plan to restore the unique beauty and bounty of this region. The oil spill represents just the latest blow to a place that's already suffered multiple economic disasters and decades of environmental degradation that has led to disappearing wetlands and habitats. And the region still hasn't recovered from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. That's why we must make a commitment to the Gulf Coast that goes beyond responding to the crisis of the moment.

I make that commitment tonight. Earlier I asked Ray Mabus, the Secretary of the Navy, who's also a former Governor of Mississippi and a son of the Gulf Coast, to develop a long-term Gulf Coast restoration plan as soon as possible. The plan will be designed by States, local communities, tribes, fishermen, businesses, conservationists, and other Gulf residents. And BP will pay for the impact this spill has had on the region.

The third part of our response plan is the steps we're taking to ensure that a disaster like this does not happen again. A few months ago, I approved a proposal to consider new, limited offshore drilling under the assurance that it would be absolutely safe, that the proper technology would be in place, and the necessary precautions would be taken.

That obviously was not the case in the Deepwater Horizon rig, and I want to know why. The American people deserve to know why. The families I met with last week who lost their loved ones in the explosion, these families deserve to know why. And so I've established a national Commission to understand the causes of this disaster and offer recommendations on what additional safety and environmental standards we need to put in place. Already, I've issued a 6-month moratorium on deepwater drilling. I know this creates difficulty for the people who work on these rigs, but for the sake of their safety and for the sake of the entire region, we need to know the facts before we allow deepwater drilling to continue. And while I urge the Commission to complete its work as quickly as possible, I expect them to do that work thoroughly and impartially.

And one place we've already begun to take action is at the agency in charge of regulating drilling and issuing permits, known as the Minerals Management Service. Over the last decade, this agency has become emblematic of a failed philosophy that views all regulation with hostility, a philosophy that says corporations should be allowed to play by their own rules and police themselves. At this agency, industry insiders were put in charge of industry oversight. Oil companies showered regulators with gifts and favors and were essentially allowed to conduct their own safety inspections and write their own regulations.

And when Ken Salazar became my Secretary of the Interior, one of his very first acts was to clean up the worst of the corruption at this agency. But it's now clear that the problem there ran much deeper and the pace of re-

form was just too slow. And so Secretary Salazar and I are bringing in new leadership at the agency: Michael Bromwich, who was a tough Federal prosecutor and Inspector General. And his charge over the next few months is to build an organization that acts as the oil industry's watchdog, not its partner.

So one of the lessons we've learned from this spill is that we need better regulations, better safety standards, and better enforcement when it comes to offshore drilling. But a larger lesson is that no matter how much we improve our regulation of the industry, drilling for oil these days entails greater risk. After all, oil is a finite resource. We consume more than 20 percent of the world's oil, but have less than 2 percent of the world's oil reserves. And that's part of the reason oil companies are drilling a mile beneath the surface of the ocean, because we're running out of places to drill on land and in shallow water.

For decades, we have known the days of cheap and easily accessible oil were numbered. For decades, we've talked and talked about the need to end America's century-long addiction to fossil fuels. And for decades, we have failed to act with the sense of urgency that this challenge requires. Time and again, the path forward has been blocked, not only by oil industry lobbyists, but also by a lack of political courage and candor.

The consequences of our inaction are now in plain sight. Countries like China are investing in clean energy jobs and industries that should be right here in America. Each day, we send nearly $1 billion of our wealth to foreign countries for their oil. And today, as we look to the Gulf, we see an entire way of life being threatened by a menacing cloud of black crude.

We cannot consign our children to this future. The tragedy unfolding on our coast is the most painful and powerful reminder yet that the time to embrace a clean energy future is now. Now is the moment for this generation to embark on a national mission to unleash America's innovation and seize control of our own destiny.

This is not some distant vision for America. The transition away from fossil fuels is going to take some time, but over the last year and a half, we've already taken unprecedented action to jump-start the clean energy industry. As we speak, old factories are reopening to produce wind turbines, people are going back to work installing energy-efficient windows, and small businesses are making solar panels. Consumers are buying more efficient cars and trucks, and families are making their homes more energy efficient. Scientists and researchers are discovering clean energy technologies that someday will lead to entire new industries.

Each of us has a part to play in a new future that will benefit all of us. As we recover from this recession, the transition to clean energy has the potential to grow our economy and create millions of jobs, but only if we accelerate that transition, only if we seize the moment, and only if we rally together and act as one Nation: workers and entrepreneurs, scientists and citizens, the public and private sectors.

When I was a candidate for this office, I laid out a set of principles that would move our country towards energy independence. Last year, the House of Representatives acted on these principles by passing a strong and comprehensive energy and climate bill, a bill that finally makes clean energy the profitable kind of energy for America's businesses.

Now, there are costs associated with this transition, and there are some who believe that we can't afford those costs right now. I say we can't afford not to change how we produce and use energy because long-term costs to our economy, our national security, and our environment are far greater.

So I'm happy to look at other ideas and approaches from either party, as long as they seriously tackle our addiction to fossil fuels. Some have suggested raising efficiency standards in our buildings like we did in our cars and trucks. Some believe we should set standards to ensure that more of our electricity comes from wind and solar power. Others wonder why the energy industry only spends a fraction of what the high-tech industry does on research and development and want to rapidly boost our investments in such research and development.

All of these approaches have merit and deserve a fair hearing in the months ahead. But the one approach I will not accept is inaction.

The one answer I will not settle for is the idea that this challenge is somehow too big and too difficult to meet. You know, the same thing was said about our ability to produce enough planes and tanks in World War II. The same thing was said about our ability to harness the science and technology to land a man safely on the surface of the Moon. And yet time and again, we have refused to settle for the paltry limits of conventional wisdom. Instead, what has defined us as a nation since our founding is the capacity to shape our destiny, our determination to fight for the America we want for our children, even if we're unsure exactly what that looks like, even if we don't yet precisely know how we're going to get there. We know we'll get there. It's a faith in the future that sustains us as a people. It is that same faith that sustains our neighbors in the Gulf right now.

Each year, at the beginning of shrimping season, the region's fishermen take part in a tradition that was brought to America long ago by fishing immigrants from Europe. It's called the Blessing of the Fleet, and today, it's a celebration where clergy from different religions gather to say a prayer for the safety and success of the men and women who will soon head out to sea, some for weeks at a time.

The ceremony goes on in good times and in bad. It took place after Katrina, and it took place a few weeks ago, at the beginning of the most difficult season these fishermen have ever faced.

And still, they came and they prayed. For as a priest and former fisherman once said of the tradition: "The blessing is not that God has promised to remove all obstacles and dangers. The blessing is that He is with us always," a blessing that's granted "even in the midst of the storm."

The oil spill is not the last crisis America will face. This Nation has known hard times before, and we will surely know them again. What sees us through—what has always seen us through—is our strength, our resilience, and our unyielding faith that something better awaits us if we summon the courage to reach for it.

Tonight we pray for that courage. We pray for the people of the Gulf. And we pray that a hand may guide us through the storm towards a brighter day. Thank you. God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:01 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG, in his capacity as national incident commander for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill; Gov. Piyush "Bobby" Jindal of Louisiana; Gov. Haley R. Barbour of Mississippi; Gov. Robert R. Riley of Alabama; Gov. Charles J. Crist, Jr., of Florida; and Carl-Henric Svanberg, chairman, BP p.l.c. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Meeting With BP p.l.c. Leadership
June 16, 2010

Good afternoon, everybody. I just concluded a constructive meeting with BP's chairman, Carl-Henric Svanberg, and I raised two issues at the meeting.

First was the containment of the oil that is still spewing into the Gulf. As I mentioned last night, my administration has directed BP to mobilize additional equipment and technology, and in the coming days and weeks, these efforts should capture up to 90 percent of the oil that is leaking out of the well.

Now, that's not good enough. So we will continue to press BP and draw on our best minds and resources to capture the rest of the oil until the company finishes drilling a relief well later in the summer that is expected to stop the leak completely.

The second topic revolved around the issue of claims. As I traveled across the Gulf, I heard growing frustration over the pace at which claims had been paid. And I also heard concerns about whether BP will make resources

available to cover legitimate claims resulting from this disaster. So this discussion today was essential.

Currently, under Federal law, there is a $75 million cap on how much oil companies could, under certain circumstances, be required to pay for economic damages resulting from a spill such as this. That amount obviously would be insufficient. And that's why I'm pleased to announce that BP has agreed to set aside $20 billion to pay claims for damages resulting from this spill.

This $20 billion will provide substantial assurance that the claims people and businesses have will be honored. It's also important to emphasize this is not a cap. The people of the Gulf have my commitment that BP will meet its obligations to them. And BP has publicly pledged to make good on the claims that it owes to the people in the Gulf, and so the agreement we reached sets up a financial and legal framework to do it.

Another important element is that this $20 billion fund will not be controlled by either BP or by the Government. It will be put in a escrow account, administered by an impartial, independent third party. So if you or your business has suffered an economic loss as a result of this spill, you'll be eligible to file a claim for part of this $20 billion. This fund does not supersede either individuals' rights or States' rights to present claims in court. And BP will also continue to be liable for the environmental disaster it has caused, and we're going to continue to work to make sure that they address it.

Additionally, BP voluntarily agreed to establish a $100 million fund to compensate unemployed oil rig workers affected by the closure of the deepwater rigs.

We've mutually agreed that Ken Feinberg will run the independent claims process we're putting in place. And there will be a three-person panel to adjudicate claims that are turned down. Every effort will be made to expedite these claims. Ken has long experience in such matters, including running the fund that compensated the victims of 9/11, and I'm confident he will ensure that claims are administered as quickly, as fairly, and as transparently as possible.

Now, BP's liabilities for this spill are significant, and they acknowledge that fact. We will continue to hold BP and all other responsible parties accountable. And I'm absolutely confident BP will be able to meet its obligations to the Gulf Coast and to the American people. BP is a strong and viable company, and it is in all of our interests that it remain so. So what this is about is accountability. At the end of the day, that's what every American wants and expects.

The structure we're establishing today is an important step towards making the people of the Gulf Coast whole again, but it's not going to turn things around overnight. And I want all Americans to know that I will continue to fight each and every day until the oil is contained, until businesses recover, and until the Gulf Coast bounces back from this tragedy, as I know it will.

One last point: During a private conversation with Chairman Svanberg, I emphasized to him that for the families that I met with down in the Gulf, for the small-business owners, for the fishermen, for the shrimpers, this is not just a matter of dollars and cents, that a lot of these folks don't have a cushion. They were coming off Rita and Katrina, coming off the worst economy that this country has seen since the Great Depression, and this season was going to be the season where they were going to be bouncing back. Not only that, but this happened, from their perspective, at the worst possible time, because they're making their entire income for the year in the 3 or 4 months during which folks can take their boats out, people are coming down for tourism.

And so I emphasized to the chairman that when he's talking to shareholders, when he is in meetings in his boardroom, to keep in mind those individuals, that they are desperate, that some of them, if they don't get relief quickly, may lose businesses that have been in their families for two or three generations. And the chairman assured me that he would keep them in mind.

That's going to be the standard by which I measure BP's responsiveness. I think today was a good start, and it should provide some assurance to some of the small-business owners and individuals down in the Gulf who I was visiting

with that BP is going to meet its responsibilities. But I indicated to the chairman that, throughout this process, as we work to make sure that the Gulf is made whole once again, that the standard I'm going to be applying is whether or not those individuals I met with, their family members, those communities that are vulnerable, whether they are uppermost in the minds of all concerned. That's who we're doing this work for.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks to the American Nurses Association
June 16, 2010

Hello, everybody! All right, everybody, have a seat. I got a lot to say here. [*Laughter*] First of all, I want to just thank Becky Patton for the extraordinary work that she has done on behalf of nurses, on behalf of patients, on behalf of the country. Thank you so much. We are proud of everything that she's done. And her mom's in the house, so thanks, Mom. Good job. Good job with Becky.

I want to thank Marla Weston, the CEO of the American Nurses Association. And I also want to acknowledge the presence here of Dr. Mary Wakefield, who is our—[*applause*]—for those of you who are not familiar, she is the administrator of HRSA and our highest ranking nurse in the administration and is—[*applause*]—does absolutely great work.

Now, I want to tell you, it is an honor to speak to the ANA, representing more than 3 million registered nurses across the country. Part of the reason I'm here is because I promised I was going to come, and I told to Becky that I don't break promises to nurses because you never know when I'm going to need a shot. [*Laughter*] And I don't want them working that needle all kind of—"I can't find the vein." [*Laughter*] So I'm keeping my promises.

But it's not just out of fear. [*Laughter*] It's also because I love nurses. I love nurses. Now, I'm not just saying that because I'm talking to a roomful of nurses. There are representatives from Illinois here in the house, and they will testify, I loved nurses before I got to Washington. And I don't think I'm alone in that, because virtually all of us, at one time or another in our lives, have known the care and the skill that you offer. In hours of need, in moments where people are most vulnerable, most worried, nurses are there, doing difficult and life-saving work.

And you don't just provide clean bandages or an intravenous line. A nurse will hold your hand sometime or offer a voice of calm or that knowing glance that says, things are going to be okay.

And when Malia was born, I remember vividly the nurses who took care of Michelle and our new baby. The doctor who delivered is actually one of our best friends, but she was there about 10 minutes. [*Laughter*] And the nurse was there the whole time tending to this new family of ours. That was a happy day. Now, there was another day, when our youngest daughter, Sasha—she was 3 months old—was diagnosed with meningitis. And it was nurses who walked us through what was happening and who, along with the doctors, helped make sure that Sasha was all right and that her father did not have a breakdown. [*Laughter*]

So as a father, as a husband, I will forever be in debt to the women and men of your profession. And I know that millions of others feel the same way. America's nurses are the beating heart of our medical system. You're on the frontlines—[*applause*]—you are on the frontlines of health care in small clinics and in large hospitals, in rural towns and in big cities all across America.

And it's because you know our health care system so well that you've been such a fierce advocate for its reform. Because after all, you care for patients who end up in the emergency room or in surgery because they couldn't afford the preventive care that would have made more invasive and costly treatment unneces-

sary. You are asked not only to take care of patients, you've got to navigate a tangle of rules and forms and paperwork that drive up costs and prevent you from doing the best job possible.

You're the ones who see the terror in a parent's eyes when an insurance company bureaucrat has denied coverage for a child's treatment. And you're the ones who have to comfort people who are wracked with worry not only about getting better, but also about paying for health care because they've hit a cap on benefits or their insurance doesn't cover a preexisting condition.

So nurses have seen the consequences of our decades-old failure to reform our health care system: the rising costs, the increased uninsured, the mixed up incentives, the overburdened providers, and a complex system that has been working a lot better for insurance companies than it's working for the American people or for providers.

And that's why, almost a year ago, nurses from across the country came to the White House to help make the case for reform, for making coverage more affordable and extending coverage to millions without it, for giving doctors and nurses more freedom to help their patients, for providing families and small businesses with more control over their health insurance, and for ending the worst and most abusive practices of the insurance industry.

And after a long and tough fight, we succeeded—yes we did—in passing health care reform. Thanks to you. And that reform will make a positive difference in the lives of the American people.

Now, this fight wasn't new for the ANA. I understand you were one of the only major health care organizations that supported the creation of Medicare from the start. And I want to recognize one of your leaders—Jo Eleanor Elliott of Colorado, who is here today and was your president back then—for the courage and leadership she showed. Where is she? There you are right there. Give her a big round of applause.

So you've been there before, and you were here this time. I want to thank the ANA for advocating for health care reform, for ensuring that the voices of nurses and of patients were heard.

Now, already, we're seeing the start of a profound shift as reforms begin to take effect. We're giving ordinary consumers and small businesses more power and protection in the health care system, and we're knocking down barriers that stand between you and the people who you care for.

A few weeks ago, 4 million small-business owners and organizations got a postcard in their mailbox from the IRS. Now, usually that's not—[*laughter*]—good news. But this time it was, because it told them that they could be eligible for a health care tax cut this year, a tax cut worth potentially tens of thousands of dollars for those small businesses, a tax cut that will help millions to provide coverage to their employees. That's happening now.

In many cases, young adults without health insurance are now able to stay on their parent's plan until they're 26 years old. Even though insurance companies had until September to comply with this rule, we asked them to do so immediately to avoid coverage gaps for young adults, and most have agreed.

Starting this month, relief is also available to businesses for providing coverage to retirees who are not yet eligible for Medicare. And as of last week, senior citizens who fall into the doughnut hole have started receiving a 20—a $250 rebate to help them afford their medication, and we're going to keep on going until we close that doughnut hole completely. In the meantime, we're strengthening Medicare by going after the billions of dollars in waste and fraud and abuse in the system. And States like Maine and Connecticut are beginning to predict budget savings as pieces of reform come on line.

So we've begun making coverage more affordable. In addition, the new health care law has also started to end the worst insurance industry practices. You know them. For too long, we've been held hostage to an industry that jacks up premiums and drops coverage whenever they please. Those days are coming to an end.

So after my administration demanded that a large insurance company justify a massive pre-

mium increase on Californians, the company backed off its plan. My Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, has urged States to investigate other rate hikes. We've set up a new Office of Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight. And we'll provide grants to States running the best oversight programs to root out bad practices when it comes to premiums.

Now, as of September, the new health care law prohibits insurance companies from dropping people's coverage when they get sick, which is critical to giving people some peace of mind. But when news reports indicated that an insurance company was dropping the coverage of women diagnosed with breast cancer, my administration called on them to end the practice immediately, don't wait till September. And soon after, the entire industry announced that it would comply with the new law early and stop this perverse practice of dropping people's insurance when they fall ill and when they need coverage the most.

Some were also questioning whether insurance companies could find a loophole in the new law and continue to discriminate against children with preexisting conditions. So we called on insurance companies to step up, provide coverage to our most vulnerable Americans. And the insurance industry has agreed.

In just 2 weeks, Americans denied coverage because of preexisting conditions will be able to enroll in a new national insurance pool. And for States that opt to run their own pools using funds from the new law, we're urging them to begin enrolling people as soon as possible. And these pools are going to provide some short-term relief, but they're temporary. They're going to ensure that folks who have been shut out of the market because they've been sick can access more affordable insurance starting right away. But what we want is these health insurance exchanges up and running in a few years so that, at that point, this kind of discrimination will finally be banned forever. And that's when those—[*applause*]—that's when the millions without coverage, including people with preexisting conditions, will have the access to the same types of insurance plans that Members of Congress get. And you know those must be pretty good.

We're also going to be putting in place a patient's bill of rights that will tell insurance companies that they can't put a restrictive limit on the amount of coverage you get in your lifetime or in a given year. It will prevent insurance companies from rescinding your coverage when you get sick because of an administrative error. It will provide simple and clear information to consumers about their choices and their rights.

And beyond making insurance more affordable and more secure, reform also will mean changes that make it easier for you, the backbone of the health care system, to do your jobs. Already, over the past year, we've made one of the largest investments in nursing and health workforce in recent history. We passed landmark reforms to make college more affordable, which can help more people gain a nursing degree, even as we provide grants and aid for more than 15,000 nurses seeking graduate degrees and other training.

And we've begun the transition to private and secure computerized health records, because this will not only reduce errors and costs—I know you can't read those doctors' handwriting—[*laughter*]—it will mean you can spend more time with patients and less time with paperwork. And that's why you got into the profession.

Now, there is more work to do. And that's why today my administration is announcing a number of investments to expand the primary care workforce. And this includes funding to allow students training part-time to become nurse practitioners to start training full-time. We want to speed up the process where folks go from the classroom into the exam room. And we're going to provide resources for clinics run by registered nurses and nurse practitioners.

Without these nurses, many people in cities and rural areas would have no access to care at all. Now, all of these steps are part of a larger effort to make our system work better for nurses and for doctors and to improve the quality of care for patients. And by focusing on primary medicine, we will finally recognize the

role of all talented and skilled health care providers, including nurses.

I don't have to tell you that nurses all too often have been given short shrift. Even amidst a nursing shortage, when there are cutbacks, you feel the squeeze in salaries or the reduction in shifts, despite being overworked and underpaid. And, as you know, this disregard goes beyond numbers on a ledger. There have been a bunch of times, I'm sure, when the service you rendered is thought to be less consequential or valuable than that of other professions. That's what has to change.

It's important that we not only ensure that you have the support to do your jobs; we're seeking to elevate and value the work that you do, because throughout our history, nurses have done more than provide care and comfort to those in need. Often with little power or sway on their own, nurses—mostly women, historically—have been a force of will and a sense of common decency and paved the way towards better care and a more compassionate society, from Clara Barton's treatment of wounded soldiers at Antietam to the advocacy of Dorothea Dix on behalf of people with mental disabilities to the countless nurses whose names we'll never know.

One of America's greatest poets, Walt Whitman, also served as a nurse during the Civil War. And the experience changed him forever. And later, he would reflect on that time, on both the heartbreak and the fulfillment he found during those years. And he wrote:

> I thread my way through the hospitals,
> The hurt and wounded I pacify with soothing hand,
> I sit by the restless all the dark night, some are so young,
> Some suffer so much, I recall the experience sweet and sad.

Sweet and sad. Your jobs are tough. Your days can be stressful and exhausting and sometimes thankless. But through long shifts and late nights, in the hectic scrum of the emergency room or in those quiet acts of humanity, you are saving lives, you are offering solace, you're helping to make us a better nation. And my task as President—our task as a people—is to ensure that our health care system is worthy of your efforts. Our mission must be to live up to the values that you uphold each and every day.

So thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:27 p.m. at the Washington Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Rebecca M. Patton, president, American Nurses Association, who introduced the President, and her mother Mary Ellen Patton; and Anita Blanchard, associate professor of obstetrics/gynecology, University of Chicago Medical Center.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting a Budget Amendment for Fiscal Year 2011

June 16, 2010

Dear Madam Speaker:

On May 21, 2010, I signed Executive Order 13543 establishing the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling to provide for a comprehensive look at how the oil and gas industry operates and how we regulate it. The purpose of this Commission is to examine both the relevant facts and circumstances concerning the causes of the disaster and to develop options for safety and environmental precautions necessary to prevent a similar disaster from happening again.

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

This request responds to urgent and essential needs. Therefore, I request this proposal be

considered as an emergency requirement. The details of this request are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Small-Business Legislation
June 17, 2010

I thank the House of Representatives for passing legislation that includes two of our key initiatives to help America's small businesses and entrepreneurs create jobs and promote recovery. Our Nation's small businesses are the backbone of the American economy and the main drivers of private job creation, and today's approval of our small-business lending fund and State small-business credit initiative marks a new and significant step toward getting small businesses the financing they need to start up, expand, and hire more workers.

The small-business lending fund would provide our Nation's community banks with capital and incentives to ensure that small businesses on Main Street can get the loans they have too often struggled to access since the onset of the financial crisis. The State small-business credit initiative would help ensure that innovative State partnerships—today, constrained by budget cuts—can better meet the credit needs of small businesses and manufacturers. I am also pleased that this legislation is moving forward as part of a larger package of small-business jobs proposals that will include the elimination of capital gains taxes on key small-business investments.

I want to recognize Chairman Barney Frank for his management of this bill as well as Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, Chairman Sandy Levin, and Chairwoman Nydia Velazquez for their efforts on behalf of America's small businesses. And I want to urge the Senate to act quickly to pass these initiatives into law.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 5297.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Risk of Nuclear Proliferation Created by the Accumulation of Weapons-Usable Fissile Material in the Territory of the Russian Federation
June 17, 2010

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the emergency declared in Executive Order 13159 of June 21, 2000, with respect to the risk of nuclear proliferation created by the accumulation of a large volume of weapons-usable fissile material in the territory of the Russian Federation is to continue beyond June 21, 2010.

It remains a major national security goal of the United States to ensure that fissile material removed from Russian nuclear weapons pursuant to various arms control and disarmament agreements is dedicated to peaceful uses, subject to transparency measures, and protected from diversion to activities of proliferation concern. The accumulation of a large volume of weapons-usable fissile material in the

territory of the Russian Federation continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to the risk of nuclear proliferation created by the accumulation of a large volume of weapons-usable fissile material in the territory of the Russian Federation and maintain in force these emergency authorities to respond to this threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 17, 2010.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Letter to G–20 Leaders on the Summit in Toronto, Canada
June 16, 2010

Dear G–20 Colleagues:

When we met in London in April of 2009, we were facing the worst worldwide economic financial crisis since the 1930s. We acted with unprecedented speed and aggressive action to boost demand and repair our financial systems. It worked.

In Pittsburgh, with recovery beginning to take hold, we agreed to work together to achieve a more balanced pattern of global growth and financial reforms to strengthen our financial system and protect our economies from instability.

In Toronto, we meet at a time of renewed challenge to the global economy. We must act together to strengthen the recovery. We need to commit to restore sustainable public finances in the medium term. And we should complete the work of financial repair and reform.

Our highest priority in Toronto must be to safeguard and strengthen the recovery. We worked exceptionally hard to restore growth; we cannot let it falter or lose strength now. This means that we should reaffirm our unity of purpose to provide the policy support necessary to keep economic growth strong. It is essential that we have a self-sustaining recovery that creates the good jobs that our people need. In fact, should confidence in the strength of our recoveries diminish, we should be prepared to respond again as quickly and as forcefully as needed to avert a slowdown in economic activity.

A strong and sustainable global recovery needs to be built on balanced global demand. Significant weaknesses exist across G–20 economies. I am concerned by weak private sector demand and continued heavy reliance on exports by some countries with already large external surpluses. Our ability to achieve a durable global recovery depends on our ability to achieve a pattern of global demand growth that avoids the imbalances of the past. In Pittsburgh, we agreed that countries with external surpluses would need to strengthen domestic sources of growth. Leaders and governments will need to decide for themselves how to achieve that objective. In some countries, strengthening social safety nets would help boost low levels of consumption. In others, product and labor market reforms could strengthen both consumption and investment. I also want to underscore that market-determined exchange rates are essential to global economic vitality. The signals that flexible exchange rates send are necessary to support a strong and balanced global economy.

We need to commit to fiscal adjustments that stabilize debt-to-GDP ratios at appropriate levels over the medium term. I am committed to the restoration of fiscal sustainability in the United States and believe that all G–20 countries should put in place credible and growth friendly plans to restore sustainable public finances. But it is critical that the timing and pace of consolidation in each economy suit the needs of the global economy, the momentum of private sector demand, and national circumstances. We must be flexible in adjusting the pace of consolidation and learn from the consequential mistakes of the past when stimulus was too quickly withdrawn and resulted in renewed

economic hardships and recession. For our part, we will pursue measures to support the recovery in private demand and return the unemployed to work. At the same time, we recognize the importance of setting a credible medium-term fiscal path: that is why my Administration will cut the budget deficit we inherited in half by FY 2013 and work to reduce our fiscal deficit to 3 percent of GDP by FY 2015, which will stabilize the debt-to-GDP ratio at an acceptable level in that year.

To support the recovery and strengthen the ability of our financial systems to deliver needed credit, we must maintain the momentum of financial repair. Resolving ongoing uncertainty about the transparency of bank balance sheets and the adequacy of bank capital, particularly in Europe, will help reduce financial market volatility and the cost of borrowing. We should support efforts to enhance transparency and increase disclosure by our large financial institutions and to act, where necessary, to strengthen the capital position of our banks. Our ability to grow without the excesses that that put our economies at risk two years ago requires that we accelerate our efforts to bring needed financial reforms to completion. In the U.S., both houses of Congress have passed comprehensive financial regulatory reform bills. We must reiterate our commitment in Toronto to a common framework for reforms that provide:

- *more stringent capital and liquidity requirements*: We want our negotiators to reach agreement on a new capital framework we can endorse in Seoul that will include higher common equity requirements, tighter definitions of capital, a simple mandatory leverage ratio, and appropriate liquidity requirements. While we consider reasonable transition measures, we must not lose sight of the need to make sure our financial institutions have the capital needed to withstand future stresses;
- *stronger oversight of derivatives markets*: We want our negotiators to reach agreement to put in place across the major financial markets a consistent framework for oversight of derivatives markets. We should subject all dealers and all major participants in the derivatives markets to supervision and regulation, including conservative capital and margin requirements, disclosure and reporting requirements, and strong business conduct standards to mitigate the potential for systemic risk and market abuse.
- *more transparency and disclosure* to promote market integrity and reduce market manipulation; and
- *more effective framework for winding down large global firms*, along with *principles for the financial sector to make a fair and substantial contribution towards paying for any burdens it creates* in a way that protects taxpayers, creates a level playing field, and reduces risks to our economies.

In Toronto, I also look forward to working on our action agendas on issues ranging from energy and development, to governance reform of international financial institutions.

Together, we designated the G–20 as the premier forum for international economic cooperation. It is important that the G–20 demonstrates its continued determination to work collectively to address the renewed challenges facing the global economy. I look forward to seeing you in Toronto and reaffirming our unity of purpose and resolve.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 18.

Remarks in Columbus, Ohio
June 18, 2010

The President. Good afternoon, everybody.

Audience members. Good afternoon.

The President. Well, it is great to be back in Ohio. Strickland said I've been in Ohio so much he might start charging me for it. [*Laughter*]

It is wonderful to be back in Ohio, and it is wonderful to be back in the beautiful city of Columbus. I just want to say thank you right off the top to Mayor Coleman for his outstanding leadership of this city. You've got one of the best mayors in the country. You also got one of the best Governors in the country in Ted Strickland.

And I also want to just acknowledge that you're going to have one of the best—you already have one of the best Senators in Sherrod Brown, and you're going to have another one in Lee Fisher. So we appreciate the great work that they're doing.

I'm going to mention some of the congressional delegations here, because they've got a lot to do with what's going on at this site.

My last visit here was a little over a year ago, when I came to take part in a graduation ceremony for 114—the 114th class of the Columbus police recruits. Some of you may remember that. I know the mayor does. I don't have to tell anybody here that these have been difficult times for Ohio and difficult times for the country. And when I was here last, America was losing 700,000 jobs per month, our economy was shrinking, plants and businesses right here in Ohio were closing. And we knew that if we failed to act, then things were only going to get much worse.

And that's why, with the support of Sherrod Brown, but also Members of the House of Representatives—Mary Jo Kilroy, Steve Driehaus, and Charlie Wilson, who are all here—wave, guys—that's why these folks worked so hard to pass the Recovery Act, which cut taxes for middle class families, that way boosting demand; cutting taxes for small businesses so that they could make payroll and keep their doors open; extending unemployment insurance and COBRA to help folks make it through some really tough times; to rebuild our infrastructure and make investments that would spur additional investments from the private sector and strengthen our country in the long run. That's what the Recovery Act was all about.

And since then, here in Ohio, nearly 2,400 small businesses have gotten loans to keep their doors open and their workers on payroll, 4.5 million families have gotten tax cuts to help pay their bills and put food on the table, some 450 transportation projects are underway or have been completed, and more than 100,000 Ohioans are at work today as a result of these steps. And today I return to Columbus to mark a milestone on the road to recovery: the 10,000th project launched under the Recovery Act. That's worth a big round of applause.

And I want to thank Secretary Ray LaHood, who has been instrumental in so many of the projects that have taken place. He has done an outstanding job, as have our other agencies in administering these programs.

Now, these projects haven't just improved communities. They've put thousands of construction crews just like this one to work. They've spurred countless small businesses to hire because—these are some big guys here, so they got to eat—[*laughter*]—which means that you got to get some food brought in, or the local restaurants here benefit from the crews being here at work. It means that instead of worrying about where their next paycheck is going to come from, Americans across the country are helping to build our future and their own futures.

Now, as my friend Joe Biden, who has done a great job overseeing the Recovery Act, would say, this is a big deal. [*Laughter*] And I think it's fitting that we've reached this milestone here in this community, because what you're doing here is a perfect example of the kind of innovation and coordination and renewal that the Recovery Act is driving all across the country.

A lot of people came together to make this day possible: business and government, grassroots organizations, ordinary citizens who are committed to this city's futures. And what you're starting here is more than just a project

to repair a road; it's a partnership to transform a community.

Mayor Coleman was describing for me how all these pieces fit together on the way over here. So the city is using recovery dollars to rebuild the infrastructure. And because of that, in part, the hospital is expanding its operations to take even better care of more people, more children here in Columbus and throughout Ohio, which means they're hiring more people.

So together, you're creating more than 2,300 new jobs and sending a powerful message that this neighborhood will soon be a place where more families can thrive, more businesses can prosper, economic development that's being sparked today is going to continue into the future. And my understanding is, because the hospital is now growing, that means they're putting money back into the neighborhood for housing and other facilities so that the entire community starts rebuilding.

Ultimately, that's the purpose of the Recovery Act: not just to jump-start the economy and get us out of the hole that we're in right now, but to make the investments that will spur growth and spread prosperity and pay dividends to our communities for generations to come.

Since I was here last year, we've begun to see progress all across the country. Businesses are beginning to hire again. Our economy, which was shrinking by 6 percent when I was sworn in, is now growing at a good clip, and we've added jobs for 6 out of the past 7 months in this country. We were losing 700,000 jobs a month; for the last—6 out of the last 7 months, we've increased jobs here in the United States of America, in part because the policies that these Members of Congress were willing to step up and implement.

Now, I'm no—under no illusion that we're where we need to be yet. I know that a lot of families and communities have yet to feel the effects of the recovery in their own lives. There are still too many people here in Ohio and across the country who can't find work; many more can't make ends meet. And for these folks, the only jobs we create that matter are the ones that provide for their families.

So while the recovery may start with projects like this, it can't end here. The truth is, if we want to keep on adding jobs, if we want to keep on raising incomes, if we want to keep growing both our economy and our middle class, if we want to ensure that Americans can compete with any nation in the world, we're going to have to get serious about our long-term vision for this country and we're going to have to get serious about our infrastructure.

And I want to say a few words about infrastructure generally. Along with investments in health care and education, clean energy and a 21st-century financial system that protects consumers and our economy, rebuilding our infrastructure is one of the keys to our future prosperity.

If we're going to rebuild America's economy, then we've got to rebuild America, period, from the ports and the airways that ship our goods to the roads and the transit systems that move our workers and connect cities and businesses.

Now, some of this work involves fixing infrastructure that's already in place: patching up roads, repairing bridges, replacing old sewer lines. And the Recovery Act has made important investments in all these things. I mean, we've got a huge backlog of work just with the infrastructure that we've got that could put hundreds of thousands of people to work all across the country, just repairing roads that we already have and fixing sewer lines that are badly in need of repair.

But here's the thing, Columbus: Repairing our existing infrastructure is not enough. We can't build an economy that sustains our kids and our grandkids just by relying on the infrastructure that we inherited from our parents and our grandparents.

We can't let other countries get the jump on us when it comes to broadband access. There's no reason why Europe or China should have the fastest trains instead of the United States. There's no reason that Germany or other countries in Europe should have the newest factories that manufacture clean energy prod-

ucts instead of us right here in the United States.

And that's why the Recovery Act has been making unprecedented investments in clean energy, spurring America's businesses to build some of the world's largest wind and solar projects right here in the United States of America. I said this once at a State of the Union Address: America does not settle for second place. And we're going to make the investments to make sure we are first in the future, not just in the past. That's got to be our priority. That's why we're bringing high-speed Internet to ten thousands of homes—tens of thousands of homes and businesses and hospitals and schools. It's why Ray LaHood's helping to lead a surge in new investment in high-speed rail. That's why we're investing in electronic medical records.

A year ago, American businesses had just 2 percent of the market in the production of electric car batteries that power the vehicles of the future. All these hybrid cars that have electric batteries, those batteries were made someplace else; we only had 2 percent of them. We made investments in the Recovery Act, and by 2015, U.S. companies are going to have 40 percent of the global market. We have created an advanced battery manufacturing facility—facilities right here in the United States that are going to allow us to maintain that cutting edge.

From the very first railroads to the Interstate Highway System, our Nation has always been built to compete. And you know the history of Ohio is a testament to that. Nearly two centuries ago, our Nation's first federally funded highway, the National Road, was extended across Ohio, bringing a generation of settlers west to this new frontier and paving the way for the automobile that would transform our landscape.

And for our economy to thrive in this new century, we've got to act with that same sense of purpose and that same spirit of innovation. That's why the recovery is just beginning—just the beginning of the investments we're going to have to make for years on our infrastructure. It's just the beginning of the work of increasing our mobility and our productivity, reducing congestion, reducing pollution, creating good jobs that can't be shipped overseas.

Because we know what we can achieve when we act boldly and invest wisely. We're seeing it right here in this community. We see it in this hospital and the depths of its commitment to this city. We see it in the city leaders who saw a need and an opportunity in this neighborhood and decided to act. We see it in the folks right here who are ready to get to work building this road and providing their—providing for their families. And I'm confident that we'll soon see it in new families and businesses that are calling this area home.

It is with that vision of a brighter future—for this city and for the country—that we begin this project, and I am looking forward to seeing all that you achieve in the years and months to come.

So thank you. Congratulations for the great work you guys are doing. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. at the construction site located at the intersection of Parsons and Livingston Avenues.

Statement on the 65th Birthday of Aung San Suu Kyi
June 18, 2010

I wish to convey my best wishes to Aung San Suu Kyi, the world's only imprisoned Nobel Peace Laureate, on the occasion of her 65th birthday on June 19. Her determination, courage, and personal sacrifice in working for human rights and democratic change in Burma inspire all of us who stand for freedom and justice. I once again call on the Burmese Government to release Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners immediately and unconditionally and to allow them to build a more stable, prosperous Burma that respects the rights of all its citizens. Towards this end, I encourage all stakeholders in Burma to engage in genuine dialogue towards national reconciliation, a vital step to set Burma on a more positive course for the future.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Amendments
June 18, 2010

Dear Madam Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 Budget amendments for the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Labor, State and Other International Programs, Transportation, and the Treasury, as well as the Small Business Administration, District of Columbia, Institute of Museum and Library Services, Northern Border Regional Commission, and Southeast Crescent Regional Commission. These amendments would not increase the proposed totals in my FY 2011 Budget.

In addition, this transmittal contains FY 2011 amendments for the Legislative Branch. As a matter of comity between branches, these appropriations requests of the Legislative Branch are transmitted without change.

Moreover, provided for your consideration is a FY 2011 Budget amendment for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). This request would fund an initiative to develop a plan to spur regional economic growth and job creation along the Florida Space Coast and other affected regions in furtherance of my Administration's bold new course for human space flight, which revitalizes NASA and transitions to new opportunities in the space industry and beyond.

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

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

The President's Weekly Address
June 19, 2010

At this moment, our Nation is facing a host of big and difficult challenges. And more than anything else, what's required to meet those challenges right now is a sense of cooperation and common purpose among our leaders. What we need is a willingness in Washington to put the public's interests first, a willingness to score fewer political points so that we can start solving more problems.

That's why I was disappointed this week to see a dreary and familiar politics get in the way of our ability to move forward on a series of critical issues that have a direct impact on people's lives.

In the United States Senate, we have legislation that would boost our economic recovery and help Americans who've been affected by the worst recession in generations. We've certainly made progress since we were losing 750,000 jobs per month around the time I took office. Our economy is growing again, and we've added jobs for 5 straight months, but there are still millions of Americans out of work and millions more who are struggling to pay the bills. The legislation in the Senate right now would extend unemployment benefits to those workers who lost their job through no fault of their own. It would provide relief to struggling States that would help save the jobs of thousands of teachers and cops and firefighters. There are also provisions in this legislation that would extend the tax credit for first-time home buyers as well as tax cuts to keep research and development jobs here in the United States.

Unfortunately, the Republican leadership in the Senate won't even allow this legislation to come up for a vote. And if this obstruction continues, unemployed Americans will see their benefits stop, teachers and firefighters will lose their jobs, families will pay more for their first home.

All we ask for is a simple up-or-down vote. That's what the American people deserve. Just

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

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 challenges 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

school. They're more likely to wind up in prison. They're more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol. They're more likely to run away from home. They're more likely to become teenage parents themselves.

And I say all this as someone who grew up without a father in my own life. He left my family when I was 2 years old. And while I was lucky to have a wonderful mother and loving grandparents who poured everything they had into me and my sister, I still felt the weight of that absence. It's something that leaves a hole in a child's life that no government can fill.

So we can talk all we want here in Washington about issues like education and health care and crime. We can build good schools. We can put money into creating good jobs. We can do everything we can to keep our streets safe, but government can't keep our kids from looking for trouble on those streets. Government can't force a kid to pick up a book or make sure that the homework gets done. Government can't be there day in, day out to provide discipline and guidance and the love that it takes to raise a child. That's our job as fathers, as mothers, as guardians for our children.

Now, the fact is, is it's easy to become a father, technically. Any guy can do that. It's hard to live up to the lifelong responsibilities that come with fatherhood. And it's a challenge even in good times, when our families are doing well. It's especially difficult when times are tough, families are straining just to keep everything together.

In a time of war, many of our military families are stretched thin, with fathers doing multiple tours of duty far away from their children. In difficult economic times, a lot of fathers are worried about whether they're going to be able to keep their job or find a job or whether they'll be able to pay the bills and give their children the kinds of opportunities that if they didn't have them themselves, at least they wished for their children. And there are a lot of men who are out of work and wrestling with the shame and frustration that comes when you feel like you can't be the kind of provider you want to be for the people that you love.

But here's the key message I think all of us want to send today to fathers all across the country: Our children don't need us to be superheroes; they don't need us to be perfect; they do need us to be present. They need us to show up and give it our best shot, no matter what else is going on in our lives. They need us to show them—not just with words, but with deeds—that they, those kids, are always our first priority.

Those family meals, afternoons in the park, bedtime stories, the encouragement we give, the questions we answer, the limits we set, the example we set of persistence in the face of difficulty and hardship, those things add up over time, and they shape a child's character, build their core, teach them to trust in life and to enter into it with confidence and with hope and with determination. And that's something they'll always carry with them: that love that we show not with money or fame or spectacular feats, but through small daily acts; the love we show and that we earn by being present in the lives of our children.

Now, unfortunately, the way we talk about fatherhood in this country doesn't always reinforce these truths. When we talk about issues like child care and work-family balance, we call them "women's issues" and "mothers' issues." Too often when we talk about fatherhood and personal responsibility, we talk about it in political terms, in terms of left and right, conservative/liberal, instead of what's right and what's wrong. And when we do that, we've gotten off track. So I think it's time for a new conversation around fatherhood in this country.

We can all agree that we've got too many mothers out there forced to do everything all by themselves. They're doing a heroic job, often under trying circumstances. They deserve a lot of credit for that. But they shouldn't have to do it alone. The work of raising our children is the most important job in this country, and it's all of our responsibilities, mothers and fathers.

Now, I can't legislate fatherhood. I can't force anybody to love a child. But what we can do is send a clear message to our fathers that there is no excuse for failing to meet their obligations. What we can do is make it easier for fathers who make responsible choices and harder for those who avoid those choices. What we can do is come together and support fathers who

are willing to step up and be good partners and parents and providers.

And that's why today we're launching the next phase of our work to promote responsible fatherhood, a new, nationwide Fatherhood and Mentoring Initiative. This is a call to action with cities and States, with individuals and organizations across the country. From the NFL Players Association to the National PTA, to everyday moms and dads, we're raising awareness about responsible fatherhood and working to reengage absent fathers with their families.

As part of this effort, we've proposed a new and expanded Fatherhood, Marriage, and Families Innovation Fund. And we plan to seek out and support the very best, most successful initiatives in our States and communities, those that are offering services like job training or parenting skills classes, domestic violence prevention, all which help provide the kind of network of support for men, particularly those in vulnerable communities.

We're also going to help dads who get caught up—we want to make sure that they're caught up on child support payments and that we reengage them in their children's lives. We're going to support efforts to build healthy relationships between parents as well, because we know that children benefit not just from loving mothers and loving fathers, but from strong and loving marriages as well.

And we're going to—[*applause*]—we're also launching a new transitional jobs initiative for ex-offenders and low-income, noncustodial fathers, because these are men who often face serious barriers to finding work and keeping work. We'll help them develop the skills and experience they need to move into full-time, long-term employment, so they can meet their child support obligations and help provide for their families.

And under Eric Holder's direction, our Justice Department is planning to create its first Fathering Reentry Court for ex-offender dads and to help replicate this program in courts across the country. And the idea here is very simple: to reach fathers right as they're leaving the criminal justice system and connect them immediately to the employment and services they need to start making their child support payments and reconnecting them with their families.

And this program was inspired by leaders like Peter Spokes, who was the executive director of the National Center for Fathering, a good friend to many in our administration, all of whom were deeply saddened by his recent passing. And we are honored to have Peter's wife Barbara with us here today. Where's Barbara? I just saw her earlier. There she is. Thank you.

So these initiatives are a good start. But ultimately, we know that the decision to be a good father, that's up to us, each of us, as individuals. It's one that men across this country are making every single day: attending those school assemblies, parent-teacher conferences; coaching soccer, Little League; scrimping and saving and working that extra shift so that their children can go to college. And plenty of fathers—and men who aren't fathers as well—are stepping up to serve as mentors and tutors and big brothers and foster parents to young people who don't have any responsible adult in their lives.

Now, even when we give it our best efforts, there will still be plenty of days of struggle and heartache when we don't quite measure up—talking to the men here now. Even with all the good fortune and support Michelle and I have had in our lives, I've made plenty of mistakes as a parent. I've lost count of all the times when the demands of work have taken me from the duties of fatherhood. And I know I've missed out on moments in my daughters' lives that I'll never get back, and that's a loss that's hard to accept.

But I also know the feeling that one author described when she wrote that "to have a child is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body." [*Laughter*] Think about that: To have a child is to have your heart walking around outside your body.

I'm sure a lot of fathers here know that same memory that I have, of driving home with Michelle and Malia right after she was born, going about 10 miles an hour—[*laughter*]—your emotions swinging between unadulterated joy and sheer terror. [*Laughter*]

And I made a pledge that day that I would do everything I could to give my daughter what I never had, that if I could be anything in life, I would be a good father.

And since—[*applause*]—and like a lot of the men here, since that time, I've found there's nothing else in my life that compares to the pleasures I take in spending time with my girls. Nothing else comes close to the pride I feel in their achievement and the satisfaction I get in watching them grow into strong, confident young women.

So over the course of my life, I have been an attorney, I've been a professor, I've been a State senator, I've been a U.S. Senator, and I currently am serving as President of the United States. But I can say without hesitation that the most challenging, most fulfilling, most important job I will have during my time on this Earth is to be Sasha and Malia's dad.

And that—[*applause*]—so you don't need a fancy degree for that. You don't need a lot of money for that. No matter what doubts we may feel, what difficulties we may face, we all have to remember, being a father is—it's not just an obligation and a responsibility, it is a privilege and a blessing, one that we all have to embrace as individuals and as a nation.

So happy Father's Day, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:24 a.m. at the Town Hall Education Arts & Recreation Campus. In his remarks, he referred to Edmund C. Fleet, executive director, Town Hall Education Arts Recreation Campus (THEARC); and his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

Remarks on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
June 22, 2010

Thank you. What do you think, Taylor? She did a pretty good job. Yes, she was solid. [*Laughter*]

Welcome to the White House, everybody. And thank you, Amy, for the wonderful introduction. Thank you, Taylor, for being here. Stories like Amy's and Taylor's are exactly why we passed the Affordable Care Act. And the courage that you and so many Americans have shown in sharing your stories is what kept us going until we actually got it done. And so we're very grateful to you.

I want to thank all the Members of Congress who are here today who helped to make reform a reality. The Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, is here, as is Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis. And they are two of the members of my Cabinet who are helping to implement this law.

I just finished a meeting with the CEOs of some of America's largest insurance companies and some of our State insurance commissioners where we discussed how we're going to work together to implement health insurance reform.

Now, it was more than a year ago that some of these same CEOs came to the White House for one of the first meetings about what this reform would look like. And we knew we wouldn't see eye to eye on everything. But for the first time, nearly everyone involved in this debate—patients, hospitals, doctors, nurses, businesses large and small, Democrats and Republicans, even those most invested in the status quo, including our insurance companies—everybody knew that finally something needed to be done about America's broken health care system. It was no longer working for families, who were seeing more and more of their incomes eaten by health costs, causing real hardships for working people. It was no longer working for small businesses, who were burdened by the weight of premiums that had doubled—more than doubled over the last decade. It was no longer working for State and Federal governments, imperiling our fiscal future. And all the while, the number of Americans without insurance kept rising, compounded by a horrific recession, people losing their jobs and then losing their health care.

So one thing was clear to everybody: We couldn't keep traveling down the same road. For the sake of our families, our businesses, and the fiscal future of this country, we had to change course. And that's why 3 months ago, in

this very room, I signed the Affordable Care Act into law.

Now, this law will cut costs and make coverage more affordable for families and small businesses. It's reform that brings—that begins to bring down our Government's long-term structural deficit. It's reform that finally extends the opportunity to purchase coverage to the millions who currently don't have it and includes tough, new consumer protections to guarantee greater stability, security, and control for the millions who do have health insurance.

Now, while it will take a few years to fully implement this law, we can already see it taking effect. Last month, 4 million small-business owners found a postcard in their mailbox informing them that they could be eligible for a health care tax cut this year worth tens of thousands of dollars to help them cover their employees. And America's largest businesses are filling out applications for critical relief to help them provide coverage for retirees who aren't yet eligible for Medicare.

Two weeks ago, tens of thousands of seniors who fall into the Medicare prescription drug coverage gap known as the doughnut hole began receiving a $250 check to help them afford their medicine. And by the end of the year, we estimate that 4 million seniors will receive this help. And by 2020, this law will close the doughnut hole completely. We're also strengthening Medicare by going after waste and fraud and abuse in the system and aggressively pursuing those who prey on seniors with scams.

In many cases, young adults without insurance can now stay on their parent's plan until they're 26 years old. That lifts a lot of worry from some parents' shoulders. Even though the insurance companies had until September to comply with this rule, my administration asked them to do so immediately to avoid coverage gaps for young adults. And I want to thank those companies that agreed to do this.

On July 1, uninsured Americans who've been locked out of the insurance market because of a preexisting condition will now be able to enroll in a new national insurance pool where they'll finally be able to purchase quality, affordable health care, some for the very first time in their lives. For States that opt to run their own insurance pools using funds from the new law, my administration is urging them to begin enrolling people as soon as possible.

And in a few years, once the new competitive marketplace comes on line through insurance exchanges, discrimination against Americans with preexisting conditions will be banned for good. And that's when individuals and small businesses will finally have the same access to the same types of insurance plans that Members of Congress have for themselves.

And today I'm announcing that the Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, and Treasury are issuing new regulations under the Affordable Care Act that will put an end to some of the worst practices in the insurance industry and put in place the strongest consumer protections in our history—finally what amounts to a true patient's bill of rights.

This long-overdue step has one overriding focus, and that's looking out for the American consumer. It's not punitive. As I said when I met with the insurance executives, it's not meant to punish insurance companies. They provide a critical service. They employ large numbers of Americans. And in fact, once this reform is fully implemented a few years from now, America's private insurance companies have the opportunity to prosper from the opportunity to compete for tens of millions of new customers. We want them to take advantage of that competition.

Now, what Americans respect—expect in return is a greater level of accountability and fairness and security. We expect to get what we pay for. And these rights guarantee just that: basic rules of the road that will make America's health care system more consumer driven and more cost effective and give Americans the peace of mind that their insurance will be there when they need it, give Amy that piece of mind that her insurance will be there when she needs it.

So starting in September, some of the worst abuses will be banned forever. No more discriminating against children with preexisting

conditions. No more retroactively dropping somebody's policy when they get sick if they made an unintentional mistake on an application. No more lifetime limits or restrictive annual limits on coverage. Those days are over.

And I'm pleased to say that some insurance companies have already stopped these practices. When news reports indicated that a company was dropping coverage for women diagnosed with breast cancer, my administration called on the industry to end the practice immediately, don't wait until September. And soon after, the entire industry announced that it would comply with the new law early and stop the practice of dropping people's coverage when they fall ill and need it most.

Some also questioned whether insurance companies might find a loophole in the new law and continue to discriminate against children with preexisting conditions. And to their credit, when we called the insurance companies to provide coverage to our most vulnerable Americans, the industry agreed.

Those were the right things to do for their consumers, their customers, the American people. And I applaud industry for that. And we're going to hold industry to that standard, a standard in which industry can still thrive but Americans are getting a fair shake.

The patient's bill of rights also eliminates the barriers that stand between the American people and their doctors. Americans will be able to keep the primary care doctor or pediatrician they choose. You'll be able to see an ob-gyn without a referral. You'll be able to seek emergency care at a hospital outside the plan's network without fighting to get approval from an insurance company first. And consumers will finally have access to simple, clear information about their choices and their rights. These protections to preserve America's choice of doctors made up the original patient's bill of rights. It was a proposal that was debated over a decade ago with significant bipartisan support, but was never enacted until now as part of the Affordable Care Act.

So this is a long-overdue victory for America's consumers and patients. And yes, it does away with the status quo that some insurance companies have taken advantage of for so long. But insurance companies should see this reform as an opportunity to improve care and increase competition. They shouldn't see it as an opportunity to enact unjustifiable rate increases that don't boost care and inflate their bottom line.

And the fact is, some insurance companies tried to raise rates even before we passed the law, even though some of them were making record profits. Earlier this year, for example, more than 800,000 Anthem BlueCross customers in California opened their mail to see that their premiums would go up by as much as 39 percent. My administration wanted to know why. People's wages aren't going up 39 percent, and the company's expenses didn't rise by 39 percent. And when pressed, they took a look at it and said, "Well, our math was wrong; we didn't justify that kind of rate increase." So they withdrew it.

The point is that there are genuine cost drivers that are not caused by insurance companies. But what is also true is we've got to make sure that this new law is not being used as an excuse to simply drive up costs. So what we do is make sure that the Affordable Care Act gives us new tools to promote competition, transparency, and better deals for consumers. The CEOs here today need to know that they're going to be required to publicly justify unreasonable premium increases on your web sites as well as the law's new web site, healthcare.gov. As we set up the exchanges, we'll be watching closely, and we'll fully support States if they exercise their review authority to keep excessively expensive plans out of their insurance exchanges.

None of this is designed to deprive insurance companies of their fair rates. And as I mentioned when we were meeting with the CEOs, there are a lot of cost drivers other than those that are within insurance companies' control. But it is important to have these steps in place to protect consumers from unjustifiable rate increases. In fact, many States are already exercising their review authority. We're already seeing a wave of change that's lifting up consumers and leveling the playing field. Maine rejected a proposed 18-percent rate hike there. Pennsylvania is investigating premium increases made by nine of the State's largest insurers. New York recently passed a law granting the State the au-

thority to review and approve premium increases before they take effect. And we're working with other States and the State insurance commissioners here today to support similar efforts. Secretary Sebelius has urged them to investigate other rate hikes. We've set up a new Office of Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight to help. And we'll provide grants to the States that run the best, most innovative oversight programs to protect their consumers.

And beginning next year, insurance companies will be required to spend at least 80 or 85 percent of health care dollars where they should be spent: on health care and on efforts to improve its quality. Not on profits, not on bonuses, not on administrative costs that don't make people healthier.

Ultimately, all these reforms are about more than just ending a dangerous status quo. They're about offering stability and security to Americans who need it. Now, we're in Washington, so obviously, there's politics involved. And I've got some folks on the other side of the aisle that still think none of this should happen and, in fact, have said they're going to run on a platform of repeal. They want to go back to the system we had before.

Would you? [*Laughter*] Would you want to go back to discriminating against children with preexisting conditions? Would you want to go back to dropping coverage for people when they get sick? Would you want to reinstate lifetime limits on benefits so that mothers like Amy have to worry?

We're not going back. I refuse to go back, and so do countless Americans who bravely shared their stories with me over 2 years as I traveled this country and who wrote letter after letter to me in the White House. A lot of them are here today.

You heard Amy's story. Taylor got ill, and the treatment produced multiple costly side effects. And now, just 3 years after diagnosis, they're picking and choosing which tests and treatments to pursue because they don't want to exceed their plan's lifetime limits. So, Amy, you and Taylor are why the Affordable Care Act bans those lifetime limits. And you're why these Members of Congress right here fought so hard, despite some very tough politics, to make this happen.

I met Nathan Wilkes from Englewood, Colorado, last August. His son, Thomas, was born with hemophilia in 2003. At the time, the Wilkes family had high-quality insurance through the high-tech company that Nathan helped to found. But when that insurer saw Thomas's claims, it began jacking up premiums for all of Nathan's employees and their families. No other insurer would take Nathan as long as Thomas was on the policy.

[*At this point, a fly flew in front of the President.*]

Get out of here. [*Laughter*] You've seen me grab one of those before. [*Laughter*]

So as Nathan's family neared their lifetime limit, a social worker actually suggested that Nathan and his wife get divorced so that she could go on Medicaid. And nobody should face a choice like that in America. So, Nathan, you and your family, you're why the Affordable Care Act bans those lifetime limits and ends the discrimination that young Thomas faced.

I met Laura Klitzka last year in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Laura—it's wonderful to see her here with her crew. Laura was diagnosed with breast cancer 2 years ago. She's undergone 8 rounds of chemotherapy, a double mastectomy, 33 rounds of radiation; then the cancer returned, spread to her bones. She lost her job during treatment. The coverage she had through her husband's employer has a lifetime limit of $1 million, and so like Nathan, they worry they'll hit that limit. They're struggling to pay their medical bills. Laura is worried about losing their house. She just wants to make sure that she can spend time focused on being well and not worrying about her medical bills. Laura, you're why we banned those lifetime limits too.

I met Katie Gibson last year in Bozeman, Montana. Because Katie once had cancer, her insurance policy was suddenly revoked when she needed it most, even though she was paying her premiums. And I called Katie the day after the House passed a reform bill last November, and I told her then that when it finally

became law, we'd be able to protect Americans like her from the kind of abuses she's had to endure. And, Katie, now we can.

So anybody who favors repeal is welcome to come talk to these people and tell them why we should go back to the status quo prior to us signing this bill, go back to the way things were. They are going to need to explain why they and tens of millions of Americans should have their new rights taken away. I don't think they'll have that conversation.

Because in the end, folks like Amy and Nathan and Laura and Katie are who this law was made to help, Americans who work hard, who do the right thing, and just expect a fair shake in return. In every story I heard out there, in every letter I read at night, people were not asking for much more than that. Nobody ever asked for a handout. Nobody ever asked for a free ride. A lot of times folks wrote they were embarrassed or guilty about asking for help at all when so many of their fellow Americans were hurting as well. Some even apologized for writing in the first place. But they all said the same thing: Please do something for people like me and families like mine.

So we did. The stories of everyday Americans and, more importantly, the courage it took to share those stories is what kept this effort alive and moving forward, even when it looked like it was lost. They are why we got this done. They are why I signed this bill into law. It wasn't easy, and it isn't perfect. Change never is in a country as big and busy and diverse as this one. But every time this country has moved forward, it's because ordinary Americans like these summoned what's best in each of us to make life better for all of us, and it's because we as a people find the will to cobble together out of all of our differences that American sense of common interest and common purpose that's always been required to advance the dreams of all of our people.

That's why we got this done. And that's what the Affordable Care Act does. And as long as I have the honor of being your President, that's what we're going to keep on doing together.

Thank you very much. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:20 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Marblehead, OH, resident Amy Wilhite and her daughter Taylor. The President also referred to Public Law No. 111–148, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters
June 22, 2010

The President. Well, we just finished up a Cabinet meeting with obviously a very wide-ranging agenda. One of the first things we talked about was the progress that we're making in terms of growing the economy again. We've now seen 5 straight months of job growth and economic growth. Over half a million private sector jobs have been created since the beginning of the year. But we also know that it is not moving as fast as we want, that there's still millions of Americans out there who are looking for work or looking for more hours or are behind on their payments because they experienced unemployment very recently.

And so we discussed how all of us working together, agency by agency, are going to be working to encourage job growth. And we discussed the need for Congress to continue to move forward on an agenda of targeted measures that can help small businesses invest, that can make sure that unemployed workers are getting hired, that continue to add to the momentum of job growth and economic growth that is needed so badly after the damage that's been done over the last couple of years.

We also got a full briefing from our national security team, as well as Vice President Biden, on Iraq. It hasn't received a lot of attention lately, but we are on pace to meet every target that we set at the beginning of this administration, to have our combat troops out and to transfer security responsibilities to the Iraqis. And we had a discussion about the progress that's been made in terms of government formation there.

We also discussed the importance of the transition from a Defense-weighted U.S. ap-

proach to a more State Department-weighted approach and the need to make sure that we are adequately funding and supporting all the diplomatic measures that are going to be necessary so that we can partner effectively with a new Iraqi Government over the long haul.

We had a discussion about the oil spill in the Gulf and the important measures that are being taken both in capping the well, in making sure that we are dealing with the consequences on the shorelines and estuaries and bays across the Gulf, and also making sure that ordinary Americans who are being devastated economically are compensated properly.

Ken Feinberg has already traveled to the Gulf, and he is meeting with Governors and local officials with the $20 billion fund that has been set up. We want to make sure that that money is moving out as quickly as possible, as fairly as possible, and that some of the people who I've had a chance to talk to down in the Gulf who are just desperate for relief are getting help as quickly as possible.

And Secretary Napolitano also briefed us on the range of measures that are being taken to ensure that we are coordinating as effectively as possible when it comes to skimming the oil as it's coming forward, initiating the burns, trying to make sure that we're capturing all the oil that we can.

And finally, we talked about energy. In the context of the oil spill, as I said last week during my Oval Office address, this has to be a wakeup call to the country that we are prepared and ready to move forward on a new energy strategy that the American people desperately want, but for which there's been insufficient political will. It is time for us to move to a clean energy future. I think the American people understand that it is a jobs creator, that it is a national security enhancer, that it is what is needed environmentally.

And we have the opportunity to build on actions that have already been taken in the House of Representatives. The Senate has an opportunity, before the August recess and the elections, to stand up and move forward on something that could have enormous, positive consequences for generations to come. And the entire Cabinet here recognizes, with all the other stuff that they're doing, that if we get energy right, that an awful lot of things can happen as a consequence.

So we are mindful that we have a lot of work to do, but we are very pleased with the progress that has been made by each of these Cabinet members, and we are looking forward to redoubling our efforts in the months to come.

All right. Thank you.

Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal/Military Operations in Afghanistan

Q. Mr. President, are you going to fire Mr. McChrystal?

The President. General McChrystal is on his way here and I am going to meet with him, Secretary Gates will be meeting with him as well. I think it's clear that the article in which he and his team appeared showed a poor—showed poor judgment. But I also want to make sure that I talk to him directly before I make any final decisions.

All right. Let me—actually, let me make one last point about this. Even as General McChrystal is on his way here, I want everybody to keep in mind what our central focus is, and that is success in making sure that Al Qaida and its affiliates cannot attack the United States and its allies. And we've got young men and women there who are making enormous sacrifices, families back home who are making enormous sacrifices. And so whatever decision that I make with respect to General McChrystal or any other aspect of Afghan policy is determined entirely on how I can make sure that we have a strategy that justifies the enormous courage and sacrifice that those men and women are making over there, and that ultimately makes this country safer. I know Secretary Gates feels the exact same way.

All right. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:22 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Special Master for TARP Executive Compensation Kenneth R. Feinberg, in his capacity as administrator of the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill compensation fund; and Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA,

commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Amendments
June 22, 2010

Dear Madam Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed amendments to Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 proposals in my FY 2011 Budget for the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice.

These amendments would support efforts to secure the Southwest border and enhance Federal border protection, law enforcement, and counternarcotics activities.

The amounts requested would be partially offset by cancelling $100 million from a lower priority program within the Department of Homeland Security. The proposed budget authority for FY 2010 would, therefore, increase by a net total of $500 million as a result of these amendments.

This request responds to urgent and essential needs. Therefore, I request these proposals be considered as emergency requirements. The details of this request are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks at a Reception Honoring Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month
June 22, 2010

The President. Hello, everybody! I was going to say welcome to the White House, but you guys seem like you feel right at home. [*Laughter*] You don't need me to tell you this is the people's house.

The—a couple of acknowledgements that I want to make very quickly. First of all, our Director of the Office of Personnel Management, who has just done an extraordinary job across the Government, give John Berry a big round of applause, please. We love John.

Audience member. All right, John!

The President. All right, John! [*Laughter*]

Our Chair of the Export-Import Bank, helping to bring jobs here to the United States of America, Fred Hochberg. Where is he? Our Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality, doing outstanding work each and every day, Nancy Sutley. Where is she? Nancy's a little vertically challenged—[*laughter*]—but I see her over there. [*Laughter*]

We've got here a trailblazer for Federal appointees—we are so proud of her—Ms. Roberta Achtenberg is here. Give Roberta a big round of applause. And then I understand we've got a terrific country singer—Chely Wright is in the house.

Now, in addition, I know they had to leave because they had votes, but you guys obviously don't have just fiercer warriors on your behalf than a couple of our openly gay and lesbian Members of Congress, Tammy Baldwin and Jared Polis, so give them—[*applause*]. They are openly terrific. [*Laughter*] They do great work.

And it is also great to have so many activists and organizers from around the country, folks who fight every day for the rights of parents and children and partners and citizens to be treated equally under the law. And so we are very proud of all of you.

Oh, and by the way, the guy standing next to me, this is Joe Biden.

Audience member. All the way from Pennsylvania.

Vice President Joe Biden. Delaware.

The President. Just because he's a Phillies fan—he's from Delaware. [*Laughter*]

Now, look, the fact that we've got activists here is important because it's a reminder that change never comes, or at least, never begins in Washington. It begins with acts of compassion—and sometimes defiance—across America. It begins when ordinary people, out of love for a mother or a father, son or daughter, or husband or wife, speak out against injustices that have been accepted for too long. And it begins when these impositions of conscience start opening hearts that had been closed and when we finally see each other's humanity, whatever our differences.

Now, this struggle is as old as America itself. It's never been easy. But standing here, I am hopeful. One year ago in this room, we marked the 40th anniversary of the Stonewall protests, and—[*applause*]. Some of you were here, and you may remember that I pledged then that even at a time when we faced enormous challenges, both on the economy and in our foreign policy, that we would not put aside matters of basic equality. And we haven't.

We've got a lot of hard work that we still have to do, but we can already point to extraordinary progress that we've made over the past year on behalf of Americans who are gay and lesbian, bisexual and transgender.

Just stay with me here for a second. Last year, I met with Judy Shepard, Matthew Shepard's mom, and I promised her that after a decades-long struggle, we would pass inclusive hate crimes legislation. I promised that in the name of her son, we would ensure that the full might of the law is brought down on those who would attack somebody just because they are gay. And less than 6 months later, with Judy by my side, we marked the enactment of the Matthew Shepard Act. It is now the law of the land.

Just a few moments ago, I met with Janice Langbehn and her children. Where's—where'd Janice go? There they are right there. And when Janice's partner of 18 years, Lisa, suddenly collapsed because of an aneurysm, Janice and the couple's three kids were denied the chance to comfort their partner and their mom, barred from Lisa's bedside. It was wrong; it was cruel. And in part because of their story, I instructed my Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, to make sure that any hospital that's participating in Medicare or Medicaid—that means most hospitals—[*laughter*]—allow gay and lesbian partners the same privileges and visitation rights as straight partners.

After I issued that memorandum, I called Janice, and I told her the news. And before we came out here today, I wanted to make sure that I had followed up. Secretary Sebelius will officially be proposing this regulation. And I can also announce that the Secretary has sent a letter today asking these hospitals to adopt these changes now, even before the rule takes effect, so—[*applause*]. Nothing can undo the hurt that her—that Janice's family has experienced. And nothing can undo the pain felt by countless others who've been through a similar ordeal. For example, Charlene Strong is here. She lost her wife Kate Fleming. And Charlene is here along with Kate's mom, who said on behalf of all mothers, thank you. Because we think it's the right thing to do.

In addition, I've issued an Executive order [Presidential memorandum]* to extend as many partnership benefits to gay and lesbian Federal employees as possible under current law. And I'm going to continue to fight to change the law to guarantee gay Federal employees the exact same benefits as straight employees, including access to health insurance and retirement plans. And in an announcement today, the Department of Labor made clear that under the Family and Medical Leave Act, same-sex couples, as well as others raising children, are to be treated like the caretakers that they are, so—[*applause*].

Because I believe in committed—I believe that committed gay and lesbian couples deserve the same rights and responsibilities afforded to any married couple in this country, I have called for Congress to repeal the so-called Defense of Marriage Act. We are pushing hard to pass an inclusive employee nondis-

* White House correction.

crimination bill. No one in America should be fired because they're gay. It's not right, it's not who we are as Americans, and we are going to put a stop to it.

And finally, we're going to end "don't ask, don't tell." That is a promise I made as a candidate. It is a promise that I reiterated as President. It's one that this administration is going to keep. Now, the only way to lock this in, the only way to get the votes in Congress to roll back this policy is if we work with the Pentagon, who are in the midst of two wars.

And that's why we were gratified to see, for the first time ever, the Secretary of Defense, Bob Gates, testify in favor of repeal. And the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mike Mullen, has repeatedly and passionately argued for allowing gay men and women to serve honestly in the military. Now, we know that forcing gay and lesbian soldiers to live a lie or to leave the military, that doesn't contribute to our security, it harms our security.

And thanks to Patrick Murphy and others, for the first time in history, the House has passed a repeal that would allow gay men and women to openly serve in our Armed Forces. And this repeal is authored so that the Pentagon can complete its review of the policy, which is critical, by the way, not only to passage, but it's also critical to making sure that the change is accepted and implemented effectively. In the Senate, the Armed Services Committee has approved repeal for the first time, and the full body is poised to vote soon.

So here's the bottom line: We have never been closer to ending this discriminatory policy. And I'm going to keep on fighting until that bill is on my desk so that I can sign it.

Of course, ultimately, change is about more than just policies in our Government. And that's why I want to close by recognizing all the young people who are here. I had a chance to take a bunch of pictures with them, just really impressive folks who are advocating on their behalf. I know there are some in the audience who have experienced pain in their lives, who at times have been—felt like outcasts, who have been scorned or bullied, and I know that there are families here on behalf of loved ones who are no longer with us, some in part because of the particularly difficult challenges that gay men and women still face.

This is a reminder that we all have an obligation to ensure that no young person is ever made to feel worthless or alone—ever. Now, at the same time, I think there's plenty of reason to have some hope for many of the young people, including those who are here today. They've shown incredible courage and incredible integrity standing up for who they are. They've refused to be anything less than themselves.

And we all remember being young—sort of. [*Laughter*] But it's not easy. It's not easy standing up all the time and being who you are. But they're showing us the way forward. These young people are helping to build a more perfect Union, a nation where all of us are equal, each of us is free to pursue our own versions of happiness.

And I believe because of them that the future is bright. It's certainly bright for them. Of course, it does depend on all of us. It depends on the efforts of government and the activism of ordinary citizens like yourselves. It depends on the love of families and the support of communities. And I want you all to know that as this work continues, I'm going to be standing shoulder to shoulder with you, fighting by your side every step of the way.

So thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:16 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Roberta Achtenberg, former Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity; Danielle, David, and Katie Langbehn-Pond, children of Janice Langbehn; and Audrey Fleming, mother of Kate Fleming. The related proclamation of May 28 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on the Resignation of General Stanley A. McChrystal as Commander of the NATO International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan

June 23, 2010

Good afternoon. Today I accepted General Stanley McChrystal's resignation as commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. I did so with considerable regret, but also with certainty that it is the right thing for our mission in Afghanistan, for our military, and for our country.

I'm also pleased to nominate General David Petraeus to take command in Afghanistan, which will allow us to maintain the momentum and leadership that we need to succeed.

I don't make this decision based on any difference in policy with General McChrystal, as we are in full agreement about our strategy. Nor do I make this decision out of any sense of personal insult. Stan McChrystal has always shown great courtesy and carried out my orders faithfully. I've got great admiration for him and for his long record of service in uniform.

Over the last 9 years, with America fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, he has earned a reputation as one of our Nation's finest soldiers. That reputation is founded upon his extraordinary dedication, his deep intelligence, and his love of country. I relied on his service, particularly in helping to design and lead our new strategy in Afghanistan. So all Americans should be grateful for General McChrystal's remarkable career in uniform.

But war is bigger than any one man or woman, whether a private, a general, or a President. And as difficult as it is to lose General McChrystal, I believe that it is the right decision for our national security.

The conduct represented in the recently published article does not meet the standard that should be set by a commanding general. It undermines the civilian control of the military that is at the core of our democratic system, and it erodes the trust that's necessary for our team to work together to achieve our objectives in Afghanistan.

My multiple responsibilities as Commander in Chief led me to this decision. First, I have a responsibility to the extraordinary men and women who are fighting this war and to the democratic institutions that I've been elected to lead. I've got no greater honor than serving as Commander in Chief of our men and women in uniform, and it is my duty to ensure that no diversion complicates the vital mission that they are carrying out.

That includes adherence to a strict code of conduct. The strength and greatness of our military is rooted in the fact that this code applies equally to newly enlisted privates and to the general officer who commands them. That allows us to come together as one. That is part of the reason why America has the finest fighting force in the history of the world.

It is also true that our democracy depends upon institutions that are stronger than individuals. That includes strict adherence to the military chain of command and respect for civilian control over that chain of command. And that's why, as Commander in Chief, I believe this decision is necessary to hold ourselves accountable to standards that are at the core of our democracy.

Second, I have a responsibility to do what is—whatever is necessary to succeed in Afghanistan and in our broader effort to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida. I believe that this mission demands unity of effort across our alliance and across my national security team. And I don't think that we can sustain that unity of effort and achieve our objectives in Afghanistan without making this change. That too has guided my decision.

I've just told my national security team that now is the time for all of us to come together. Doing so is not an option, but an obligation. And I welcome debate among my team, but I won't tolerate division. All of us have personal interests; all of us have opinions; our politics often fuels conflict. But we have to renew our sense of common purpose and meet our responsibilities to one another and to our troops who are in harm's way and to our country.

We need to remember what this is all about: Our Nation is at war. We face a very tough fight in Afghanistan. But Americans don't flinch in the face of difficult truths or difficult tasks. We persist, and we persevere. We will not tolerate a safe haven for terrorists who want to destroy Afghan society from within and launch attacks against innocent men, women, and children in our country and around the world.

So make no mistake: We have a clear goal. We are going to break the Taliban's momentum. We are going to build Afghan capacity. We are going to relentlessly apply pressure on Al Qaida and its leadership, strengthening the ability of both Afghanistan and Pakistan to do the same.

That's the strategy that we agreed to last fall; that is the policy that we are carrying out in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In that effort, we are honored to be joined by allies and partners who have stood by us and paid the ultimate price through the loss of their young people at war. They are with us because the interests and values that we share and because this mission is fundamental to the ability of free people to live in peace and security in the 21st century.

Now, General Petraeus and I were able to spend some time this morning discussing the way forward. I am extraordinarily grateful that he has agreed to serve in this new capacity. It should be clear to everybody, he does so at great personal sacrifice to himself and to his family. And he is setting an extraordinary example of service and patriotism by assuming this difficult post.

Let me say to the American people, this is a change in personnel, but it is not a change in policy. General Petraeus fully participated in our review last fall, and he both supported and helped design the strategy that we have in place. In his current post at Central Command, he has worked closely with our forces in Afghanistan, he has worked closely with Congress, he has worked closely with the Afghan and Pakistan Governments and with all our partners in the region. He has my full confidence, and I am urging the Senate to confirm him for this new assignment as swiftly as possible.

Let me conclude by saying that it was a difficult decision to come to the conclusion that I've made today. Indeed, it saddens me to lose the service of a soldier who I've come to respect and admire. But the reasons that led me to this decision are the same principles that have supported the strength of our military and our Nation since the founding.

So once again, I thank General McChrystal for his enormous contributions to the security of this Nation and to the success of our mission in Afghanistan. I look forward to working with General Petraeus and my entire national security team to succeed in our mission. And I reaffirm that America stands as one in our support for the men and women who defend it.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:43 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command.

The President's News Conference With President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia

June 24, 2010

President Obama. Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated. *Dobriy den'*. After many meetings around the world, I'm delighted to welcome my friend and partner, President Medvedev, to the White House.

This is also an opportunity to return the wonderful hospitality that the President, Mrs. Medvedeva, and the Russian people showed me and my family during our visit to Moscow 1 year ago. Michelle and I enjoyed a wonderful eve-

ning at the President's home. Our daughters will never forget having tea in the Winter Garden of the Kremlin. And, Mr. President, I hope you'll remember having a burger at Ray's Hells Burger today. [*Laughter*]

We just concluded some excellent discussions, discussions that would have been unlikely just 17 months ago. As we've both said before, when I came into office, the relationship between the United States and Russia had drifted, perhaps to its lowest point since the cold war. There was too much mistrust and too little real work on issues of common concern. That did not serve the interests of either country or the world. Indeed, I firmly believe that America's most significant national security interests and priorities could be advanced most effectively through cooperation, not an adversarial relationship, with Russia.

That's why I committed to resetting the relationship between our two nations, and in President Medvedev, I've found a solid and reliable partner. We listen to one another, and we speak candidly. So, Mr. President, I'm very grateful for your leadership and your partnership.

By any measure, we have made significant progress and achieved concrete results. Together, we negotiated and signed the historic new START Treaty, committing our nations to significant reductions in deployed nuclear weapons. Today we reaffirmed our commitment to work to ratify this treaty as soon as possible, so it can enter into force and set the stage for further cuts and cooperation.

Together, we've strengthened the global nonproliferation regime so that as we meet our obligations under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, other nations meet theirs and are held accountable if they don't.

Along with our international partners, we passed and are enforcing new U.N. sanctions against North Korea. We offered Iran the prospect of a better future, and when they refused, we joined with Russia and our partners on the Security Council to impose the toughest sanctions ever faced by the Government of Iran.

Together, our nations have deepened our cooperation against violent extremism, as terrorists threaten both our peoples, be it in Times Square or in Moscow. And today we've agreed to expand our cooperation on intelligence and counterterrorism. Russian transit routes now play a vital role in supplying American and NATO forces in Afghanistan. And to prevent terrorists from acquiring nuclear weapons, we came together at our Nuclear Security Summit, where our two nations made numerous commitments, including agreeing to eliminate enough plutonium for about 17,000 nuclear weapons.

Together, we've coordinated our efforts to strengthen the global economic recovery through the G–20, work that we will continue in Toronto this weekend.

And today we agreed to continue closely to coordinate our diplomatic and humanitarian efforts following the tragic outbreak of ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan.

Our two countries continue to disagree on certain issues, such as Georgia, and we addressed those differences candidly. But by moving forward in areas where we do agree, we have succeeded in resetting our relationship, which benefits regional and global security. This includes, I would note, a change in the attitudes among the Russian people, who today have a far more favorable view of the United States, and that in turn creates more space for additional partnership.

Indeed, this has been the real focus of our work today and of President Medvedev's visit, not simply resetting our relationship, but also broadening it. Because 20 years after the end of the cold war, the U.S.-Russian relationship has to be about more than just security and arms control. It has to be about our shared prosperity and what we can build together.

That's why we created the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission during my visit to Moscow last year to forge new partnerships, not just between governments, but between our businesses, our peoples, and our societies. And today we agreed to forge new cooperation across a whole range of areas.

In particular, we're expanding trade and commerce. We agreed to deepen our collaboration on energy efficiency and clean energy technologies. And this afternoon President

Medvedev and I will join American and Russian business leaders as they move forward with a series of major trade and investment deals that will create jobs for Americans and Russians across many sectors, from aerospace and automotive engineering to the financial sector and high technology. Consistent with my administration's National Export Initiative, this includes the sale of 50 Boeing aircraft, worth $4 billion, that could add up to 44,000 new jobs in the American aerospace industry.

To deepen Russia's integration into the global economy, I reaffirmed our strong commitment to Russia's ascension to the World Trade Organization. Today we've reached an agreement that will allow the United States to begin exporting our poultry products to Russia once again. And I want to thank President Medvedev and his team for resolving this issue, which is of such importance to American business and which sends an important signal about Russia's seriousness about achieving membership in the WTO.

Therefore, I told President Medvedev that our teams should accelerate their efforts to work together to complete this process in the very near future. Russia belongs in the WTO. That's good for Russia, it's good for America, and it's good for the world economy.

I appreciated very much the opportunity to hear President Medvedev's vision for modernization in Russia, especially high-tech innovation. This is a personal passion of the President. And during his visit to Silicon Valley this week, he visited the headquarter of Twitters, where he opened his own account. I have one as well, so we may be able to finally throw away those red phones—[*laughter*]—that have been sitting around for so long. American companies and universities were among the first to invest in President Medvedev's initiative to create a Russian silicon valley outside Moscow and more are announcing new investments today.

Mr. President, the United States will be your partner as you promote the transparency and accountability and rule of law that's needed to infuse this spirit of innovation throughout your economy.

We're deepening partnerships between our societies. As they did during our meeting in Moscow, leaders from civil society groups—Russian and American—are meeting here in Washington to explore new ways to cooperate in education and health, human rights and combating corruption. And in the spirit of President Medvedev's visit, they're placing a special focus on how new technologies can improve their work.

Finally, I would simply add that the new partnership between our peoples spans the spectrum, from space to science to sports. I think, President, you're aware that recently I welcomed to the White House a group of young Russian basketball players—both boys and girls—who were visiting the United States. We went on the White House basketball court, and I have to admit some of them outshot me. [*Laughter*] They represented the hope for the future that brings our countries together.

Those were the same hopes of another generation of Americans and Russians, the generation that stood together as allies in the Second World War, the Great Patriotic War in which the Russian people suffered and sacrificed so much. Now, we recently marked the 65th anniversary of our shared victory in that war, including that historic moment when American and Soviet troops came together in friendship at the Elbe River in Germany.

A reporter who was there at that time, all those years ago, said: "If there is a fine, splendid world in the future, it will largely be because the United States and Russia get on well together. If it is in trouble, it will be because they don't get on well. It's as simple as that."

Mr. President, the decades that followed saw many troubles, too many troubles. But 65 years later, it's still as simple as that. Our countries are more secure and the world is safer when the United States and Russia get on well together. So I thank you for your partnership and your commitment to the future that we can build together for this and for future generations.

With that, let me introduce President Medvedev.

President Medvedev. Thank you, Mr. President. Distinguished colleagues, of course I must start with thanking my counterpart, President Barack Obama, for invitation to visit the United States of America with a visit and for the

exceptional hospitality and generosity we observed here. Even the weather is so warm that it leaves no doubt that everything is the result of hard work for—in terms of preparation of the visit.

Our delegation appreciated the hospitality. And in Moscow, we met various places, and today I have managed to dine with President Barack Obama—an interesting place, which is typically American—probably it's not quite healthy, but it's very tasty, and you feel—you can feel the spirit of America.

But this is not the main thing we were engaged in. Our delegation, the Russian delegation had a very busy schedule and—which started in California, which is an unparalleled event. Besides the fact that it's a very beautiful place on the coast of the United States, it's a token place, and I hope this is a symbolic launch of cooperation between our countries in the sphere of innovation and high tech.

We spoke about—we have spoken about it today with the President and before, saying that we have a dialogue to build confidence between our countries. We have made steps aimed at establishing a more firm construction of our relations—structure of our relations. And to a certain extent, we made our world safer. I must say this.

But this is not enough for our bilateral economic ties to change. And this visit is generally mostly aimed at achieving these goals. We are ready for that, and our American partners are ready for this same thing. The President and I agreed to work in this sphere, and today the main part of our talks were devoted to economic issues and, first of all, to the very complicated issues as Russia's membership in WTO.

Mr. President has just said that we have reached progress and made headway, but we will later discuss it, probably. I am sure that such cooperation as cooperation in high-tech sphere can be mutually beneficial, including in this framework of those new projects created in Russia.

We are establishing our continuation, so to say, all this in the silicon valley, not far from Moscow, which is the Skolkovo center, and hope that our American partners will actively partake in this project and will have some good groundwork for that.

In my yesterday's talk in the Silicon Valley and the forum that was held in St. Petersburg, the economic forum, the decisions of major companies to come to Russia with such investment, all this inspires us and shows that we can agree not only on missiles or any—some important and complicated issues of international agenda.

I count on the fact that in Russia, we'll soon have relevant business in place. Yesterday I had an interesting event in my life. I visited the Stanford University, which is a well-known university with special climate, and I was enjoying walking and strolling around Stanford without necktie or—and a suit, but in jeans, which was a pleasure for those people who occupy high posts. I also spoke with students, professors, and tutors and the faculty. It was an open, frank, and candid communication, and I felt their interest in strengthening our good relations and creating new high-tech projects in the Russian Federation and the United States.

As far as the talks of today, I can say, Mr. President has said in detail about everything. I have practically nothing to add. We went through all the issues and the items of the agenda. We're interested in removing the obstacles accumulated over the previous period in term—in this area of bilateral trade and investment.

Russia has been actively participating in international labor division, and after the Washington summit is over, we will fly—well, by different planes—we'll fly to Canada, where we will address the issue of promoting our common view and common goals and discussing the global financial agenda, and on our mutual understanding, a lot depends in the format of G–20, including.

Today we have spoken about our economies' responses to the effects of the crisis. So we believe that much is done, but a lot has been—has to be done. President told me about many innovations and novelties he's trying to prove—to steer through the Congress to make the U.S. economy more stable. I briefed him on our crisis exit measures.

I believe it was a helpful exchange of opinions, and I hope that in a cooperative way, we will, together, discuss the issues of restoring the global finance and establishing the new financial order during the G–20 meeting.

There are some things that should be substantially changed; I mean the investment climate. We should provide a stimulus to our businessmen to be more attentive and thoughtful towards each other, to invest funds in each other's economies. And this is why, after the press conference, we're going to meet our business communities of our countries, and we will talk of future steps so that the level of economic investment cooperation is in line with the potential of the U.S. and the Russian economies.

Over the last period of time, we established—we created a number of useful tools. One of them is a Presidential Commission that has been mentioned by Mr. Obama. On the one hand, it's a common instrument, but on the other hand, it's a mechanism that provides for effective interaction which is in line with the current spirit and level of our friend and partnership relations that—and also, I meant, relations between Mr. Obama and me. So I hope all the colleagues that are present here and that are members of the commission will actively work to implement the plans that we have.

So we went through the national agenda. And today we devoted less time to it because in our previous meetings, we devoted a lot to it, so still have managed to do something. We spoke of the Middle East crisis and the resolution on Iran, the Korean Peninsula developments, the Kyrgyzstan developments, and some other most complicated issues that are currently on our planet.

We also spoke about European security. We believe that we share a common view that Europe should have the security system. We have some differences—and Mr. President mentioned it—in terms of, for example, the after-effects of the conflict that was initiated by Georgia's leadership in 2008. But these differences do not prevent us from discussing future and launching new mechanisms of contacts.

We discussed the situation around the new START Treaty. Our goal—the goal of the two Presidents—is to ensure tranquil ratification of the treaty by our parliament. I hope it's going to be done in near future. Well, for example, in the statement of the Federation Council, there are hearings in place, there are hearings on, and in Congress, there are hearings, as far as I know, as well as in the Senate. So these active discussions should reveal the truth and synchronize the process of ratification.

We keep thinking of our next future steps, and this is a serious responsibility of the Russian Federation and the United States. We'll not lift this responsibility or shirk it. We will keep in touch. And I'm always ready to discuss various issues with my colleague and my counterpart. And we succeed in these discussions.

Last time the President and I spoke over the phone, it was a record—my record of phone conversation—probably Obama has some longer records. It lasted 1 hour, 45 minutes, which is a lot, I may say frankly, and the ear starts getting stiff, but the result—I will not brief you on the nuances—on the topics we discussed, we were both interested and submerged into the topic. Not only our aides, our ministers should be that responsible, but we too.

So I'm thankful to my counterpart for his active cooperation and for a warm welcome here in Washington. Thank you so much.

President Obama. We're going to take some questions. We will start with Carol Lee of Politico.

U.S. Military Operations in Afghanistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Does the change in command in Afghanistan change your timetable for withdrawal? Is there likely to be any disruption, particularly given Secretary Gates seemed to contradict Vice President Biden's comments that you can bet on a large number of troops withdrawing in July of 2011? So are you confident that everyone on your team is on the same page when it comes to your plan? Do you expect anyone else to leave?

And if I may, to President Medvedev, given your country's history and experience in Afghanistan and your ability to talk candidly with President Obama, have you offered him any advice on the Afghan war? And do you believe that a foreign country can win in Afghanistan?

Thank you.

President Obama. The short answer is that what we saw yesterday was a change in personnel, but not a change in policy. Let me flesh that out.

When we engaged in an extensive review last year, General Petraeus was part of a group that included Secretaries Gates, Clinton, my national security team that discussed extensively what our various options were in Afghanistan. And what was determined was, number one, that we had to be very clear on our mission.

Our mission, first and foremost, is to dismantle and destroy Al Qaida and its affiliates so that they can't attack the United States. The reason we're there in the first place is because 3,000 Americans were killed from an attack launched in that region. We are not going to have that repeated.

In order to achieve that, we have to make sure that we have a stable Afghan Government, and we also have to make sure that we've got a Pakistani Government that is working effectively with us to dismantle these networks.

What we then said was we would put in additional troops to provide the time and the space for the Afghan Government to build up its security capacities, to clear and hold population centers that are critical, to drive back the Taliban, to break their momentum, and that beginning next year, we would begin a transition phase in which the Afghan Government is taking more and more responsibility for its own security.

Here's what we did not say last year. We did not say that starting July 2011, suddenly there would be no troops from the United States or allied countries in Afghanistan. We didn't say we'd be switching off the lights and closing the door behind us. What we said is we'd begin a transition phase in which the Afghan Government is taking on more and more responsibility.

That is the strategy that was put forward. What we've also said is, is that in December of this year, a year after this strategy has been put in place, at a time when the additional troops have been in place and have begun implementing strategy, that we'll conduct a review and we'll make an assessment: Is the strategy working? Is it working in part? Are there other aspects of it that aren't working? How is the coordination between civilian and military? Are we doing enough to build Afghan security capacity? How are we working effectively with our allies?

So we are in the midpoint of implementing the strategy that we came up with last year. We'll do a review at the end of this year. General Petraeus understands that strategy because he helped shape it. And my expectation is that he will be outstanding in implementing it and we will not miss a beat because of the change in command in the Afghan theater.

Keep in mind that during this entire time, General Petraeus has been the CENTCOM commander, which means he's had responsibility in part for overseeing what happened in Afghanistan. And that is part of the reason why I think he's going to do such a capable job. Not only does he have extraordinary experience in Iraq, not only did he help write the manual for dealing with insurgencies, but he also is intimately familiar with the players. He knows President Karzai. He knows the other personnel who are already on the ground.

So our team is going to be moving forward in sync. It is true that I am going to be insisting on a unity of purpose on the part of all branches of the U.S. Government that reflects the enormous sacrifices that are being made by the young men and women who are there.

I mean, every time I go to Walter Reed, when I visited Afghanistan and I visited the hospitals, and you see young men and women who are giving their all, making enormous sacrifices on behalf of the security of this Nation, my expectation is, is that the leadership is true to those sacrifices, that the strategy that we're promoting, the manner in which we are working together at the leadership level fully respects—fully reflects and honors the incredible dedication of our young men and women on the ground. That's what I expect, and I believe that is what I will receive.

Was there one last aspect to the question?

Q. Does anyone else need to go in the chain of command?

President Obama. I am confident that we've got a team in place that can execute. Now, I'm paying very close attention to make sure that they execute, and I will be insisting on extraordinary performance moving forward.

One last thing I just want to remind everybody, though, that the issues with General McChrystal that culminated in my decision yesterday were not as a result of a difference in policy. I want to be very clear about that. He was executing the policy that I had laid out; that he was executing the orders that I had issued and that were reflective of the review process that took place last year. Okay?

President Medvedev. I'll try to be even briefer than my colleague, Mr. President. You know, I hope that we have quite friendly relations with President Obama, but I try not to give pieces of advice that cannot be fulfilled. This is a hard topic, a difficult one. I can say only two things. First of all, we believe that, at present, the United States and some other countries are assisting the Afghan people in obtaining the much wanted statehood and restore the basis of the functioning of an effective state, restore their civil society and their economy. And in these terms, we will support and back the efforts of the U.S.

As far as our own experience, well-known experiences—[*inaudible*]—I would very much like to see the Afghan people in near future having an effective state and a modern economy, which requires toiling more than a year. But this is the path to guarantee that the most—the gravest scenarios of the last time will not repeat.

Please, ITAR–TASS.

Russia's World Trade Organization Membership/Russia-U.S. Cooperation in Research and Development

Q. Good day. ITAR–TASS News Agency. My question to the President of the United States: You just mentioned that you discussed the issue of Russia's joining the WTO during your talks. But I must admit that and state that promises to facilitate Russia's entry has been heard by the Russian delegation for a decade. Could you more specifically name the timeframe when you're referring to finalizing the process in near future?

And a question to Medvedev: Yesterday you visited the Silicon Valley. How did your perceptions on future cooperation between Russia and the U.S. in high-tech sphere change, and what indicators should be reached so that you can call the cooperation a successful one? Thank you.

President Obama. On the WTO, first of all, I emphasized to President Medvedev, I emphasized to his entire delegation, and I now want to emphasize to the Russian people, we think it is not only in the interests of the Russian Federation but in the interests of the United States and in the interest of the world that Russia joins the WTO. So this is something that we want to get resolved.

In terms of timeframe, let me give you a sense of perspective from our U.S. Trade Representative, Ron Kirk, who has been in close contact in negotiations with his counterparts on the Russian side. The way he described it is that 90, 95 percent of the issues have now been resolved. Now, the remaining 10—5 to 10 percent are difficult issues and are going to require some significant work. But that should give you some sense that a lot of work has already been done, even in the last few months, that makes an enormous difference.

Now, in our joint statement, what we were going to essentially instruct our negotiators is that they try to come to terms with the technical issues that remain by the fall. We are going to keep putting pressure on negotiators in the same way that we did during the START Treaty so that these—there's a sense of urgency on the part of our team.

A lot of the technical issues, the resolution of those technical issues, though, may be in the hands of the Russian Government. We've already made progress on some issues like encryption, for example. There may be certain international standards that require modifications in Russian law.

So as much as possible, what I've told my team is we are going to do everything we can to get this done as quickly as possible, and we will be very specific and very clear about the technical issues that Russia still faces. And Russia then will act in accordance with its needs and re-

quirements internally to meet the demands of the WTO in order to get this done.

But I'm confident that we can get this completed. And I am confident that President Medvedev and his vision for an innovative, modernized, energized economy are entirely consistent with Russia's joining the WTO.

And I also want to just say this. Sometimes it's odd when you're sitting in historic meetings with your Russian counterpart to spend time talking about chicken. [*Laughter*] But our ability to get resolved a trade dispute around poultry—that is a multibillion-dollar export for the United States—was, I think, an indication of the seriousness with which President Medvedev and his team take all of these trade and commercial issues.

And I very much appreciate the steady and consistent manner in which the President has approached these issues. That's part of what gives me confidence that we're going to get this done and that this will just be one aspect of a broader strengthening of commercial ties, cross-border investment, and expanded opportunities and job creation both in the Russian Federation and in the United States.

President Medvedev. I will say a couple of words about the WTO, because it's important for our country. First of all, we have coordinated a common approach today which says that some substantive issues are almost off—are none left. So we moved along all the lines, starting from encryption and intellectual property and ending with state borders and other things like synchronized character of changing of the Russian legislation as—in the process of joining the WTO.

There are some remaining technical minor problems, and our teams have been instructed to work as fast as possible. And we hope—and we have stated this—that the work will be finalized by the end of September this year.

I'm quite happy that we have set the timeframe not to lose all the positive momentum in what we have deliberated and not to dilute the talks about WTO in the issues of chicken meat or swine trimming. We're in a different situation today.

As far as cooperation in the Silicon Valley is concerned, well, yesterday paid heed that everyone wishes to call the Silicon Valley the "Kremlin Valley" in Russia. Probably for English there is no difference, but in Russia there is. So in the "Kremlin Valley" it was very interesting—the visit, I mean. And I looked at the activities of major companies that will, as I hope, become our close partners for modernization and technological advancement of our economy like—those like Cisco. And yesterday we inked a memorandum on investment in some projects to the tune of great sums. And also, I watched the activities of small companies situated in the Silicon Valley, which set an example of being efficient and effective in the risk of high-tech business.

It's very good that our companies settle in the Silicon Valley. Yesterday I browsed though the search engine Yandex, which is our number-one search engine and one of the major systems for search information in the world. So we should learn how to work, and we should not swagger, saying that we are clever enough. We have something to learn in terms of organizing business, and this is prompted by my talk with the representatives of Russian business communities that moved to the United States or are here on a temporary basis. Some of them are wishing to work with Russian investors. Many of them want to come back to Russia. But they do have precious experience as the Silicon Valley and what is done there.

And it's first and foremost people—their minds and their abilities and skills—and only after, money and infrastructure. So we will carefully study the experience of the Silicon Valley, and without replicating, we will use the best practices and samples that exist in California in the framework of that major project that is called the Silicon Valley.

China/Global Economic Stabilization

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I'd like to ask about the G–20, since you are both heading to the summit. On China, you've already welcomed its decision on the yuan. Are you satisfied with how far the country has moved since that news? How will this influence your judgment on whether China is a

currency manipulator? And when will you release your report to Congress on this matter?

President Obama. Okay. I think that China made progress by making its announcement that it's going to be returning to its phased-in, market-based approach to the RMB. The initial signs were positive, but it's too early to tell whether the appreciation that will track the market is sufficient to allow for the rebalancing that we think is appropriate.

I'm going to leave it up to Secretary Tim Geithner to make a determination as to the pace. He's the expert when it comes to examining the currency markets. I will say that we did not expect a complete 20-percent appreciation overnight, for example, simply because that would be extremely disruptive to world currency markets and to the Chinese economy. And ultimately, not surprisingly, China has got to make these decisions based on its sovereignty and its economic platform.

But we have said consistently that we believe that the RMB is undervalued, that that provides China with an unfair trade advantage, and that we expect change. The fact that they have said they are beginning that process is positive. And so we will continue to monitor and verify how rapidly these changes are taking place.

And I think that we will be able to track a trajectory. And if that trajectory indicates that over the course of a year the RMB has appreciated a certain amount that is more in line with economic fundamentals, then I—hopefully, not only will that be good for the U.S. economy, that will also be good for the Chinese economy and the world economy.

More broadly, just to widen out the challenges that the world economy faces, we said in Pittsburgh in the G–20 that it was important for us to rebalance, in part because the U.S. economy for a long period of time was the engine of world economic growth; we were sucking in imports from all across the world financed by huge amounts of consumer debt. Because of the financial crisis, but also because that debt was fundamentally unsustainable, the United States is not going to be able to serve in that same capacity to that same extent.

We are obviously still a huge part of the world economy. We are still going to be open. We are still going to be importing as well as exporting. But the economic realities are such that for us to see sustained global economic growth, all countries are going to have to be moving in some new directions.

That was acknowledged in Pittsburgh. That means that surplus countries are going to have to think about, how are we spurring domestic demand. That means that emerging countries are going to have to think, are we only oriented towards exports, or are we also starting to produce manufacturing goods and services for the internal market. It means that deficit countries have to start getting serious about their mid-term and long-term debt and deficits. And that includes the United States of America, which is why I've got a fiscal commission that's going to be reporting to me by the end of the year.

So the point is, not every country is going to respond exactly the same way, but all of us are going to have responsibilities to rebalance in ways that allow for long-term, sustained economic growth in which all countries are participating and, hopefully, the citizens of all these countries are benefiting. All right?

Now he's got to decide.

Kyrgyzstan

Q. Komsomolskaya Pravda newspaper. A question to both Presidents. You said that you discussed the situation in Kyrgyzstan. Do you share the view on the problem? And what are joint ways of solving it? It's known that Russia and U.S. have military bases in the republic. So do you consider opportunity to involve a military contingent if the situation in Kyrgyzstan keeps deteriorating?

President Medvedev. Yes, we have discussed this issue, as the situation in the Republic is difficult. At present, the state is not operating as it should. Well, the country, de facto, is split into parts, and civil unrest and clashes continue on the ethnic grounds. Very many people have perished, and the authorities have been incapable of preventing what has happened.

So we are interested, both Russia and the States, in the state's ability in Kyrgyzstan to be able to resolve such issues to—and look that all the civil rights are observed and the tasks of en-

suring food supplies and the basic material facilities are ensured.

Russia is working with the temporary caretaker leadership of Kyrgyzstan. We believe that they should prove their legitimate character, nature. But we consider Kyrgyzstan to be a strategic partner. We will help them both in terms of money and humanitarian aid. We hope that during the election process, a full-fledged government will be shaped, able to solve and rest the issues that face this state. Otherwise, Kyrgyzstan will degrade and will break up into parts.

All of us share a concern that under these circumstances, radical elements may rise to power in that country, and in this case, we will have to address the issues that are addressed by us in other regions. I'm referring to the goals that we have in Afghanistan.

We discussed this issue, and if we are talking about a possibility of some enforcing order, well, I believe that Kyrgyzstan should on its own cope with these problems. The Russian Federation does not plan any deployment of a military—of a peaceful contingent. And I got a letter from the Acting President of Kyrgyzstan, Roza Otunbayeva. But there is a consultations mechanism in the CSTO format. Heads of Security Council met to discuss the issue of security and of deploying a peacekeepers contingent. So far, there is no need, they have decided, but these things may start developing by different scenarios.

So CSTO will respond, and me, being the chairman of the Organization, any time can convene a meeting of relevant bodies, and we hope that the United States do have—does have an understanding.

President Obama. It is—obviously, we're monitoring the situation very carefully. There already has been excellent coordination between the United States and the Russian Federation on delivery of humanitarian aid.

One of the things that we discussed is creating a mechanism so that the international community can ensure that we have a peaceful resolution of the situation there, and that any actions that are taken to protect civilians are done so not under the flag of any particular country, but that the international community is stepping in.

And so our teams will be in continuing discussions in the weeks ahead as we monitor the situation as it unfolds.

All right. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:07 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Svetlana Medvedeva, wife of President Medvedev; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; and Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, former commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan. President Medvedev and two reporters spoke in Russian, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at the United States-Russia Business Summit
June 24, 2010

President Obama. Well, good afternoon, everybody. It is a pleasure to be here with my friend and partner, President Medvedev, and I want to thank him again for his leadership, especially his vision for an innovative Russia that's modernizing its economy, including deeper economic ties between our two countries.

I want to thank the leaders who are guiding the discussion today: my Commerce Secretary, Gary Locke, and Minister Nabiullina. I always have a little trouble with that one. [*Laughter*] They say the same thing about Obama. [*Laughter*] We are joined by our United States Trade Representative, Ambassador Ron Kirk, and our great Ambassadors, John Beyrle and Sergey Kislyak.

And I want to also thank the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the U.S.-Russia Business Council, the American Chamber of Commerce in

Moscow, and all the organizations who helped bring our countries together not just today but every day.

Now, many of you joined us at the business summit during my visit to Moscow 1 year ago, and it is good to see you again. I noted then that you're part of a long tradition of commerce and trade between our peoples. Long before Russia and the United States even exchanged Ambassadors, we exchanged goods.

In fact, before coming to Washington, President Medvedev visited California and Silicon Valley to explore new partnerships in science and technology and in venture capital. And while there, he pledged Russia's support to preserve the historic Fort Ross in Sonoma County, an enduring reminder of the early Russian settlements and trade that brought Russian goods to our young nation.

Some have even wondered whether our Declaration of Independence may have been signed with goose quills from Russia. More than 200 years later, it's a sign of the times that during his visit to Silicon Valley, President Medvedev opened his own Twitter account. I have one as well. And I said during our press conference today that we may be able to finally get rid of those old red phones. [*Laughter*]

As we all know, despite the surge in trade in recent years, the economic relationship between the United States and Russia is still largely one of untapped potential. And I pointed out last year that our trade with Russia is only about the same as our trade with Thailand, a country with less than half the population of Russia. So obviously, there's more work to do.

And that's why part of the reset of the U.S.-Russia relationship required us creating the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Partnership Commission—Presidential Commission to explore a whole range of new opportunities, including economic partnerships that create jobs and opportunities for both our peoples. And under Secretary Locke and Minister Nabiullina's leadership, that's what we have done.

Companies represented here today are moving forward with a series of major trade and investment deals that will create jobs for both Americans and Russians across many sectors, from aerospace to automotive engineering to the financial sector and high technology.

I am especially pleased that Boeing and Russian Technologies are moving forward with a $4 billion deal on 50 Boeing 737s. This is a win for Russia, creating a long-term market for its raw materials and resulting in modern airplanes for Russia's travelers. It's obviously a win for the United States, because this partnership could add up to 44,000 new jobs in the American aerospace industry. This reflects my administration's National Export Initiative, and it's a perfect example of the shared prosperity and the high-tech jobs that we can create together.

So today President Medvedev and I agreed to expand trade and commerce even further. We agreed to deepen our collaboration on energy efficiency and clean energy technologies. We reached an agreement that will allow the United States to begin exporting our poultry products to Russia once again. Chicken is important. [*Laughter*]

I want to again thank President Medvedev and his team for resolving this issue, which is an important signal about Russia's seriousness about achieving membership in the World Trade Organization. And that's why I told President Medvedev that our teams should accelerate their efforts to work together to complete this process in the very near future. I believe that Russia belongs in the WTO. That's good for Russia, it's good for America, and it is good for the world economy.

I pledged to President Medvedev that the United States wants to be Russia's partner as he pursues his vision of modernization and innovation in Russia, including his initiative to create a Russian silicon valley outside of Moscow. American companies and universities were among the first to invest in this effort. And I'm pleased that a number of you here today are going to be working with it as well.

Now, there's still a lot more that we can do to encourage trade and investment. And obviously in Russia—and President Medvedev and I discussed this—issues of transparency and accountability and rule of law remain absolutely critical. This is the foundation on which investments and economic growth depends. And I

very much appreciate and applaud President Medvedev's efforts in this area.

Today we took another step forward. Our two Governments are making a joint commitment to open government that fosters transparency and combats the corruption that stifles economic growth.

Of course, ultimately, it's you, the private sector, our entrepreneurs, who create jobs and unleash economic growth. It's the market that's been the most powerful force in history for creating opportunity and prosperity. It's not the resources we pump or pull from the ground. It's the imagination and the creativity of our people, our workers, and their dreams for themselves and their children that ultimately drives the modern economy.

Last year in Moscow, I learned a Russian proverb, which says, "Every seed knows its time." A year ago, we planted a seed of cooperation and commerce. And today, that cooperation is bearing fruit with new partnerships and prosperity for both our peoples. And I think that if we stay on the course that we're on, with a spirit of mutual respect and mutual interest, we are going to make even more progress, sell more goods, create more jobs, get more cross-border financing than ever before.

So, President Medvedev, welcome. Thank you to all the businesspeople who are visiting here from Russia and your ministers. Thank you for your vision and your determination to continue to move us towards a brighter vision of our future.

Thank you.

President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia. Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, it's been a year since we met in order to discuss affairs—business affairs, and a lot of water has flown from the time, as we used to say.

There are certain moments that distinguish this meeting from the meeting in Moscow. First of all, it is much hotter here, so it is more difficult to work. At the same time, we are all seated and back in Moscow, we were standing with Presidents. So it is easier to work. And this isn't a significant difference. But speaking in serious term, during this year, we have changed a lot.

The world economy has changed. And we were working very hard in order to improve the situation in our national economy in order to relaunch failed mechanisms in international economy. And certain persons present here just worked to save their businesses. In general, we managed to do so, although we did have problems.

Today we discussed different issues with President. After that—after my visit to the Congress, I'll fly to G–20. And tomorrow we are willing to continue discussing economic issues during the G–8 summit, and later on, during the G–20 summit. We will think on how to build our future. And our future depends to a great extent on our bilateral relations and on relations our countries have with other partners and on relations between the U.S. and Russia.

The agenda that I had in the U.S. was very interesting, very intensive. For the first time in my practice, I visited not only the Capital or New York, but I also visited California. And I was deeply impressed by what I saw there. Part of my delegation accompanied me. Part of the delegation witnessed how business is organized in the Silicon Valley.

We have things to learn from that experience; I already said that during the press conference. And I hope that this context will provide for better opportunities to implement our agenda that we proposed for our economy—to modernize our economy in accordance with five Presidential priorities: first medicine, energy efficiency, nuclear technologies, computer technologies, and outer space programs.

We are creating a new center of innovative developments in Skolkovo, outside of Moscow. And I think that the U.S. experience, we will be able to apply this experience in our country, of course introducing necessary changes.

And I'm very grateful to the U.S. businessmen who expressed their desire to work in this direction and adopted a series of decisions. We value this very much, and we will be thinking how to create the most favorable, most protected conditions for such work.

Speaking about our Silicon Valley, about the Skolkovo project, we in Russia adopted an unprecedented measure. We established a spe-

cial legal framework—I adopted a special law, and we're going to apply tax facilitation and also introduce a number of regimes to provide for better conditions of work.

We are convinced that the U.S.-Russia economic potential is great. At the same time, due to the crisis and to the difficulties which we had in our relations a certain time ago, this potential has not been tapped. And the volume of investments do not responds to what we need. It is evident that we want this volume to grow, both investments of the United States into Russia and vice versa, because it's not a one-way road. The economy is global, and we must create reasonable rules of—and assist each other to overcome different difficulties.

Recently, we signed a series of documents—we recently held an economic forum in Russia and signed documents between U.S. and Russian companies. Here we signed agreements as well. This is a good sign. I am convinced that in future, with my friend and partner, President Barack Obama, we will control this process—we will assist this process, because to my mind, this is a very important element of our interstate relations.

We will work personally and in the framework of the Presidential Commission established a while ago, but we also pin our hopes on an U.S.-Russia Business Dialogue established 2 years ago. We have representatives of this dialogue in this hall, and I'm very pleased that we are interacting on this topic and that eventually our joint projects will help us to overcome the difficulties threatening our economies, the world economy.

We still have to do a lot, to do a lot internationally and to do a lot with respect to our national legislations. President Obama is doing great work. We understand how difficult this work is, because each solution has both persons who are in favor and who are against. But it is evident that the world economy and the world itself has changed. And we will have to change the rules, although everybody present in this hall are committed to modern economic approaches and are committed to a free market.

At the same time, we should understand that the 21st century has come, and therefore, take into consideration the global economic processes. Our cooperation should develop every year. I believe that our cooperation is very promising, and it's very good that we met here again to discuss the future of U.S.-Russia business relations.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:08 p.m. at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of Economic Development Elvira S. Nabiullina of Russia; Russia's Ambassador to the U.S. Sergey I. Kislyak; and U.S. Ambassador to Russia John R. Beyrle. President Medvedev spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama and President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia on Afghanistan

June 24, 2010

The United States of America and the Russian Federation confirm our commitment to Afghanistan becoming a peaceful, stable, democratic, neutral and economically self-sufficient state, free of terrorism and narcotics, recognizing that further significant international support will be needed to achieve this goal.

We take note of the significant contribution to strengthening international stability which has resulted from the successful implementation of the arrangements between the U.S. and Russia and between Russia and NATO on ground and air transit. In accordance with these arrangements, over 320 flights have been carried out, and over 41,000 personnel and over 9,000 rail containers of valuable cargo have been transported in support of operations in Afghanistan. We are considering the possibility of expanding this cooperation by increasing the volume of ground transit.

We unwaveringly follow our common obligations in the fight against the narcotics threat

coming from the territory of Afghanistan, which is undermining our shared and global security. The June 9–10 International Forum "Drug Production in Afghanistan" provided an opportunity to discuss cooperation to counter this threat. We reaffirm that the Counternarcotics Working Group of the U.S.-Russia Presidential Commission is an important tool, and express our commitment to expanding cooperation, with an emphasis on interdiction of channels for the delivery of narcotics and chemical precursors for their production (including by preventing their diversion, pursuant to UN Security Coucil Resolution 1817); activating information sharing; and reducing illicit financial flows linked to the regional drug trade. We will explore the possibility of establishing counternarcotics cooperation between the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). We support a comprehensive approach for resolving the issue of decreasing the volume of narcotics grown in Afghanistan, including by providing farmers with alternatives to poppy cultivation as a means of subsistence and providing continuous assistance to Afghan-Government-led counternarcotics efforts, including agriculture development, interdiction, demand reduction and eradication, as well as corresponding public information.

We confirm the need for law enforcement cooperation and express our readiness to assist the Afghan Government to strengthen the effectiveness of the work of counternarcotics law enforcement authorities, including by taking part in their training and equipping. We intend to develop various training programs for counternarcotics service officials of countries in the region under the auspices of the NATO-Russia Council, including use of the Russian Ministry of Interior's (MOI) All-Russia Institute for Raising Staff Qualifications in Domodedovo. Within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), we will jointly review the possibility of implementing in Central Asian countries a series of projects to train Afghan border officials.

We support the establishment of American-Russian cooperation in the interest of social-economic development of Afghanistan, in particular in the area of restoration and reconstruction of assets having key significance for the Afghan economy.

We reaffirm our support for the Afghan Government's plans under the program of national reconciliation and reintegration to offer an honorable place in Afghan society to those who have decided to renounce violence, participate in building a free and open society and respect the Afghan Constitution, cut ties with al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups, and are prepared to pursue their political goals peacefully.

We are committed to further enhancing the regime of sanctions provided for by UN Security Council Resolution 1267 and successor resolutions. Toward this goal, we will carefully review each candidate for delisting from the consolidated sanctions list on an individual basis. We also intend to add new names of specific individuals to the consolidated list on the basis of existing criteria.

We welcome the planned transition of responsibilities for maintaining security in Afghanistan to the Afghan National Security Forces. Achieving this goal requires raising the level of their operational capability to such an extent that they will be able to independently defend their country against internal and external threats. We affirm the need for international support to strengthen the potential of the Afghan National Security Forces. In this context, Russia and the United States are working on the possibility of assisting Afghan security forces by supplying Russian-made helicopters and spare parts.

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

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama and President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia on Counterterrorism Cooperation

June 24, 2010

Terrorism has emerged as one of the greatest threats to global peace and security in the 21st Century. Recent events this year in both of our countries, including the tragic subway bombings in Moscow in March, the explosion in Stavropol in May, the attempt to detonate a car bomb in New York City's Times Square in May, and the unsuccessful bombing of a U.S. passenger airliner in December 2009, all underscore the crucial need to further expand counterterrorism cooperation between the United States and the Russian Federation through joint actions in the areas of law enforcement, transportation security, intelligence sharing, terrorism finance, counterterrorism technology, and within the framework of multilateral fora.

Building on our already robust partnership on counterterrorism which was reflected in the results of the meeting of the Counterterrorism Working Group of the U.S.-Russia Presidential Commission on May 28, 2010, we pledged today to take additional steps to safeguard the citizens of our countries, and at the same time safeguard civil liberties and fundamental freedoms. Our military structures are considering questions regarding the conduct of joint counterterrorism exercises. Underscoring the commitment to ensuring the safety of each country's transportation systems, we are continuing discussions aimed at concluding Memoranda of Understanding on aviation security in order to exchange aviation-related information and to allow joint airport assessments and air carrier inspections, and on sharing best practices in public mass transportation security. We also achieved a principle understanding to establish an arrangement to allow air marshals to operate on flights between our countries. We also aim to jointly lead an effort within the Group of Eight countries on the role and experiences of victims and survivors of terrorism, while we continue to work closely together within the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, a successful U.S.-Russia project created in 2006.

We reaffirmed our common view of the threat to global security posed by al Qa'ida and advocated continued cooperation to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qa'ida.

Identifying and isolating terrorists is integral to our efforts. We welcomed Russia's efforts to update and enhance the implementation of the sanctions regime under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1822, and the decision by the United States to list Doku Umarov of the so-called "Caucasus Emirate" as a specially designated global terrorist under U.S. Executive Order 13244. Under the auspices of the Presidential Commission, our dialogue has added depth to our understanding of ways to counter violent extremism while enhancing respect for human rights.

We are pleased with the cooperation we have established to date in this area, and remain prepared to explore further means to promote international security, repel terrorist threats, protect the lives and rights of citizens, and bring terrorists to justice.

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

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama and President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia on Energy Efficiency

June 24, 2010

The President of the United States of America and the President of the Russian Federation have agreed upon a multifaceted initiative to promote energy efficiency and the development of clean energy technologies. As identified in the Action Plan, agreed by the Presidential Commission's Energy Working Group, co-chaired by Secretary of Energy Steven Chu and

Minister of Energy Sergey Shmatko, these efforts will promote innovation in the U.S. and Russian economies and assist in reducing national levels of carbon emissions through implementing the most advanced technologies, mobilizing financial resources, and facilitating creative energy management solutions.

The centerpiece of this collaboration will be the development of a pilot smart grid project based on the most innovative technologies to cut losses in electric power systems and reduce emissions. The project will match U.S. and Russian cities implementing similar projects and will facilitate the sharing of best practices and technical information. The Action Plan also provides for implementing energy management and technical programs to improve energy efficiency in U.S. and Russian public sector buildings. In recognition of the crucial role of the private sector, including small and medium sized companies, in driving innovation, the sides agreed to develop financial mechanisms to help create investment incentives to promote energy efficiency and clean technologies.

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

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama and President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia on Intercountry Adoption

June 24, 2010

We are convinced that all children have the right to grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. Many children throughout the world are deprived of this natural right.

Every year, tens of thousands of children find loving parents through adoptions, including international adoptions. We honor those who have the generosity to welcome adopted children, in particular from other countries, into their families.

However, tragic incidents involving children adopted between our countries caused by the adoptive parents underscore the importance of ensuring reliable protections for the rights, safety, and well-being of adopted children. We are committed to doing everything in our power to achieve this.

In this regard, we have come to the conclusion that it is necessary to conclude a legally binding bilateral agreement on cooperation in the field of intercountry adoption. At our direction, experts from the United States and Russia have already been actively working on a draft, and they have informed us that they have made considerable progress in fulfilling this difficult task.

We will work together so that entry into force of this agreement as soon as possible would create an even stronger legal basis for adoption in the interests of children and families of both our countries.

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

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama and President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia on People-to-People Connections

June 24, 2010

The renewed relationship between the United States and Russia depends not just on the actions of our governments, but on the energy, creativity, and commitment of our two peoples. Each year, thousands of Americans and Russians now travel freely between our countries, from athletes to artists, from scientists to students. Thanks in part to the work of the U.S.-Russia Presidential Commission, Americans and Russians have more possibili-

ties to increase personal and professional connections in business, research, education, culture, tourism and many other areas.

Over the past year, the Commission has helped to significantly expand youth sports exchanges, university partnerships and cultural programs, both in the United States and in Russia. Broadening of contacts among non-governmental organizations and increasing collaboration on timely issues for Americans and Russians have been two priorities of the Commission's work. We have organized exhibits that celebrate the achievements of our writers and performing artists, and that recognize our shared history. We are working together to foster academic excellence through increased exchanges among students, teachers, and researchers, particularly in the fields of science and technology. New technologies are playing a role in these efforts to disseminate information and ideas. Young people in both countries are using new tools like You Tube to share creative experiences and to exchange views on issues, from the rule of law to modern dance.

Despite progress on many fronts, we recognize that making personal connections is harder than it should be for American and Russian representatives in several Commission working groups have raised the need to make procedures for travel easier, particularly for businesspeople and scientists. Both sides are committed to seeking ways to facilitate travel between our countries, consistent with the laws and regulations of each country. By streamlining or clarifying the requirements for travel, work, and study, we hope to further strengthen the connections between our peoples and energize the relationship between our nations.

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

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama and President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia on Promotion and Implementation of Open Government

June 24, 2010

The United States of America and the Russian Federation express their full support, commitment, and agreement to collaborate, where appropriate, to promote more open government through dedicated efforts to increase transparency, promote meaningful citizen participation, and foster collaboration between government and the private sector.

Creating a more open government in the 21st century will demonstrate a new spirit of flexibility, innovation, and creativity. It will entail greater use of new communications and e-government technologies that will promote greater participation by citizens, enhanced accountability, and improved transparency for both regulation and spending. This new approach is already reducing paperwork burdens, promoting economic growth, cutting costs, and heightening efficiency for the two governments and the public at large.

As both countries implement their respective plans for open government, we stand ready to share experiences, collaborate on projects in both our national interests, and work with other countries around the globe that are instituting similar reforms.

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

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama and President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia on Russia's Accession to the World Trade Organization

June 24, 2010

The United States and the Russian Federation reaffirm their deep mutual commitment to Russia's integration into the multilateral trading system through Russian accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). We welcome the renewed energy towards completing this pro-

cess as soon as possible, which is in the clear interest of both our nations, and that of the global trading community. This is a trade policy priority for both nations.

Our governments will therefore both undertake the most vigorous possible efforts in the coming months—bilaterally and with other Members of the WTO—to build and sustain the momentum towards completing the remaining steps in this process. These steps have been clearly identified. We have agreed on approaches to resolve the small number of outstanding bilateral accession issues. Based on the significant progress achieved by our teams, including agreement on the treatment of state-owned enterprises, and provided that Russia fully implements the mutually agreed upon action plan for bringing Russian legislation into compliance with WTO requirements, we aim to settle these issues by September 30.

The United States commits itself to offering the Russian Federation its full support and best advice in the WTO accession process. The Russian Federation, meanwhile, commits to a government-wide effort to accelerate the adoption of measures that bring the country into conformity with WTO norms, in keeping with customary procedures for accession to the WTO.

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

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama and President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia on Strategic Stability

June 24, 2010

The United States of America and the Russian Federation are committed to continuing the development of a new strategic relationship based on mutual trust, openness, predictability, and cooperation by following up on the successful negotiation of the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, which is focused on the reduction of strategic offensive arms and provides a basis for consideration of further mutually beneficial measures.

They have submitted the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms to the Senate of the United States of America and the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, and plan to coordinate closely on their respective efforts to secure its prompt ratification and entry into force.

In addition, the Arms Control and International Security Working Group of the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission plans to discuss potential ways to promote strategic stability and a more transparent strategic relationship. The United States and the Russian Federation are also committed to working with all our partners this year to strengthen the conventional arms control regime in Europe, and modernize it for the 21st century.

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

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama and President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia on a Strategic Partnership in Innovation

June 24, 2010

The United States of America and the Russian Federation, recognizing the growing role of technological innovation in the economies of both countries, as well as the importance of bilateral cooperation in this area, express their intent to begin new and dedicated efforts to promote collaboration in the areas of development of civil technologies, open standards, and innovation and technology policy. These collaborative measures will be made in equal partnership and for mutual benefit and will foster long term relationships in the areas of

economic development, national competitiveness, and the development of a world-class workforce.

In this context the United States and Russia are considering the generation of new innovative ideas, their broad dissemination and their commercialization as an important component for developing an innovation ecosystem and fostering economic growth in both countries.

Implementation of these ideas is dependent upon a trained world class workforce with twenty-first century knowledge and skills, unfettered access to ideas and information, and a business environment that fosters fair competition, and the rule of law, to include ensuring protection of intellectual property rights. At the same time efficient capital markets and openness to international trade and investment are fundamental for an effective innovation strategy, and are key to supporting the development of innovative products and ventures.

To build upon existing measures in innovation and technology policy the United States and Russia propose to develop cooperation in the following key areas:

Invest in the Building Blocks of Innovation. For purposes of successful innovation development the United States and Russia will take steps that will foster and develop bilateral and international collaboration, including: support of research and development, and the creation of human, physical, and technological capital needed to perform that research and transfer those innovations.

Promote Productive Entrepreneurship. Both countries commit to create environments conducive to entrepreneurship, including policies that support the venture capital industry, that will allow companies based in the United States and Russia to be internationally competitive in a global exchange of ideas and innovation.

Catalyze Breakthroughs for Shared Priorities. The United States and Russia are committed to fostering innovation in sectors of exceptional importance to both countries, in particular: developing alternative energy sources, energy efficiency and conservation, advanced transportation technologies, nanotechnology, space technology, biotechnology, security technologies, and computer and information technology.

For these purposes the United States and Russia are committed to supporting and developing cooperation on innovation in science and technology through both existing mechanisms of strategic partnership and through new cooperation instruments at the level of government institutions, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. These instruments will serve primarily to create opportunities for quality training and mentoring of scientists, entrepreneurs and innovators; foster targeted bilateral investments in basic and applied research and development, including through targeted grants; support leading universities and scientific research organizations; and provide for joint commercialization of research and development.

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

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama and President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia on the Situation in Kyrgyzstan

June 24, 2010

The United States of America and the Russian Federation confirm their common interest in supporting the people of Kyrgyzstan in their efforts to restore democracy and stability after the April 7 events and tragic confrontations in the south of the country. We extend our sincere condolences to the families of those who lost loved ones in the interethnic conflicts. We call for the use of nonviolent political methods of resolving the current problems, for a rapid restoration of public order, civic peace and interethnic understanding. We support a coordinat-

ed multilateral response to this crisis and support the United Nations and other multilateral organizations, neighbors, and friends of Kyrgyzstan in their efforts to assist in the normalization of the situation in the country, including providing humanitarian aid. We intend to continue our joint efforts with Kyrgyzstan, to combat threats from narcotics trafficking and terrorism and work together to promote economic development of a stable Kyrgyzstan.

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

Statement on the House of Representatives Passage of Election Spending Disclosure Legislation

June 24, 2010

I congratulate the House of Representatives on today's passage of the "DISCLOSE Act," a critical piece of legislation to control the flood of special interest money into our elections. The "DISCLOSE Act" would establish the strongest-ever disclosure requirements for election-related spending by special interests, including Wall Street and big oil companies, and it would restrict spending by foreign-controlled corporations. It would give the American public the right to see exactly who is spending money in an attempt to influence campaigns for public office. The House bill is not perfect. I would have preferred that it include no exemptions. But it mandates unprecedented transparency in campaign spending, and it ensures that corporations who spend money on American elections are accountable first and foremost to the American people. I urge the Senate to act swiftly on its version of the bill, and I look forward to working with both Chambers on prompt enactment of final legislation.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 5175.

Statement on Congressional Passage of Legislation To Limit Cuts in Medicare Payments to Physicians

June 24, 2010

I'm pleased that Congress has acted to ensure the security of our seniors' health care. A 21-percent pay cut to physicians' payments would have forced some doctors to step [stop]* seeing Medicare patients, an outcome we can all agree is unacceptable.

We should also agree, as I've said in the past, that kicking these cuts down the road just isn't an adequate solution to the problem. The current system of recurring cuts and temporary fixes was passed into law more than 10 years ago. It's untenable.

I believe we need to permanently reform the Medicare formula in a way that attacks our fiscal problems without punishing our hard-working doctors or endangering the benefits on which so many of our seniors rely. I look forward to working with Congress to achieve that goal, and I'm gratified that in the meantime they've taken the provisional step of blocking this pay cut.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 3962.

* White House correction.

Remarks on Financial Regulatory Reform and Consumer Protection Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters

June 25, 2010

The President. Good morning, everybody. In a few moments I'll depart for Canada to take part in a summit with the G–8 and the G–20 nations. This is the third G–20 summit we've held since I was sworn in as President.

At our first meeting in London, with the world in the grips of the worst financial crisis of our time, we acted boldly and swiftly to bring our economy back from the brink. At our second meeting in Pittsburgh, with our recovery beginning to take hold, we agreed to work to pursue a balanced pattern of global growth, and repair our financial systems.

This weekend, in Toronto, I hope we can build on this progress by coordinating our efforts to promote economic growth, to pursue financial reform, and to strengthen the global economy.

We need to act in concert for a simple reason: This crisis proved and events continue to affirm that our national economies are inextricably linked. And just as economic turmoil in one place can quickly spread to another, safeguards in each of our nations can help protect all nations.

I'm gratified we've made great progress towards enacting these safeguards here at home. Because of the incredibly hard work of Chairman Dodd and Chairman Frank and the strong leadership of Chairwoman Lincoln and Chairman Peterson and the great efforts of the conferees and members of both parties—who were up very late last night—we are poised to pass the toughest financial reform since the ones we created in the aftermath of the Great Depression. Early this morning the House and Senate reached an agreement on a set of Wall Street reforms that represents 90 percent of what I proposed when I took up this fight.

Now let me be clear: Our economic growth and prosperity depend on a strong, robust financial sector, and I will continue to do what I can to foster and support a dynamic private sector. But we've all seen what happens when there's inadequate oversight and insufficient transparency on Wall Street. The reforms making their way through Congress will hold Wall Street accountable so we can help prevent another financial crisis like the one that we're still recovering from.

We'll put in place the toughest consumer financial protections in our history, while creating an independent agency to enforce them. Through this agency, we'll combine under one roof the consumer protection functions that currently are divided among half a dozen different agencies. Now there will be one agency whose sole job will be to look out for you.

Credit card companies will no longer be able to mislead you with pages and pages of fine print. You will no longer be subject to all kinds of hidden fees and penalties or the predatory practices of unscrupulous lenders. Instead, we'll make sure that credit card companies and mortgage companies play by the rules. You'll be empowered with easy-to-understand forms, so you know what you're agreeing to. And you'll have the clear and concise information you need to make financial decisions that are best for you and your family.

Wall Street reform will also strengthen our economy in a number of other ways. We'll make our financial system more transparent by bringing the kinds of complex deals that help trigger this crisis, like trades in a $600 trillion derivatives market, into the light of day. We'll enact the Volcker rule to make sure that banks protected by the safety net of the FDIC can't engage in risky trades for their own profit. And we'll create what's called a resolution authority to help wind down firms whose collapse would threaten our entire financial system. No longer will be have companies that are, quote, "too big to fail."

Over the last 17 months, we've passed an economic Recovery Act, health insurance reform, education reform, and we are now on the brink of passing Wall Street reform. And at the

G–20 summit this weekend, I'll work with other nations not only to coordinate our financial reform efforts, but to promote global economic growth while ensuring that each nation can pursue a path that is sustainable for its own public finances.

As the main forum for international economic cooperation, the G–20 is the right place to discuss such issues. And over the last few days, I hope we can build on our past progress and strengthen the global economy for a long time to come.

Thank you very much, everybody.

Senate Action on the Financial Regulatory Reform Bill

Q. Can you get the bill through the Senate?

The President. You bet.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:52 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on National HIV Testing Day
June 25, 2010

This Sunday is National HIV Testing Day, an occasion to raise awareness of the steps each of us can take as individuals to fight HIV/AIDS. As we mark this day, I would like to renew my call for all Americans to help reduce the risk of infection by getting tested for HIV and learning their HIV status. One in five Americans who are currently living with HIV—more than 230,000 people—do not know their status. The majority of HIV infections are spread by those who are unaware that they have the disease. And research shows that people who know their status take better care of themselves and take steps to reduce the risk of transmitting HIV to others. That is why it is so important that people get tested.

In recent years, we have made huge advances in HIV research, prevention, and care. Still, HIV and AIDS remains an epidemic in this country. That is why my administration is launching in the coming days a comprehensive national HIV/AIDS strategy focused on reducing new HIV infections, increasing access to care, and reducing HIV-related health disparities. But Government cannot address this important issue alone. We need the commitment of businesses, churches and faith groups, philanthropic organizations, the scientific and medical communities, educational institutions, and others. And all of us have a responsibility to reduce our risk and know our status, to continue to support those already affected by this disease, and to fight the stigma and discrimination people still face. So on this National HIV Testing Day, let us all recommit to do our part to help stop the spread of HIV and AIDS.

Statement on Croatian Statehood Day
June 25, 2010

I join the American people in sending my congratulations to all those observing Croatian Statehood Day. Since Croatia declared its independence in 1991, our two nations have enjoyed a close relationship, and we have proudly supported the people of Croatia as they have taken their rightful place in the community of nations. Croatia has built its democracy at home and continues to contribute to regional and global security. Our joint membership in NATO makes us allies, but our relationship makes us friends. Here in America, those Americans that trace their origins to Croatia or have family there should be proud of the lasting ties between our two nations.

The President's Weekly Address
June 26, 2010

This weekend, I'm traveling to Toronto to meet the members of the G–20. There, I hope we can build on the progress we made at last year's G–20 summits by coordinating our global financial reform efforts to make sure a crisis like the one from which we are still recovering never happens again. We've made great progress towards passing such reform here at home. As I speak, we are on the cusp of enacting the toughest financial reforms since the Great Depression.

I don't have to tell you why these reforms are so important. We're still digging ourselves out of an economic crisis that happened largely because there wasn't strong enough oversight on Wall Street. We can't build a strong economy in America over the long run without ending this status quo and laying a new foundation for growth and prosperity.

That's what the Wall Street reforms currently making their way through Congress will help us do, reforms that represent 90 percent of what I proposed when I took up this fight. We'll put in place the strongest consumer financial protections in American history and create an independent agency with an independent director and an independent budget to enforce them.

Credit card companies will no longer be able to mislead you with pages and pages of fine print. You will no longer be subject to all kinds of hidden fees and penalties or the predatory practices of unscrupulous lenders. Instead, we'll make sure credit card companies and mortgage companies play by the rules. And you'll be empowered with easy-to-understand forms and the clear and concise information you need to make the financial decisions that are best for you and your family.

Wall Street reform will also strengthen our economy in a number of other ways. We'll make our financial system more transparent by bringing the kinds of complex trades that helped trigger this crisis—trades in a $600 trillion derivatives market—finally into the light of day. We'll enact what's called the Volcker rule to make sure banks protected by safety nets like the FDIC can't engage in risky trades for their own profit. We'll create what's called a resolution authority to help wind down firms whose collapse would threaten our entire financial system. Put simply, we'll end the days of taxpayer-funded bailouts and help make sure Main Street is never again held responsible for Wall Street's mistakes.

Beyond these reforms, we also need to address another piece of unfinished business. We need to impose a fee on the banks that were the biggest beneficiaries of taxpayer assistance at the height of our financial crisis, so we can recover every dime of taxpayer money.

Getting this far on Wall Street reform hasn't been easy. There are those who've fought it tooth and nail to preserve the status quo. In recent months, they've spent millions of dollars and hired an army of lobbyists to stop reform dead in its tracks.

But because we refused to back down and kept fighting, we now stand on the verge of victory. And I urge Congress to take us over the finish line and send me a reform bill I can sign into law, so we can empower our people with consumer protections and help prevent a financial crisis like this from ever happening again.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:15 p.m. on June 24 in the Red Room at the White House for broadcast on June 26. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 25, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 26. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom in Toronto, Canada

June 26, 2010

President Obama. Let me begin by saying that the last conversation I had with David Cameron was before the—well, I guess it wasn't the last one, but a recent conversation was before the match between the United States and England at the World Cup. And since it ended in a tie, we are exchanging—and paying off our debts at the same time—this is Goose Island 312 beer from my hometown of Chicago, and, David, I understand this is——

Prime Minister Cameron. This is Hobgoblin from the Wychwood brew in Witney, in my constituency.

President Obama. And so I advised him that in America, we drink our beer cold. [*Laughter*] So he has to put this in the refrigerator before he drinks it, but I think he will find it outstanding. And I'm happy to give that a shot, although I will not drink it warm.

Prime Minister Cameron. It's my pleasure to send you—you can have it cold, it's all right. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. All right.

Prime Minister Cameron. But——

President Obama. Cheers.

Prime Minister Cameron. Any way you like. Thank you very much.

President Obama. Now, I want to say that all of us in the United States deeply value the special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom. And we have been very impressed with the leadership that David Cameron has shown thus far. He has, I think, taken a series of steps on some very tough issues and clearly is prepared to make difficult decisions on behalf of his vision for his country.

We already, I think, have established a strong working relationship, as have our teams. And we are confident that that special relationship is only going to get stronger in the months and years to come.

We had an excellent conversation, building on—off of the conversations that we've had at the G–8 about the world economy and the importance of our two countries focusing both on the issues of growth, but also on the issues of financial consolidation, that we have long-term debts that have to be dealt with and we have to address them.

There are going to be differentiated responses between the two countries because of our different positions, but we are aiming at the same direction, which is long-term, sustainable growth that puts people to work.

At the same time, we had a extensive discussion about Afghanistan and the alignment between our two countries in recognizing we have a serious threat to our safety and security that has to be addressed in this region; that we recognize the enormous sacrifices that both British troops and U.S. troops have been making for some time now, but we are convinced that we have the right strategy to provide the time and the space for the Afghan Government to build up capacity over the next several months and years. And this period that we're in right now is going to be critical both on the political front and on the military front, and there's going to be extremely close consultation between our two countries so that we can create a situation in which Afghanistan and Pakistan are able to maintain their effective security and those areas are not able to be used as launching pads for attacks against our people.

We also discussed Iran, and I thanked David for his stalwart support of the United Nations Security Resolution 1929, the toughest sanctions that have been imposed on the Iranian Government through the United Nations Security Council. We now have to make sure that we follow up in terms of implementation, and that was a major discussion point.

And the key conclusion that we take out of this last day of conversations, and I suspect this will continue through the evening and tomorrow, is that on foreign policy issues, the United States and the United Kingdom are not only aligned in theory but aligned in fact; that we see the world in a similar way; we continue

to share the same concerns and also see the same strategic possibilities.

And so I think this partnership is built on a rock-solid foundation and it's only going to get stronger in the years to come. So thank you, David.

And I think that may have been my phone going off, so I'm going to—[*laughter*].

Prime Minister Cameron. I'm glad it wasn't mine. [*Laughter*]

Well, thank you very much for that, and thank you for what you said about the relationship between our two countries, which I believe is incredibly strong, but as you say, I think can get stronger in the years ahead.

We've had some very good conversations at the G–8 and a very good meeting here today. I think particularly on the issue of Afghanistan, which is the number-one foreign policy and security policy priority for my Government, making progress this year, putting everything we have into getting it right this year, is vitally important. And we've had very good conversations on that.

And as you said, Barack, on all the issues we discussed over the weekend so far—the Middle East peace process, Iran, how we take those forward, and the key relationships that we have in the Gulf and elsewhere—we have a very close alignment, and I think we can work together, and we want to support the work that's being done.

On the economy, you rightly say we have a big deficit problem which we have to address. But of course we want to do it in a way that encourages growth, and that's why we're focusing on spending reductions rather than on big tax increases. And I think that's the right approach to take.

And as we go into the G–20, I think we can explain that we're aiming at the same target, which is world growth and stability, but it means those countries that have big deficit problems like ours have to take action in order to keep that level of confidence in the economy, which is absolutely vital to growth, to make sure it's there.

But it's been great to have this opportunity to be meeting and the discussions that we had at the G–8 and the G–20. And thank you also for the lift between the two. It was—he threatened to send me a bill, but as I said—[*laughter*]—times are very tight in the U.K., so I'm afraid we'll have to take it as a free lift. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. He was a model passenger. I want everybody to know he fastened his seat belt as he was supposed to.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:18 p.m. at the InterContinental Toronto Centre.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea in Toronto

June 26, 2010

President Obama. Well, I just had an excellent discussion with President Lee and his team. Obviously, we are marking the 60th anniversary of the Korean war and the extraordinary friendship and alliance between our two countries. And when I last visited the Republic of Korea, President Lee shared with me a wonderful story of what the American presence had meant to him as he was growing up, and it was a reminder and a testament, I think, of the importance of the relationship and the alliance between our two countries.

I expressed to President Lee once again the condolences of all Americans for the tragic *Cheonan* incident and indicated to him that we stand foursquare behind him. He has handled this issue with great judgment and restraint. He rightly is insisting on North Korea being held to account for its actions in the United Nations Security Council. We are fully supportive of that effort. We think it is the right thing to do. There have to be consequences for such irresponsible behavior on the international stage.

We also reaffirmed the importance of our military alliance. One of the topics that we discussed is that we have arrived at an agreement that the transition of operational control for alliance activities in the Korean Peninsula will take

place in 2015. This gives us appropriate time to—within the existing security context—to do this right, because this alliance is the lynchpin of not only security for the Republic of Korea and the United States, but also for the Pacific as a whole. And South Korea is one of our closest friends; we want to make sure that we execute what's called the OPCON transition in an effective way.

One of the other points that we discussed extensively was the issue of commercial and trade ties between our two countries. There has been a lengthy negotiation to arrive at a free trade agreement. The last time I was in Korea, I said that I would be committed to moving this forward. And today I indicated to President Lee that it is time that our United States Trade Representative work very closely with his counterpart from the R.O.K. to make sure that we set a path, a road so that I can present this FTA to Congress.

We are going to do it in a methodical fashion. I want to make sure that everything is lined up properly by the time that I visit Korea in November. And then in the few months that follow that, I intend to present it to Congress. It is the right thing to do for our country; it is the right thing to do for Korea. It will strengthen our commercial ties and create enormous potential economic benefits and create jobs here in the United States, which is my number-one priority.

So both on the security front and on the economic front, our friendship and alliance continues to grow. My personal friendship with President Lee and my admiration for him continues to grow. And I'm looking forward to working diligently with him, and I'm looking forward to an opportunity to visit Korea once again because I had a wonderful time the last time we were there.

President Lee. Thank you. First of all, today during my talks with President Obama, I recalled how we are commemorating the 60th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean war, and I thought it was a very good opportunity for me to thank Mr. President, as well as the people of the United States and its Government, for the sacrifice and dedication and commitment given to the people of Korea 60 years ago. Because of your sacrifice by the American people and by the men and women in uniform, Korea today enjoys the freedom, prosperity, and the peace that we enjoy today. And I thanked President Obama for that. And I also thanked the United States Congress for adopting a joint resolution commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Korean war.

And I also thanked President Obama for his firm and unflagging support given to my people and my Government following the sinking of our Navy vessel, the *Cheonan*. And as President Obama just explained, he and I agreed on the timing of the transfer of the wartime operational control. We also talked in detail about the followup activities to the *Cheonan* incident. And also, we agreed on the adoption of the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement as well.

And as you know, considering the evolving security environment of the region, as well as the world, and also in order to strengthen R.O.K.-U.S. alliance, we made a formal request to President Obama and to the U.S. administration for the adjustment of the transfer of the timing of the wartime operational control. And I would like to thank President Obama for accepting this proposal, and we agreed to transfer this in the latter half of 2015—by late 2015.

And also, President Obama and I talked about what to do following the *Cheonan* incident, and we talked in detail about the months ahead. And we talked—first of all, we agreed that Korea and the United States, that we will do all that we can to deter any acts of North Korean aggression leveled against us and that we will react swiftly and strongly so that this will not happen again. And also, we are working very closely at the United Nations Security Council in order to bring about a statement and—a strongly worded statement condemning North Korea. And we also agreed on the followup activities that we would be jointly taking between Korea and the United States.

And also, with regards to the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, as President Obama talked about, when he was visiting Korea last November, he also assured us of his firm, continued commitment towards realizing this very important agreement. He and I agreed that we

will continue to work closely together so that we can talk about the specific ways to move this forward. And we very much welcome and thank President Obama for proposing a date for us to look forward to, and we will work towards that date and that objective in the weeks and months ahead. And again, I thank President Obama for his very constructive proposal.

And also, President Obama and I agreed that we will of course work together in order to condemn North Korea at the United Nations, but also at the same time, we will work towards this very important global objective, and that is to stop nuclear weapons proliferation. And having said that, the issue of Iran is a very, very important matter for Korea as well. I assured President Obama that Korea will continue to support his goals when it comes to Iran and that Korea will be a firm supporter and also take constructive part and contribute in the application of the sanctioning measures against Iran.

Well, President Obama, ladies and gentlemen, it was a very constructive meeting today that I had, a very useful dialogue with President Obama, as always. It was a chance for me and everyone here to reaffirm once again what a close ally and partner and friends we are between Korea and the United States. And thank you, President Obama, because not only as heads of state but as personal friends, I will continue to work towards strengthening this partnership, this friendship that is so valuable to all of us.

President Obama. Thank you.

Now, I realize that I didn't give my excellent translator a chance to translate my excellent remarks. [*Laughter*] So she's just going to summarize them very quickly.

[*At this point, an interpreter translated President Obama's initial remarks.*]

President Lee. [*Inaudible*]

President Obama. Thank you. [*Laughter*] See, the reason I forgot to have the translation is because President Lee, he actually knows English perfectly, but he—[*laughter*]. So I always know that he knows what I'm saying before the translator.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:16 p.m. at the InterContinental Toronto Centre. In his remarks, he referred to Minister for Trade Kim Jong-hoon of South Korea. President Lee spoke in Korean, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Hu Jintao of China in Toronto
June 26, 2010

President Hu. Your Excellency, Mr. President, I am very pleased to see you again. If I remember correctly, this is our sixth meeting.

In April this year, you and I had a very good meeting in Washington, DC, and reached important agreement on growing the China-U.S. relationship. I'm happy to note that, thanks to the joint efforts of both sides, recently new progress has been made in this relationship. I'm also happy to note that last month, the second round of China-U.S. strategic and economic dialogues produced positive outcomes.

As things stand, the international situation continues to undergo profound and complex changes. And we are confronted with the challenges of promoting the full recovery of the world economy. And there's global challenges. We need to continue to follow the spirit of staying the same course and uniting together. We want to work with the U.S. side to maintain the high-level exchanges and interactions at various other levels and deepen our practical cooperation across the board.

We also want to strengthen the community in coordination with the U.S. side on major regional and international issues to continue to move forward the positive, cooperative, and comprehensive China-U.S. relationship.

Now, I want to give the floor to you, Mr. President.

President Obama. Well, Mr. President, it is wonderful to see you again, and your delegation. I want to thank you for the very positive letter that I received from you most recently, because I think you accurately note the tremen-

dous progress that we've made in improving our relations.

We've worked very hard, and our teams have worked very hard, over the last 18 months to build a relationship of trust and mutual confidence. And it is my belief that we have accomplished many things as a consequence of that hard work.

We recently had a successful second round of our strategic and economic dialogue and the first round of our human rights dialogue. Larry Summers and Tom Donilon will be traveling to China in early August at my request to talk to your top economic and foreign policy advisers, and we're also looking forward to an invitation for a visit by Defense Secretary Gates in the coming months.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:45 p.m. at the InterContinental Toronto Centre. President Hu spoke in Chinese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

June 26, 2010

Today we celebrate the anniversary of the United Nations Convention against Torture, one of the foremost international human rights documents. The United States was a leader in the document's drafting and remains dedicated to supporting its principles at home and abroad.

I continue to believe that brutal methods of interrogation are inconsistent with our values, undermine the rule of law, and are not effective means of obtaining information. They alienate the United States from the world and serve as a recruitment and propaganda tool for terrorists. They increase the will of our enemies to fight against us and endanger our troops when they are captured. The United States will not use or support these methods.

Over the past year, the Department of State has, at my request, gathered information from our Embassies around the world about effective mechanisms to stop torture and assist its victims. I have asked the Department of State to share this information with interested international and nongovernmental organizations and to develop a system of advice and tools to share with governments and other relevant actors in addressing this problem.

The United States will continue to support the efforts of other nations and international and nongovernmental organizations, to eradicate torture through human rights training for security forces, capacity building, and encouraging robust legislation against such practices. We will also continue our close collaboration with international and domestic groups working to rehabilitate and reintegrate torture victims and offenders. I am sincerely grateful for the efforts of all the men and women around the world who are working to end the scourge of torture.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia in Toronto

June 27, 2010

President Obama. Good morning, everybody. *Selamat pagi.*

It is wonderful once again to see my good friend, the President of Indonesia, and members of his delegation. I obviously have enjoyed our interactions here, although my hope and wish was that I was going to be seeing him in Jakarta. Because of the crisis that we've had in the Gulf, I've had to delay the trip. But graciously, for a second time now, the President has reextended the invitation, and I am confident that we are going to get there.

We're having breakfast this morning because the friendship between Indonesia and

the United States has always been strong, and it is our intention to continue to make it even stronger. Working within the G–20, we have been able to stabilize the world economy. I was just hearing from the President the progress that's been made in getting back to precrisis levels in Indonesia with respect to economic growth and employment, inflation. But obviously, we have many challenges that still have to proceed.

Two areas where we are particularly interested in working together is on the issue of climate change, where we are helping to create a climate change study center in Indonesia that I think can provide enormous support for not only studies there, but also in the region and around the world.

And the second area is education, where we're looking to put an additional $160 million into joint programs that can enhance cooperation on educating our youth, which is obviously one of our top priorities in terms of future development.

So I just want to once again thank the President for his graciousness, his cooperation, and reaffirm the great friendship between our two countries.

Mr. President.

President Yudhoyono. Thank you. Good morning. I am very pleased to meet President Barack Obama this morning to discuss issues of common interest, both bilaterally and multilaterally.

Indonesia and America are entering and developing a comprehensive partnership which is elevating and transforming our relations based on the equal partnership and aim to meet the challenges of the 21st century: promoting peace, reforming the world economy, addressing climate change, as well as promoting harmony among civilizations. A stable, dynamic, and strong relations between Indonesia and the U.S. is good for our region and for our world.

I appreciate the leadership of President Barack Obama, and I thank to him for his friendships and good will toward Indonesia.

I want to thank you.

President Obama. Okay. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:27 a.m. at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India in Toronto

June 27, 2010

President Obama. Well, I want to express my pleasure at having the opportunity to meet once again with my good friend, Prime Minister Singh. I said before and I continue to believe that the extraordinary leadership that Prime Minister Singh has provided not just to India but to the world has helped us navigate through some very difficult times.

And I can tell you that here at the G–20, when the Prime Minister speaks, people listen, particularly because of his deep knowledge of economic issues, as well as the fact that he understands that as India rises as a world power and not just a regional power, that it also has enormous responsibilities to work with the rest of the world community around issues of peace and prosperity.

The last time that Prime Minister Singh visited the United States, as part of a wonderful state dinner, we instituted what we termed a strategic partnership that involves all of our ministers at the highest levels working together to try to find ways to enhance commercial ties, security ties, coordination on critical multilateral issues like climate change. And as a consequence, Minister Krishna led a delegation to Washington to follow up and, working with Secretary Clinton, conducted some very high level talks. I had the opportunity to participate in that dialogue.

We also wanted to make sure that in addition to government-to-government ties, we were initiating people-to-people ties, and so a Indian-American CEO conference took place. And we're going to continue to see how we can get

our businesses to work together, and they're generating recommendations to each of us in terms of how we can improve ties between the United States and India.

I am very pleased to have accepted a visit on behalf of myself and Michelle to India. It is a trip that I'm very much looking forward to, and I know that the Prime Minister and his gracious wife will extend great hospitality to us. We are also just excited because of the tremendous cultural as well as political and social and economic examples that India is providing the world and has in the past.

So, Mr. Prime Minister, thank you so much for your friendship, and we look forward to working with you in the months to come, leading up to the visit so that we know that we're going to have a very productive stay when we're in India.

Prime Minister Singh. Mr. President, thank you very much for your warm words. I attest that India attaches the greatest importance to this relationship with the United States, with which we have a steady partnership.

It is our common endeavor, Mr. President, to give this strategic partnership a new trust, a new meaning, a new content. And it's my privilege to be associated in this global endeavor with you, Mr. President. You are a role model to millions and millions of people all over the world. Your life history is a history which inspires millions of people everywhere where there are people who have risen by the sheer depth of their austerity, of their hard work, and their commitment to the values on which you have worked and you've stood for.

It has been my privilege, Mr. President, to enjoy your friendship, and this is something which I will cherish forever in my life.

The dinner that you hosted for me and for my wife last year was a most memorable evening for both of us. And we look forward to your visit, the First Lady's visit, and your children's visit to India later this year. A very warm welcome awaits you, Mr. President. And I have every reason to believe that you will find it a productive and exciting journey to a country of India's diversity, of India's complexity.

And we are engaged in getting rid of chronic poverty, ignorance, and disease, which still afflict millions and millions of our people. And it's our common desire to work together to get rid of this scourge in our lifetime. And in that, the United States support means a great deal to us. Your personal commitment to social justice is something we cherish.

And I look forward to have the privilege of welcoming you and your family to our country so that you can see for yourselves what we are trying to do, the difficulties of managing social and economic transformation in the framework of a democracy committed to the rule of law, committed to all fundamental human freedoms. I think that's what India seeks to achieve. And in this, we seek your active involvement and active participation.

Thank you very much.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:13 p.m. at the InterContinental Toronto Centre. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of External Affairs Somanahalli Mallaiah Krishna of India; and Gursharan Kaur, wife of Prime Minister Singh.

The President's News Conference in Toronto
June 27, 2010

The President. Please, everybody, have a seat. Good evening. I want to thank our wonderful hosts—first and foremost, my friend and partner, Prime Minister Harper, as well as the Canadian people and the people of Toronto—for their extraordinary hospitality.

The success of these summits—the G–8 in Muskoka and the G–20 here in Toronto—is a

tribute to Canadian leadership. I also want to thank my fellow leaders for the sense of purpose that they brought to this summit.

The G–20 is now the premier forum for international economic cooperation. We represent East and West, North and South, advanced economies and those still emerging. Our challenges are as diverse as our nations. But together, we represent some 85 percent of the global economy, and we have forged a coordinated response to the worst global economic crisis in our time.

In London last year, we took unprecedented action to prevent an even larger economic catastrophe, to put our economies on the path to recovery, and to begin reforming our financial system so that the crisis like the one we were emerging from never happened again.

In Pittsburgh, we went further, moving beyond the old economic cycles of boom and bust by committing our nations to a new framework for growth that's balanced and sustained, as well as specific financial reforms.

Our bold action has succeeded. In the United States, we are committed, above all, to leading by example, and because of the steps that we've taken to get our economy moving, we are growing again, and this growth is beginning to translate into job creation. And we're now poised to pass the toughest financial reform since the aftermath of the Great Depression.

Globally, economic contraction has given way to economic growth. Trade that had plummeted is rebounding. Emerging economies in particular are seeing impressive growth. So we have pulled ourselves back from the brink and begun to move forward with economic recovery.

But as we all know, that's not good enough. In the United States and around the world, too many people are still out of work. In too many economies, demand for goods and services is still too weak. As we've been reminded in recent months, a financial crisis in one country can have consequences far beyond its borders. And history teaches us that growth and prosperity is never guaranteed. It requires constant effort, and it requires continued leadership.

So we came to Toronto with three specific goals: to make sure the global recovery is strong and durable, to continue reforming the financial system, and to address the range of global issues that affect our prosperity and security. And we've made progress in each of these areas.

First, to ensure the recovery is strong and durable, we agreed to continue coordinating our efforts so we're creating jobs. That's my highest economic priority as President. And this is why we are focused on increasing global demand. Every economy is unique, and every country will chart its own unique course. But make no mistake: We are moving in the same direction.

As I reiterated to my colleagues, after years of taking on too much debt, Americans cannot and will not borrow and buy the world's way to lasting prosperity. No nation should assume its path to prosperity is simply paved with exports to the United States. Indeed, I've made it clear that the United States will compete aggressively for the jobs and industries and markets of the future.

And that's why I've set the goal of doubling our exports over the next 5 years, an increase that would support millions of jobs in the United States. It's why I've launched a National Export Initiative to help meet this goal. It's why we focused earlier this week on deepening our economic cooperation with Russia, which would benefit both of our countries, including restarting our poultry exports and accelerating our efforts to support Russia's entry into the WTO.

And that's why I announced that my administration will work to resolve outstanding issues regarding the United States-Korea Free Trade Agreement by the time that I visit Korea in November. This will create new jobs and opportunity for people in both our countries and enhance America's competitiveness in the 21st century.

A strong and durable recovery also requires countries not having an undue advantage. So we also discussed the need for currencies that are market driven. As I told President Hu yesterday, the United States welcomes China's decision to allow its currency to appreciate in response to market forces. And we will be watching closely in the months ahead.

And because a durable recovery must also include fiscal responsibility, we agreed to balance the need for continued growth in the short term and fiscal sustainability in the medium term. In the United States, I've set a goal of cutting our deficit in half by 2013. A number of our European partners are making difficult decisions. But we must recognize that our fiscal health tomorrow will rest in no small measure on our ability to create jobs and growth today.

The second area we focused on was advancing the goal of financial reform. Just as we're on the verge of passing financial reforms in the United States, our European partners have committed to the process we went through in the United States: a new level of transparency and a stress test for banks to rebuild confidence.

Here in Toronto, we reaffirmed our commitment to the highest global standards. To maintain momentum, we directed our teams to finalize for our meeting in Seoul a global framework to ensure that banks hold enough capital to withstand the stresses of government intervention. Rules must be clear. Oversight must be strong. Complex trades like derivatives must be brought into the light of day. Excessive risk-taking and abusive practices must be prevented. Consumers must be protected. In short, we have to do everything in our power to avoid a repeat of the recent financial crisis.

Finally, we made progress on a range of global challenges that are critical to shared prosperity. We're moving forward with the food security initiative that we announced last year, including by launching a special fund at the World Bank which will strengthen farmers' productivity in the poorest countries. And we made progress towards a new, coordinated approach so that we can invest more than $20 billion to reduce hunger and promote agricultural development.

The G–20 leaders renewed our commitment, made in Pittsburgh, to phase out fossil fuel subsidies. The United States has laid out our plans for achieving this goal, and we're urging our G–20 partners to do so as well. This would be one of the most important steps we can take to create clean energy jobs, increase our energy security, and address the threat of climate change.

And I'm pleased we endorsed my proposal to broaden the G–20 agenda to include the fight against corruption. In too many places, the culture of the bribe is a brake on development and prosperity. It discourages entrepreneurship, destroys public trust, and undermines the rule of law while stifling economic growth. With a new commitment to strengthening and enforcing rules against corruption, economic opportunity and prosperity will be more broadly shared.

Let me conclude by saying that I know that much of the focus coming into these meetings was on whether our nations would be divided by different approaches. But as we've proven repeatedly over the past 18 months, our nations can and have come together through the G–20 to build on the foundation of our shared interests. Indeed, that's the purpose of these meetings. We can bridge our differences. We can coordinate our approaches. And we can continue our relentless focus on durable growth that puts our people to work and broadens prosperity for the world.

So with that, let me take a few questions. I've got a handy list here, and I'm going to start with Darlene [Darlene Superville] from AP.

Global Economic Stabilization/North Korea

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Do you think the decision by your G–20 counterparts here to endorse stiff deficit reduction goals is a repudiation of your view that cutting deficits too quickly and too fast would hinder the global economic recovery?

And then if I could ask you just quickly on North Korea, you said yesterday that North Korea must be held to account for the sinking of the South Korean warship and that there must be consequences for such irresponsible behavior. What, specifically—what kind of punishment would you like to see imposed on North Korea, short of some sort of condemnation from the U.N. Security Council?

The President. Okay.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Darlene, I'm—since you're the first, I'm going to give you two questions. Everybody else, let's try to stick to one, please, especially big questions.

With respect to the first question, we helped to draft this communique, which reflects our policies. I know leading up to the conference, leading up to the summit, there was some sense of a divide. In fact, the policies that we've been promoting are reflected in the communique and entirely consistent with what the G–20 leaders came up with.

Keep in mind that we had already proposed a long time ago that we were going to cut our deficits in half by 2013. And so the timeframe and the measures that have been adopted are consistent with our view that it is important for us to make sure that in the medium and long term, we are paying attention to the big deficits and debts that we have out there.

What we did say coming to this conference is, we can't all rush to the exits at the same time. So countries that have surpluses should think about how can they spur growth and how can they spur demand. Not all of those involve stimulus. Some of them might involve structural changes in their economy. Some of them might involve passing financial regulatory reforms so that their banks are lending again.

But the point is that in each country, what we have to recognize is that the recovery is still fragile, that we still have more work to do to make this recovery durable. But we also have to recognize that if markets are skittish and don't have confidence that we can tackle the tough problems of our medium- and long-term debt and deficits, then that also is going to undermine our recovery.

Now, there are going to be some countries—Greece being the most obvious example—that has to act immediately because they're facing a sovereign debt crisis. There are going to be other countries where the issue really has to do with how do we start putting in place some plans that are credible for deficit reduction, even though they don't kick in significantly in this first year.

So, for example, Germany, which cares deeply, obviously, about the issue of fiscal consolidation, if you actually look at their plans, they're no more front-loaded than ours are. In fact, you can make the argument that some of the steps that I've already taken—freezing domestic discretionary spending for the next 3 years in my budget, passing PAYGO, setting up a fiscal commission to tackle issues like entitlements long term—that many of those decisions are comparable to some of the decisions that have been made by those who are promoting fiscal consolidation.

So I think this has really been an issue in which there is violent agreement between the parties. We have to make sure we're not rushing to the exits too quickly and all at the same time. But we also have to be mindful that the debt and deficit levels that many advanced countries have right now are unsustainable and have to be dealt with in a serious way.

With respect to North Korea, our main focus right now is in the U.N. Security Council, making sure that there is a crystal-clear acknowledgement that North Korea engaged in belligerent behavior that is unacceptable to the international community. And the United States participated in the investigation that was conducted around the *Cheonan*. Our experts concluded that North Korea had carried out that attack. That was consistent with South Korea's assessment and others who were observers in the process.

I think President Lee has shown extraordinary restraint given these circumstances. And it is absolutely critical that the international community rally behind him and send a clear message to North Korea that this kind of behavior is unacceptable and that the international community will continue to step up pressure until it makes a decision to follow a path that is consistent with international norms.

And my expectation is, is that those who were here at the G–20, as they look at the evidence, will come to that same conclusion. I think it is a bad habit that we need to break to try to shy away from ugly facts with respect to North Korea's behavior in the interests of—or under the illusion that that will somehow help to maintain the peace.

All right. Hans [Hans Nichols, Bloomberg News]. There you go.

China

Q. Okay. Thank you, Mr. President. Before the summit, you said it was too early to tell if China's revaluation of their RMB would lead to real evaluation. You suggested that you'd take a year to look at the trajectory to see whether or not it was real. You've just said a couple of months——

The President. Did I say a year at the press conference in the White House?

Q. On the 24th with Medvedev, you said——

The President. Did I say a year?

Q. ——you would take a year to monitor the RMB's—that was the trajectory.

The President. Okay.

Q. I just want to know if there's a reason for——

The President. No, the—you know——

Q. ——the change in the intervening time?

The President. Look, the—I'd have to look at the transcript, but let me just make sure that I'm absolutely clear here. Number one, China has determined that it is in its own interests, its own sovereign interests to move back towards a path of flexible exchange rates. We think that is a very positive thing. We think, in part, it is a positive thing because a undervalued RMB has given China a significant trading advantage, and we have been very clear to them that we don't consider that acceptable or consistent with the principles of balanced and sustainable growth that were discussed in Pittsburgh and that all G–20 countries signed on to.

So we are pleased that they've made this first step. But like, I think, a number of other countries, a number of other trading partners with China, the proof of the pudding is going to be in the eating. We didn't expect a 20-percent revaluation in a week. That would be disruptive to the Chinese economy; it would be disruptive to the world economy.

We do expect that as more and more market forces come to bear, that given the enormous surpluses that China has accumulated, that the RMB is going to go up and it's going to go up significantly. And so we are going to be paying attention over the next several months to make that determination.

Now, I don't have a perfect formula. Will I have a clear idea after 3 months as to whether it's moving fast enough or not? I will leave that up to Treasury Secretary Geithner, who makes these determinations. That's not my job. But——

Trade

Q. How long do you expect people like Senator Charles Schumer and American manufacturers who've lost so many jobs so quickly—how long do you expect them to wait?

The President. Well, Hans, we're not going to have a colloquy here, but my expectation is, is that they're going to be serious about the policy that they themselves have announced.

Now, what I'm going to do is I'm going to work with people like Senator Schumer, manufacturers, workers who are affected by these trade imbalances. And I think we all have the same interest, and that is, the United States can compete with anybody as long as we've got an even playing field.

And as I indicated in my opening remarks, we're prepared to enter into trade agreements with Korea. One of the things that we discussed here was, is there a way to reinvigorate the Doha round, which has been stuck for a very long time? So I agree with the statement in the communique that trade can be a source of prosperity for everybody, but it's got to be a fair deal.

And it's not just currency, by the way. I mean, we've had discussions with our Chinese partners about what are they doing on nontariff barriers; what are they doing with respect to intellectual property protection; what are they doing with respect to state-owned enterprises or stated-owned banks that are subsidizing industry. So there are a whole host of issues.

Now, undoubtedly, they've got some issues with us. And I think we can manage these trade frictions, but it's going to be important, I think, for China to take seriously not just what we're saying, but what a number of countries, including countries like Canada, are saying.

All right? Jackie [Jackie Calmes, New York Times]. Where are you at?

Afghanistan/Pakistan

Q. I'm back here. Thank you, Mr. President. One of the noneconomic issues you covered here was Afghanistan. And I'm curious whether you believe that the talks that Pakistan is reportedly brokering between the Taliban and President Karzai of Afghanistan hold promise, or do they concern you? And a related question—not a second question—[*laughter*]—is, do you agree with the new Prime Minister of Great Britain, David Cameron—David, to you—that the—we can be totally out of Afghanistan by 2015 and turn the lights off?

The President. I'm not sure that's a quote from David, but I'll take the second question first. We have been in Afghanistan now for 9 years. Next year, we will have been there for a decade. This is now America's longest war. And what that means is that all of us have an interest not in occupying Afghanistan, but an interest in making sure Afghanistan is stable, can stand on its own two feet when it comes to security issues, and is not a base for terrorist activities launched against the United States of America.

Now, I think that we're going to need to provide assistance to Afghanistan for a long time to come. They are still building up a national government. They are in a very tough neighborhood. They are a very poor country. So on a whole range of issues—from economic, development, setting up courts, setting up effective police forces, a political system that is transparent and fair, as well as with respect to security—we intend to be a partner with Afghanistan over the long term. But that is different from us having troops on the ground.

Now, I've been clear about the policy that we're pursuing. It was announced last November, and we're several months into it. The policy involves us sending in additional troops—we already had approximately 68,000; we put in an additional 30,000—with the intent of providing the Afghan Government the space and the time to build up its security forces, for us to be able to help blunt the momentum of the Taliban, to clear some of the areas in which the Taliban had gotten a very fierce foothold, to start moving Afghan security forces in, even as we are improving governance and we're improving the legitimacy and credibility of the civilian Government.

That is the policy that General McChrystal was pursuing. That is the policy that General Petraeus is pursuing. That is the policy that all of our ISAF allies have fully endorsed, as has President Karzai.

Now, it's tough. It is a tough challenge, for reasons that have been amply recorded. As I said, this is a—this is the third poorest country in the world. It has an extraordinarily high illiteracy rate. It has suffered through 30 years of war. And so this is going to be tough. But what I expect is that by the end of this year, we will have seen progress on the strategy that was laid out. We will conduct a full review. Those things that are not working, we will fix. Those things that are working, we will build on, both on the civilian side and on the military side, as well as on the diplomatic side. Because ultimately, as is true in—as was true in Iraq, so will be true in Afghanistan: We're going to have to have a political solution, not simply a military solution.

Now, with respect to the negotiations and efforts at reintegration, I think it's too early to tell. I think that we have to view these efforts with skepticism, but also openness. The Taliban is a blend of hardcore ideologues, tribal leaders, kids that basically sign up because it's the best job available to them. Not all of them are going to be thinking the same way about the Afghan Government, about the future of Afghanistan. And so we're going to have to sort through how these talks take place. But I think that President Karzai's peace jirga was a useful step. He's going to be having a Kabul conference that I think will be a useful step in this direction.

I think that conversations between the Afghan Government and the Pakistani Government, building trust between those two Governments is a useful step. I think to the extent that we can get all the regional players to recognize that it is in everybody's interests that this region between Pakistan and Afghanistan are not used to launch terrorist attacks, that will be a useful step. And that's what we're moving towards.

Peter Maer [CBS Radio].

Q. I'm here.

The President. There you are.

Supreme Court Nominee Elena Kagan's Confirmation Process

Q. Thank you, sir. Looking ahead to the Supreme Court confirmation hearings of your choice, Elena Kagan, tomorrow, first of all, what do you say to the critics who are portraying her as a politically motivated liberal? And given your own support when you were in the Senate for a filibuster of a Supreme Court nominee, what's your guidance to Republicans who may be threatening that at this point?

The President. I think they should pay attention to Elena Kagan's record and her testimony. Under our constitutional system, the Senate is entrusted with the process of providing advice and consent, and I am absolutely confident that if you give a fair reading of Elena Kagan's record and her performance in every job that she's had, what you see is somebody with an extraordinarily powerful intellect; somebody with good judgment; somebody who understands the impact that laws have on individual Americans; somebody who's able to broker understandings between people of very difficult ideological bents; somebody who is extremely hard-working, extremely diligent, extremely personable; knows how to build consensus; has been an outstanding lawyer; has been an outstanding dean of one of our top law schools—notice, even though it's my alma mater, I just said "one of"—has performed brilliantly as Solicitor General; and has the support, by the way, of a number of very conservative jurists who she's worked with.

So as I examine some of the arguments that have been floated against her nomination over the last several weeks, it's pretty thin gruel. Now, having said that, I expect that my Republican colleagues and my Democratic colleagues should ask her tough questions, listen to her testimony, go through the record, go through all the documents that have been provided to the Senate Judiciary Committee, and then vote their conscience.

Q. [*Inaudible*]—the filibuster threat, sir—[*inaudible*]—in your experience——

The President. Vote their conscience.

Mr. Kimura [Kazuhiro Kimura] of the Kyodo News.

North Korea/China/Japan-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I have a question with two parts, if I may. [*Laughter*]

The President. But they're related. [*Laughter*]

Q. Yes, of course.

The President. Yes.

Q. Okay. The *Cheonan* incident once again indicated unstability of Northeast Asia and the importance of the U.S.-Japan security——

The President. Yes.

Q.——treaty that just marked the 50th anniversary this month. And you will be meeting with new Prime Minister Kan after this. And on this occasion, would you please talk about your long-term vision on the alliance and the security treaty? I mean, is this current structure of the treaty sustainable for the coming decades, especially with the Chinese military expansion and the unpredictable North Korea? And—or would—there would be more responsibility required on the Japanese side?

And the related second-part question is, in your meeting with Hu Jintao yesterday, you called for the cooperation from Chinese side to send a clear message to North Korea as a consequence. How do you look at the response so far? Is it favorable and strong enough to send a united, clear message to North Korea? Thank you.

The President. Let me answer the second question first. I had the conversation with President Hu. I was very blunt. This is not an issue where you've got two parties of moral equivalence who are having an argument. This is a situation in which you have a belligerent nation that engaged in provocative and deadly acts against the other. And I think it is very important that we are clear about that.

Now, I am sympathetic to the fact that North Korea is on China's border. They have a security interest in not seeing complete chaos on the Korean Peninsula or a collapse that could end up having a significant impact on them. And so I think the United States and the international community should be mindful that this is in China's backyard.

And so when they adopt a posture of restraint, I understand their thinking. But I think there's a difference between restraint and willful blindness to consistent problems. And my hope is, is that President Hu will recognize as well that this is an example of Pyongyang going over the line in ways that just have to be spoken about seriously, because otherwise, we're not going to be able to have serious negotiations with the North Koreans.

I, like, I think, every participant in the six-party talks, would love nothing more than to see these issues resolved diplomatically. So in that, China and the United States and Japan and South Korea and Russia all share a common interest. We'd like to see a denuclearized Korean Peninsula. We'd like to see a North Korea that is a responsible member of the world community, which would be good for the people of North Korea. But that's only going to happen if we're honest about what's taking place right now and if we're honest about our basic expectations of how nations behave in an international order.

With respect to the alliance between the United States and Japan, we marked 50 years; I expect that alliance to sustain itself for another 50 years. I think the condition of the alliance is very strong. I'm—have already had the opportunity to meet with and discuss issues with the new Prime Minister over the last several days. I think he is as committed as I am to making sure that the U.S.-Japan alliance remains strong and vibrant. It is good for Japan's security; it is good for America's security. And by the way, I think, again, it helps to serve China's interests and South Korea's interests.

I think rather than set it up as a rivalry, rather than see—view this as an issue of spheres of influence, which is, I think, an old way of thinking, what we want to do is to say, we are always going to be there for Japan; we are always going to be there for South Korea; we are going to be a presence in the Pacific because we are a Pacific nation as well as an Atlantic nation. But we want to partner with all countries to create an environment in which trade and commerce and the exchange of goods and people and ideas and cultures is thriving.

And look, Asia is obviously on the move. China's on the move. That's a positive thing. That shouldn't be a threat to anybody. What we want to make sure of, though, is, is that through dialogue, through forums like the G–20, through forums like ASEAN or APEC or some of the other multilateral institutions that we've set up, that all countries are meeting their responsibilities, even as their rights are also being recognized. And I think if we adhere to that basic principle, then a strong U.S.-Japan alliance is something that can continue to be a cornerstone of a peaceful and prosperous Asia, which will benefit all people.

Okay? Dan Lothian from CNN.

Afghanistan/Iraq

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. To follow up on Jackie's question, you talked about providing assistance in Afghanistan for some time to come. But given the challenges there and the history in Afghanistan, what makes you think that after declaring victory in Afghanistan, that it won't slide back into becoming a haven for terrorists?

The President. Well, I don't have a crystal ball. I think that right now the debate surrounding Afghanistan is presented as either we get up and leave immediately because there's no chance at a positive outcome, or we stay, basically, indefinitely and do, quote, unquote, "whatever it takes for as long as it takes." And what I said last year, I will repeat, which is, we have a vital national interest in making sure that Afghanistan is not used as a base to launch terrorist attacks.

It is true that Al Qaida right now is in Pakistan. And you'll often hear, "Why are we in Afghanistan when the terrorists are in Pakistan?" Well, Al Qaida is pinned down and has been weakened in part because they don't have the run of the territory. We would be less secure if you returned to a situation that existed prior to 9/11, in which they had a Government that was friendly to them and willing to house their operations. And I don't think anybody would dispute that.

So A, we've got a vital interest in the region; B, we do not expect, because of our involvement in Afghanistan, that the country is going

to completely transform itself in a year or 2 years or 5 years. President Karzai does not expect that; the Afghan people don't expect that. Afghanistan has its own culture. It is a very proud culture. It has a lot of work to do with respect to development, and it's going to have to find its own path.

But I reject the notion that the Afghan people don't want some of the basic things that everybody wants: basic rule of law, a voice in governance, economic opportunity, basic physical security, electricity, roads, an ability to get a harvest to market and get a fair price for it without having to pay too many bribes in between. And I think we can make a difference and the coalition can make a difference in them meeting those aspirations, even as we are meeting our security interests. Those two things are tied together.

Now, there has been a lot of obsession around this whole issue of when do we leave. My focus right now is how do we make sure that what we're doing there is successful, given the incredible sacrifices that our young men and women are putting in. And we have set up a mechanism whereby we are going to do a review—and I've signaled very clearly that we're not going to just keep on doing things if they're not working—and that by next year, we will begin a process of transition.

That doesn't mean that we suddenly turn off the lights and let the door close behind us. And if you look at what's happening in Iraq right now, we have met every deadline. By the way, there was a timetable in place, and we are—we have—by the end of August, will have removed all of our combat troops from Iraq. We will maintain a military presence there, we will maintain military-to-military cooperation, and we are providing them assistance, but we're meeting this deadline.

And I think it is worth the extraordinary sacrifices that we are making—and when I say "we," not just the United States, but all coalition members—to try to see a positive outcome in Afghanistan as well.

All right? Last question, Scott Horsley [National Public Radio]. Where's Scott?

U.S. Federal Budget Deficit/President's Agenda

Q. Mr. President, are there steps your administration can take now to build confidence that the U.S. will, in fact, meet its deficit reduction targets in the medium and long term?

The President. I'm sorry. Could you repeat the question? Put the mike a little closer to you.

Q. Are there steps your administration can take now to build confidence that the U.S. will, in fact, meet its deficit reduction goals in the medium and long term?

The President. The several steps we've already begun to take, number one, as I indicated, the budget that we're presenting, 3 years discretionary domestic spending freeze. And I've sent a clear signal to the leadership when we met, even if we do not get the entire budget package passed through Congress, that top line number needs to stay firm. And I'm serious about it.

We've initiated a whole host of measures to cut programs that aren't working, including, by the way, in the defense area. Bob Gates has been, I think, as successful as any Secretary of Defense in recent memory in actually killing programs, which, I think, anybody who follows Washington knows is very tough, very difficult.

We have instituted PAYGO. And although there were baselines built in that took into account the fact that some of this stuff was not going to be solved overnight, it is starting to provide budget discipline to Congress as they move forward.

And we have set up this Fiscal Commission, who will provide reports starting in November. And one of the encouraging things—although there was resistance, ironically, on the part of some of the Republicans who originally had been cosponsors of legislation to create the Fiscal Commission, and they, in fact, ended up voting against it—what's been encouraging, based on what I'm hearing both from Democrats and Republicans, is that there's been a serious conversation there. People are looking at a whole spectrum of issues to get at what is basically a structural deficit that preceded this financial crisis.

Even if—the financial crisis made it much worse, but even if we had not gone through this financial crisis, we'd still have to be dealing with these long-term deficit problems. They have to do with Medicaid; they have to do with Medicare; they have to do with Social Security. They have to do with a series of structural problems that are not unique to America. Some of it has to do with an aging population. And we've got to look at a tax system that is messy and unfair in a whole range of ways.

And so they're looking at the gamut of steps that are going to be taken. And one of the interesting things that's happened over the last 18 months as President is, for some reason, people keep on being surprised when I do what I said I was going to do. So I say, I'm going to reform our health care system, and people think, well, gosh, that's not smart politics, maybe we should hold off. Or I say, we're going to move forward on "don't ask, don't tell," and somehow people say, "Well, why are you doing that? I'm not sure that's good politics."

I'm doing it because I said I was going to do it, and I think it's the right thing to do. And people should learn that lesson about me, because next year, when I start presenting some very difficult choices to the country, I hope some of these folks who are hollering about deficits and debt step up, because I'm calling their bluff. And we'll see how much of that—how much of the political arguments they're making right now are real and how much of it was just politics.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 6:03 p.m. at the InterContinental Toronto Centre. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada; President Hu Jintao of China; President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea; Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, former commander, and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commander-designate, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; and Prime Minister Naoto Kan of Japan.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Naoto Kan of Japan in Toronto

June 27, 2010

President Obama. Well, Prime Minister Kan and I just had an excellent conversation and bilateral meeting after 3 days where we've had an opportunity to share ideas on not only the most pressing issues that are facing our economies, but also a range of security issues.

I congratulated Prime Minister Kan on his leadership. And we both noted the significance of 50 years of a U.S.-Japan alliance that has been a cornerstone not only of our two nations' security, but also peace and prosperity throughout Asia.

We discussed some very pressing security issues, in particular, North Korea, the sinking of the *Cheonan*, and the importance of both our countries standing in solidarity with South Korea and the entire international community standing with South Korea in condemning the incident and making sure that North Korea gets a clear signal that such provocations are unacceptable.

I also expressed appreciation to Japan for its support for the Iran sanctions that we passed through the United Nations Security Council, and we discussed issues of implementation.

But of course, in addition to significant dangers, we also talked about great opportunities. We see the possibilities of strengthening our economic ties across a whole range of issues. That's been, obviously, the subject of this summit.

We're both determined to pursue opportunities in clean energy and job growth and promoting the kind of sustainable recovery that will create opportunities for our people and increase opportunities not just for this generation but for future generations.

And I'm very much looking forward to visiting Japan and enjoying the hospitality of Prime

Minister Kan as he helps to shape the agenda for the next APEC meeting. And I thanked him for the very generous offer of boom and skimmers coming from Japan that can help in what is going to be a very lengthy process of cleaning up the Gulf in the wake of the oil spill.

But it's an example of a friendship and an alliance in which Japan and the United States have consistently been there for each other. And although that friendship and alliance has to continually be renewed and reshaped in light of new circumstances, the core values and the shared vision at the heart of our alliance remains strong, and I am very confident that working with Prime Minister Kan, we are going to be able to continue to build on that tremendous history over the last 50 years.

Prime Minister Kan. I am very happy to have such a—have candid discussions with President Obama today. And at the outset of our meeting, I talked about my experience from 30 years ago when I visited the United States on the invitation of the Department of State and about the experience of seeing the various NGOs are making activities depend solely on the nations, and I saw the grassroots democracy there. And I shared my recognition that President Obama was elected on such a background of the democracy in the United States. And I said to the President I have an experience of political life based on such grassroots activities, and I will also continue to pursue such a style of politics with my allies.

And I am also happy to have such a meeting in a year which is a milestone of 50 years—50th anniversary of the Japan-U.S. alliance. And this alliance between Japan and the United States not only has brought peace and prosperity not only to Japan, but also, it has been a foundation and cornerstone of civility of the whole Asia-Pacific region. And President Obama has such a recognition, and he completely shares the same understanding about our alliance. And for the stability of Asia, Japan is proud of working—having been working together with the United States.

And I told the President that it is very important to further enhance the partnership and our alliance, and at the same time, in order to pursue that goal, it is important for the Japanese public themselves to think really about the significance of our alliance and for them to think about the decisions for the future of our alliance. And I talked about my recognition with President Obama today. And in other words, it is often the case that people see the way—people see the situation as politicians make their decisions and the public makes complaints about it, that it is important for us to avoid such a situation by creating real discussions about our future ways.

And we talked also about the incident in which North Korea attacked the—attacked and sunk the North Korean naval—South Korean naval vessel, and we talked also about the issue of Iran and Afghanistan. Always we have to work together to respond, and we share the common understanding of those issues.

And I also reaffirmed our recognition that it is important for us to cooperate in such issues as climate change or nuclear disarmament in North Korea's regime.

And during the past 3 days, we talked about the economic issues at the G–8 and G–20 meetings, and we discussed these issues together. And President Obama expressed the support for the economic policy that Japan will pursue, and I was strongly encouraged by his comments.

When I was the Finance Minister, Mr. Geithner was my counterpart, but now Finance Minister Noda is his counterpart, and we have other counterparts between us. And we will make sure that these counterparts will work together well.

And I'm happy that in November, we are hosting the APEC meeting, and on that occasion, we will be welcoming President Obama in Japan. I will make sure that we prepare much ice cream for him.

President Obama. That's my favorite. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Kan. And even before November, if I have an opportunity to visit the United States, I would be happy to do so, and as President Obama has suggested, that if our schedules meet, it would be good to create such an opportunity. And in September, I haven't made the final decision, but there is a

possibility of visiting the United States for the United Nations General Assembly. So I will be considering it then.

President Obama. Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:25 p.m. at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Prime Minister Kan spoke in Japanese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on the Death of Senator Robert C. Byrd
June 28, 2010

I was saddened to hear this morning that the people of West Virginia have lost a true champion, the United States Senate has lost a venerable institution, and America has lost a voice of principle and reason with the passing of Robert C. Byrd.

Senator Byrd's story was uniquely American. He was born into wrenching poverty, but educated himself to become an authoritative scholar, respected leader, and unparalleled champion of our Constitution. He scaled the summit of power, but his mind never strayed from the people of his beloved West Virginia. He had the courage to stand firm in his principles, but also the courage to change over time.

He was as much a part of the Senate as the marble busts that line its chamber and its corridors. His profound passion for that body and its role and responsibilities was as evident behind closed doors as it was in the stemwinders he peppered with history. He held the deepest respect of members of both parties, and he was generous with his time and advice, something I appreciated greatly as a young Senator.

We take solace in the fact that he is reunited with his wife of nearly 69 years, Erma, and our thoughts and prayers are with their daughters, their grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, and all the people of West Virginia who loved Robert C. Byrd.

Statement on the New National Space Policy
June 28, 2010

Over the past 50 years, America has led the world in space exploration, broadening humanity's horizons and our understanding of the universe. And our achievements have in turn led to incredible technological advances that have improved our lives and transformed our economy. We can point to satellites orbiting hundreds of miles overhead that can identify our location within inches or communications systems that allow information to flow around the world as never before. In part, what has made this progress possible was a commitment by our Nation to scientific discovery and technological innovation and an unyielding faith in the future, even during difficult times.

That is why each President since Dwight Eisenhower has defined a national space policy: to ensure that as we confront the pressing issues of the day, we continue to press forward in the pursuit of new frontiers. Today my administration is continuing in this tradition. We are releasing a new national space policy, designed to strengthen America's leadership in space while fostering untold rewards here on Earth. For even as we continue our relentless focus on the serious challenges we face at home and abroad, our long-term success and leadership as a nation demands that we do not lose sight of the promise of the future.

Our policy reflects the ways in which our imperatives and our obligations in space have changed in recent decades. No longer are we racing against an adversary; in fact, one of our central goals is to promote peaceful cooperation and collaboration in space, which not only will ward off conflict, but will help to expand our capacity to operate in orbit and beyond. In addition, this policy recognizes that as our reliance on satellites and other space-based technologies increases, so too does our responsibility to address challenges such as debris and other hazards. No longer is space just a destination to reach; it is a place where we must be able to work in ways that are responsible, sustainable,

and safe. And it is central to our security and the security of our allies, as spaced-based technology allows us to communicate more effectively, to operate with greater precision and clarity, and to better protect our men and women in uniform.

But above all, this policy is about the boundless possibilities of the future. That is why we seek to spur a burgeoning commercial space industry, to rapidly increase our capabilities in space while bolstering America's competitive edge in the global economy. We are proposing improved observation of the Earth, to gain new insights into our environment and our planet. We set ambitious goals for NASA: ramping up robotic and human space exploration, with our sights set on Mars and beyond, to improve the capacity of human beings to learn and work safely beyond the Earth for extended periods of time. And this policy recognizes the importance of inspiring a new generation of young people to pursue careers in science and engineering. For, ultimately, our leadership as a nation, in this or any endeavor, will depend on them.

In short, this policy, while new, reflects the standards of leadership we have set since the dawn of the space age and ideals as old as America itself. We do not fear the future; we embrace the future. Even in times of trial, we do not turn inward; we harness the ingenuity and talents of our people, we set bold goals for our Nation, and we lead the world toward new frontiers. That is what has ensured our prosperity in the past. And that is what will ensure our prosperity in this new century as well.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Federal Reserve Chairman Ben S. Bernanke and an Exchange With Reporters

June 29, 2010

The President. Well, I just had an excellent conversation with Chairman Bernanke. This is a periodic discussion that we have to get the Chairman's assessment of the economy and to discuss some of the policy initiatives that we have here at the White House.

I think in our discussions, we share the view that the economy is strengthening, that we are into recovery, that it's actually led by some interesting sectors like manufacturing that we haven't seen in quite some time: the tech sectors are strong. We have gone from losing 750,000 jobs per month to 5 months of job growth now, private sector job growth that is obviously so important to consumer confidence and the well-being of the economy overall.

But what we also agreed is that we've still got a lot of work to do. There is a great concern about the 8 million jobs that were lost during the course of these last 2 years, and that we've got to continually push the pace of economic growth in order to put people back to work. That ultimately is the measure for most Americans of how well the economy is doing.

And although we've seen corporate profits go up, we have seen some very positive trends in a number of sectors, unfortunately, because of the troubles that we've seen in Europe, we're now seeing some headwinds and some skittishness and nervousness on the part of the markets and on part of business and investors. And so we're still going to have to work through that.

The thing that I think both of us emphasized was that if we can make sure that we continue to do the things that we're doing, deal with folks who need help—so passing unemployment insurance, for example; making sure that we are working to get credit flowing to small businesses that are still having some difficulties in the credit markets; strengthening consumer confidence—then we think that the general trends will be good. But we're going to have to keep on paying a lot of attention to the labor markets and helping people who have been displaced during the last couple of years get back into the labor market. So that's going to be a major challenge.

We also talked about the financial regulatory reform package that has now cleared both

the House and the Senate conferees. It will now be going to both the House and the Senate. This was a result of terrific work, I think, by my economic team, by members of the committee and Chairman Dodd and Chairman Frank, and some good advice from Chairman Bernanke in consultation during this process.

Not only will completion of the financial regulatory reform bill provide some certainty to the markets about how we are going to prevent a crisis like this from happening again, but it also ensures that consumers are going to be protected like never before on all the things day to day that involve interactions with the financial system. From credit card debt to mortgages, consumers are going to have the kinds of protections that they have not had before. We're going to be taking a whole range of financial instruments that had been in the shadows and we're going to be putting them in the light of day so that regulators can provide the oversight that potentially would prevent a future crisis. We're going to be in a position to resolve the failure of one institution without seeing it infect the entire financial system.

And this weekend at the G–20, we talked about how we can coordinate effectively with the international community to make sure that high standards for capital and reduced leverage apply not just here in the United States but across the board.

So overall, I think that—listening to Chairman Bernanke, I continue to be convinced that with financial regulatory reform in place, with a recovery well underway, that we have enormous potential to build on the hard work that's been done by this team and put people back to work and keep this recovery and the economy growing over the next several years.

But we can't let up. We're going to have to continue to be vigilant. I know that the Chairman feels the same way with respect to his role. And we look forward to working together in our respective institutions to make sure that we keep this recovery going on track.

Ben.

Chairman Bernanke. Thank you. We had a wide-ranging discussion; I'm very appreciative of the chance to do that. We talked about the outlook for the economy. We talked about financial regulatory reform. The President talked about some of the issues in that area. But I think very importantly, we also talked a lot about the international context. What's happening around the world in the emerging markets, in Europe affects us here in the United States, and it's important for us to take that global perspective as we discuss the economy.

The President. All right.

Death of Senator Robert C. Byrd/Financial Regulatory Reform

Q. Mr. President, are you at all concerned that the passing of Senator Byrd jeopardizes regulatory reform? And how big a blow would that be to the economic recovery?

The President. Well, I'm concerned about the fact that a giant of the Senate and a personal friend of mine passed away. I don't think about that in the context of financial regulatory reform.

I'm confident that given the package that has been put together, that Senators, hopefully on both sides of the aisle, recognize it's time we put in place rules that prevent taxpayer bailouts and make sure that we don't have a financial crisis that can tank the economy. And I think there's going to be enough interest in moving reform forward that we're going to get this done.

But when I think about Senator Byrd, what I think about is somebody who, during the course of an unparalleled career, not only helped to transform the institution of the Senate but, through his own personal transformation, embodied the kind of changes in America that have made us more equal, more just, more fair. And he will be sorely missed.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:44 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia

June 29, 2010

President Obama. Hello, everybody. I want to welcome His Majesty King Abdallah to the White House, and I'm very pleased to be able to return the extraordinary hospitality that he showed me and my delegation when we visited Saudi Arabia and when we visited His Majesty's farm.

Since that historic meeting that took place 65 years ago between Franklin Delano Roosevelt and His Majesty's father, King Abdul Aziz, we have had a strong and strategic relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia.

I always value His Majesty's wisdom and insights, and we have had a very productive session speaking about a whole range of issues that relate to both relations between our two countries, but also issues of prosperity and security around the globe.

We talked about our joint interest and work together in combating violent extremism. And we talked about a range of strategic issues, including issues related to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Iran and its attempts to develop nuclear weapons capacity. We discussed the Middle East peace process and the importance of moving forward in a significant and bold way in securing a Palestinian homeland that can live side by side with a secure and prosperous Israeli state.

As representatives of two G–20 countries, we also continued the conversation that took place this weekend about how the Saudi Government and the United States Government can work with our other partners around the world to keep the economic recovery going and to help bring about the strong economic growth that's necessary to put people back to work.

And we will continue to work together to expand the people-to-people contacts, the educational programs, the commercial ties, the businesspeople who are working together in both countries so that not only do our Governments remain strong partners but our people are continually enriching both countries.

So, Your Majesty, on behalf of the American people, welcome. We appreciate your friendship, and we appreciate your good counsel and look forward to continuing to work together to strengthen the strong bonds between our two countries.

King Abdallah. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I believe you have covered everything and left nothing out in terms of our conversation.

Mr. President, I would like to share with you the views that I have been hearing about you from other—from around the world. You are an honorable man, and you are a good man. And I don't say this in order to compliment you. I say this because this is the truth as I hear it from people around the world.

And I would like to say to the friendly American people that the American people are friends of Saudi Arabia and its people, and they are friends of the Arab and Muslim people, and they are also friends of humanity.

Mr. President, I would like to point to the historic ties of friendship between our two nations that began with the meeting that you pointed to, the meeting between the late King Abdul Aziz and the late Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Over the past seven decades, the relationship has grown stronger and broader and deeper, and we appreciate all that you personally have done to further broaden and deepen and strengthen this relationship. And I hope that you will be able to continue to work with us on improving this relationship for many more years.

Thank you, Mr. President, for a productive meeting. I want to also thank our friends, the American people. And I also would like to thank our friends here in the media. May God spare us from all of the bad things they can do to us. [*Laughter*] And may God bless us with all the positive things they can do for us and for humanity.

President Obama. Well, that is an excellent prayer. Thank you. *Shukran*.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:33 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. King Abdallah spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Bermuda-United States Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters
June 29, 2010

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Treaty between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Bermuda relating to Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, signed at Hamilton on January 12, 2009. I also transmit, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to the Treaty.

The Treaty is one of a series of modern mutual legal assistance treaties being negotiated by the United States to more effectively counter criminal activities. The Treaty should enhance our ability to investigate and prosecute a wide variety of crimes.

The Treaty provides for a broad range of cooperation in criminal matters. Under the Treaty, the Parties agree to assist each other by, among other things: producing evidence (such as testimony, documents, or items) obtained voluntarily or, where necessary, by compulsion; arranging for persons, including persons in custody, to travel to the other country to provide evidence; serving documents; executing searches and seizures; locating and identifying persons or items; and freezing and forfeiting assets or property that may be the proceeds or instrumentalities of crime.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Treaty, and give its advice and consent to ratification.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 29, 2010.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Racine, Wisconsin
June 30, 2010

The President. Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody, have a seat, if you've got a chair. [*Laughter*] Well, thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. It's great to see you. It's good to be back in Racine. It is great to be back in this hall, because I don't know if there was anybody here who, when I was running for President, came—we did a rally in this hall. Must have—that's like—is that 3 years ago? Two? [*Laughter*] I did not have as much gray hair back then. [*Laughter*] That I'm certain of. Jim Doyle still had hair on his head. [*Laughter*] That's true.

I want to make some acknowledgements. First of all, you got one of the best Governors in the country and one of the most wonderful first ladies; Jim Doyle and Jessica Doyle are here. I want to acknowledge your outstanding and dynamic young mayor; John Dickert is here. You know, I try not to meddle in local politics, but you got a Milwaukee mayor who might make a really good Governor; Tom Barrett is here. State Treasurer Dawn Marie Sass is here. And State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Evers is here.

I also want to thank Bishop Darrell Hines for doing the invocation, Justine Boerger for doing the pledge, and Staff Sergeant Emily Russell, who's with the Wisconsin National Guard and sang our national anthem. Give them a big round of applause. Thank you. Thank you.

So it is great to be back in the Midwest—even if it's just for a day—especially on a day like today. I was trying to tell somebody that weather in the Midwest is always like this. [*Laughter*] You know, lakes all calm and blue.

They didn't believe me. But it's wonderful to be here, and it's just nice to get out of Washington. I love Washington, but I have to tell you, it's good to escape the heat and hot air. [*Laughter*]

So I stopped off on the way here to get a kringle. It was nice. Maybe on the way back, I'll look for a brat and some cheese curds. [*Laughter*] But don't tell Michelle. [*Laughter*]

Now, what I really wanted to do was have a chance to talk to all of you and listen to you about what's on your minds. So this is going to be a town hall meeting. But I want to make some remarks at the top, if you don't mind.

I know that towns like Racine are still hurting from this recession. This city has the second highest unemployment rate in the State, and I can only imagine how much pain that's caused, how many lives have been upended. And you've got, as I said, a dynamic young mayor who's thinking day in, day out about how to put people back to work, and has—the city has been cooperating with the State and Federal programs to figure out how we can start incubating a bunch of growth here, but it's still tough.

And some of you may be out of work, and you're tired of sending out resumes and not getting a response. Maybe you've got a job, but the bills seem to be stacking up faster than your pay is. Maybe you've looked through the family budget and you've got no idea how you're going to save for your retirement or send your kid to college. Or maybe you're a young person who's just about to get out of school and you're wondering what your job prospects are going to be.

I hear worries like this all the time from folks that I talk to in town halls like this, but also in the letters that I read each night from all across the country. And it's frustrating, and often it's heartbreaking. And that's why even though there's—there are plenty of challenges on our plate, everything from Afghanistan to Iran to the oil spill, all critical issues that go to our long-term prosperity and security, nothing's more important than reversing the damage of the great recession and getting folks back to work.

We had to take the country through some pretty tough steps to pull us out of the freefall that we faced when I took office. And I know that sometimes people don't remember how bad it was and how bad it could have been. But when I was sworn in, we were losing 750,000 jobs a month. Every—each month, we were losing 750,000 jobs. The economy was shrinking at 6 percent. It was contracting by 6 percentage points. That's faster than it had in decades.

Today, it's growing again. Today, we've added private sector jobs for 5 months in a row. So the economy's headed in the right direction. But for a lot of Americans—for Racine and a lot of other communities—it's not heading there fast enough. Not if you're out of work. Not if you can't pay your mortgage. Not if you can't take care of your family. And the truth is, from the day we walked into the White House, we knew that the crisis we faced was so severe that it was going to take months and maybe even years to fully heal, to dig ourselves out of one of the worst recessions in our history.

And that's why I've been fighting—in addition to everything we've done—for additional steps to speed up this recovery and keep the economy growing. We want an extension of unemployment benefits for workers who lost their jobs through no fault of their own. We want to help small-business owners get the loans they need to keep their doors open and hire more workers. We want relief for struggling States so they don't have to lay off thousands of teachers and firefighters and police officers.

Now, you'd think this would be pretty straightforward stuff, but I've got to say that lately, we've been having to wrangle around what used to be pretty noncontroversial things: providing loans for small businesses; extending unemployment insurance when 8 million people lost their jobs during the recession. But lately, there's a minority of Senators from the other party who've had a different idea. As we speak, they are using their power to stop this relief from going to the American people. And they won't even let these measures come up for a vote. They block it

through all kinds of procedural maneuvering in the Senate.

Now, some of this is just politics. You know, I'm—that's the nature of Washington. Before I was even inaugurated, there were leaders on the other side of the aisle who got together and they made the calculation that if Obama fails, then we win. Right? That was the basic theory. They figured, if we just keep on saying no to everything and nothing gets done, then somehow, people will forget who got us into this mess in the first place, and we'll get more votes in November. And you know, that will make people pretty cynical about politics.

Now, let's be fair, though. The other party's opposition is also rooted in some sincere beliefs about how they think the economy works. They think that our economy will do better if we just let the banks or the oil companies or the insurance industry make their own rules. They still believe that, even after the Wall Street crash, even after the BP oil well blew, that we should just keep a hands-off attitude. They think we should keep doing what we did for most of the last decade leading up to the recession.

So their prescription for every challenge is pretty much the same—and I don't think I'm exaggerating here—basically, cut taxes for the wealthy, cut rules for corporations, and cut working folks loose to fend for themselves. Basically, their attitude is, you're on your own.

Now, here's the problem. And again, I don't question that a lot of them sincerely subscribe to this view. Here's the problem: We've already tried these ideas. Remember? We tried them for 8 years. We tried them for a good part of the last decade. We know where they led us.

On Wall Street, the financial industry and its lobbyists spent years chipping away at rules and safeguards that could have prevented the meltdown of—that caused—that was caused by Lehman Brothers and AIG. But we didn't have those rules in place, that framework of regulation in place. So instead, we saw a disaster that nearly led to the collapse of the entire economy.

In the Gulf, we don't yet know what caused the explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil rig. But what we do know is that for decades, the oil industry's been able to essentially write its own rules and safety regulations. Industry insiders were put in charge of industry oversight, and oil and gas companies were allowed to basically fill out their own safety inspection forms.

In Washington, nearly a decade of tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires led to little more than sluggish growth, a shrinking middle class. Your paychecks flatlined; wages and incomes did not go up. Even when the economy was growing, it wasn't growing for you.

And for all the party's moralizing about fiscal discipline—because it is true that part of what we inherited is a real significant problem in terms of spending at the Federal level—the economic policies they put in place turned a $237 billion surplus into a $1.3 trillion deficit.

So when I—you know, there were a couple of signs when I came in, said, you know, do something about spending. I'm game to do something about spending, but let's just remember how we got into this fix.

Now, I've never believed that government has all the answers. That's not how America thinks. Government can't and should not replace businesses as the engines of growth and job creation in our economy. Government should live within its means. We should root out waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars wherever and whenever we can. Too much regulation can stifle competition and hurt businesses.

But if you think about the history of this country, we've always recognized that there are times when only government has been able to do what individuals couldn't do and what corporations would not do. That's how we have railroads and highways and public schools and police forces. That's how we've made possible scientific research that led to the medical breakthroughs and technological wonders that all of us take for granted now. That's why we have Social Security and a minimum wage and laws to protect the food we eat and the water we drink and the air we breathe. That's why we have rules to ensure that mines are safe and that oil companies pay for the spills that they cause.

And there have always been those who said no to these policies and these ideas. I mean, you look back on the history books; there were people who said that Social Security was socialism, said that Medicare was a Government takeover. There were automakers who said that installing

seatbelts was unnecessary, unaffordable, and would ruin the auto industry. There were skeptics who thought that cleaning our water and our air would bankrupt our economy.

Right here in Wisconsin, if you look at the lake now and look at the lake—what it was like 30 years ago, 40 years ago—and there were people who said, well, there's nothing we can do about all the sludge and drudge and whatever's going on in there. But they were wrong. They were wrong then, and they're wrong today.

So I want everybody to understand, this debate that we're having in Washington is not about big government or small government. It's about responsible government. It's about accountable government. It's about whose side government is on. It should be on the side of the American people. A government that breaks down barriers to opportunity and prosperity, that's the kind of government we need. That's the kind of government I'm trying to give you.

So I just want everybody to remember, we've tried the other side's theories. We know what their ideas are. We know where they led us. So now we've got a choice. We can return to what we know did not work, or we can build a stronger future. We can go backwards, or we can go forwards. And I don't know about you, but I want to move forward in this country.

As we speak—right now—we're on the verge of passing the most comprehensive financial reform since the Great Depression, a reform that will prevent a crisis like this from happening again. It will protect our economy from the recklessness and irresponsibility of a few on Wall Street. It will protect consumers against unfair practices of credit card companies and mortgage lenders. It's a reform that makes sure taxpayers never have to engage in a bailout for Wall Street's mistakes.

But I have to tell you, you would think this would be a bipartisan issue, don't you? I mean, you'd think everybody would say, "All right, what we were doing, that didn't work; we really got to tighten things up a little bit." But right now most of our friends on the other—in the other party are planning to vote against this reform. So the leader of the Republicans in the House said that financial reform was like—and I'm quoting here—using "a nuclear weapon" to target "an ant." [*Laughter*] That's what he said. He compared the financial crisis to an ant. [*Laughter*] Now, this is the same financial crisis that led to the loss of nearly 8 million jobs, the same crisis that cost people their homes, their life savings.

I mean, I—he can't be that out of touch with the struggles of American families. And if he is, then he's got to come here to Racine and ask people what they think. Do you think we should fix—I mean, maybe I'm confused. Do you think that the financial crisis was an ant and we just needed a little ant swatter to fix this thing? Or do you think that we need to restructure how we regulate the financial system so you aren't on the hook again and we don't have this kind of crisis again?

When you ask men and women who've been out of work for months at a time, who talk about how they've been barely hanging on, they don't think this financial crisis was something where you just need a few tweaks. They know it's what led to the worst recession since the Great Depression, and they expect their leaders in Washington to do whatever it takes to make sure a crisis like this doesn't happen again. And so there may be those in Washington who want to maintain the status quo, but we want to move America forward.

There are some folks who are against raising the limit on what companies like BP have to pay if they cause an environmental disaster. A few of them said they were against the $20 billion fund that we set up to make sure that workers and businesses in the Gulf whose livelihoods have been harmed by the oil spill would get compensation. The top Republican on the Energy Committee apologized to BP. Did you all read about that? He apologized to BP that we had made them set up this fund. Called it "a tragedy" that we had made them pay for the destruction that they had caused. Now, I got to say, they pulled it back after—he meant it, but then they kind of walked it back. [*Laughter*]

I mean, the tragedy is what the people of the Gulf are going through right now. That's the tragedy. And our Government has a re-

sponsibility to hold those who caused it accountable. They want to take us backwards. We want to move forward.

Some of these same folks want to maintain the status quo, where we just rely on oil and other fossil fuels for all of our energy needs, even though we know that our dependence on these energy sources are—is a problem because they're finite. They're going to run out. That jeopardizes our national security and our prosperity and our planet.

So I want to move forward. I believe it is time for this country to embrace a clean energy future. I don't want clean energy jobs to go to China. I don't want them to go to Germany. I want those industries to take root right here in the United States of America.

So already we've provided entrepreneurs and small-business owners with tax credits and loan guarantees that's led to 720,000 clean energy jobs in—will lead to over 700,000 jobs in 2012. These are good-paying, middle class, American jobs. I've seen them. I've gone to wind turbine plants where they're creating wind turbines and gone to solar plants where they're making the latest generation of solar panels. And we've created an entire new advanced battery industry here in the United States. So where we were only getting 2 percent of that market, we're now going to be getting 40 percent of that market. That was all done through the Recovery Act.

We've got to build on that progress, not undo it. That's why we need to pass legislation that makes clean energy the profitable kind of energy for America's businesses. We've got to have a national mission to change the way we use energy and produce energy. And you know what? That—it will be good for our economy. It is going to drive our economy in the 21st century. It is not time for us to look backwards; it's time for us to look forward right now when it comes to energy policy in this country.

So look, these are incredibly challenging times for America, especially for families who've been hurt by this recession. And you know, one of the things that I've tried to do is always be straight with you, when I was running and as President. The problems we face aren't going to go away overnight. No President, no politician has the power to make that happen. There will be some who tell you that the closer you get to election day. [*Laughter*] But the fact is, some of these challenges have been building up for decades. Making sure that our schools are prepared to—are preparing our kids to compete in this new global economy, making sure that our health care system is efficient and provides good, quality care to everybody, making sure that we are at the forefront of a clean energy future, getting our budgets under control—all those issues are issues that have been building up for decades.

So we're not going to fix them overnight, but what we can do is make a choice about which direction we want to take this country. What we can do is what we've always done, which is shape our own destiny as a nation.

The interests of the status quo, they're always going to have the most vocal defenders, the most powerful defenders. There'll always be lobbyists for the banks and the insurance industry that doesn't want more regulation, for companies that would prefer to see tax breaks instead of more investment on infrastructure or education. And let's face it: For some of us, just voters, the prospects of change are kind of scary, even when we know the status quo isn't working for us.

I mean, you remember all the fearmongering that was going on during the health care debate, right? Remember? All of you were told, you're going to lose your health care; it's going to be socialized; Government's going to come in and death panels are going to be set up and—remember that? And now we're about 3, 4 months into it, and everybody's looking around and—[*laughter*]. But at the time, it was scary.

And the other thing is, there are no powerful interests to lobby for a clean energy future that may be starting years from now or the research that may lead to the lifesaving medical breakthrough a decade from now. There aren't powerful lobbyists for the student who may not be able to afford a college education right now but if they got that college education would end up starting a business that would create thousands of jobs here in Wisconsin.

It's our job as a nation to advocate for the America that we hope for, to fight for the future that we want for the next generation, even if it's

not always popular, even if it's not easy, even if we're not benefiting in the short term. And if we do that now, if we set up that foundation, I am positive that we are going to create the kind of America that we want for the next generation. Our better days are ahead of us, not behind us, but we got to fight for that future. I want to fight with you. I want to fight alongside you for that future, Racine. And I'm absolutely positive that if we can unify the country, if we have the courage to change, then nothing can stop us.

Thank you. Thank you, everybody. God bless you. I'm going to—thank you.

All right. Everybody, take a seat again. We've got—we got time for some questions, all right? So the—we've got people in the audience who've got microphones, so if you will wait until I call on you, and then somebody with a microphone will come, and I'm going to go girl, boy, girl, boy, so—[*laughter*]—so we know it's fair.

All right, so I am going to start with this young lady right here, right in front. [*Applause*] She—well, you don't have to cheer for your—[*laughter*]—cheering for yourself here. All right, can you see her right here? Can somebody get her a microphone? There you go. You can just hand it to her, it will be all right. I know they told you—go ahead.

Housing Market/National Economy

Q. Hey, I just want to know what you plan on doing with the mortgage companies that were bailed out and that are not really helping the people, that won't modify these loans. I want to know what's going to be going on with that.

The President. Okay. You know, one of the—obviously, part of what triggered this entire crisis was what was going on in the mortgage industry. American homeownership—that's always been such an important symbol of the American Dream, right? Having your own home. And so I think that part of what's happened over the years was it was easier and easier to get a mortgage. And some of that was good, but unfortunately, what you started seeing were what were called these subprime loans.

So people were told, you know, you don't have to put any money down, don't worry about it, zero interest. But it—when you read the fine print, your mortgage was adjustable, and if home values didn't keep on going up and up and up, then suddenly, you might find yourself in a situation where you just couldn't pay your mortgage.

What was worse was that all the big investors and bankers on Wall Street were investing in these subprime loans. So they were pouring huge amounts of money into the mortgage industry, but nobody was really seeing to whether these mortgages were ones that people were going to have the salary to sustain. So when you started seeing people defaulting on these mortgages, it not only hurt the person who was in danger of losing their home, suddenly, the whole banking system, which was resting on top of all these loans, started getting shaky. And that triggered a panic. And then suddenly, banks weren't willing to lend to each other, and it all just started unraveling.

And that's why we had to step in so aggressively, because at a certain point, nobody was getting any loans. Even if you had a good credit rating, even if you had an ample salary, you just couldn't get a loan for your business, you couldn't get a loan for—to buy a car, you couldn't get anything.

Now, we have been able to settle the markets down and stabilize them so that now it's possible for people to get mortgages and get auto loans, it's possible for businesses to get credit, although small businesses are still having a problem. But that underlying problem of the housing market is still there.

Now, part of it is there are some folks who really just couldn't afford the home that they bought. And they just—it might not be their fault; they were fooled into thinking they could afford it—but no matter how much we help, they just got too much house for their salary. And so the best we can do there is to try to help them find other options and not lose too much money. And we are—we have programs to do that.

We've also been pushing the banks—who we helped—to say that if you've got somebody who actually could afford their home, but what

happened was their home values dropped so quick that right now they're what's called underwater, where the loan is worth more than the house, try to make an adjustment, because you're better off—everybody will be better off if you make an adjustment so that people are still paying their mortgage, but you reduce some of the interest or the principal so that they can stay in their home over the long term. That will be better off for the bank than if that person who has the mortgage goes into foreclosure.

So we've got programs now that we've set up to help people who can afford to stay in their homes, but just need a little bit of help, a little bit of adjustment at the margins.

But I've got to caution everybody here, because sometimes we'll get letters, and people say, you know, I'm not getting help staying in my home. And I feel bad for them, but some of them just, no matter how much money we put into it, their salary just doesn't support the mortgage that they have, and we can't make a big enough adjustment.

So you are going to see foreclosures. You're going to see some folks lose their homes. What we have to do is to make sure, number one, that they land in a decent rental situation or maybe a different house, provide them some help and counseling. And we're doing that, cooperating with State and local officials.

The second thing we've got to do is make sure that we've got regulations in place so that people don't get tricked into buying homes that they can't afford again. And that's part of this financial regulatory bill that we set up. So a lot of the predatory practices, a lot of the fine print that made people think they were getting a fixed-rate mortgage and then they find out suddenly it's a adjustable-rate, balloon mortgage that—so they thought they were getting 5 percent interest rates, and the next thing they know they're paying 10—a lot of those practices now are going to be subject to regulation and oversight.

Because we don't want to go through anything like this again. It's not fair for the person who buys the home, and it's not fair for everybody else who ends up having to help Wall Street because of their irresponsible behavior.

All right? Okay, a gentleman's turn. Gentleman right there—yes, right there, with the striped shirt. You, yes. [*Laughter*] There you go.

U.S. Armed Forces/Veterans Benefits/Civilian Expeditionary Force

Q. Thank you, sir. I had heard something and read about it on the Internet: You wanted the civilians to be just as strong and well funded as our military. What are your plans to go about constructing that?

The President. I'm sorry, could you repeat the question?

Q. Sorry, nervous.

The President. Yes, you were talking real fast.

Q. I saw an interview with you; you said live that you wanted the civilians to be just as strong and well funded as our military. What are your plans to go about constructing such a thing?

The President. Well, I don't know exactly the interview you're referring to, but if I was talking about civilians versus military, I was probably talking about in the context of—our Federal workforce, if you take a look at it—first of all, our military has just been extraordinary. Over the last—so much burden has been placed on them. I mean, they've been fighting two wars now for a long time. And frankly, a lot of folks have been going about their business, not really changing how they behave. People in uniform have made all kinds of adjustments, and their families have made all kinds of adjustments and sacrifices.

That's part of the reason why, even though I've frozen discretionary domestic spending, I haven't frozen the budgets that are needed to give pay raises to our troops, to make sure that our veterans are properly cared for, to make sure that their families are getting support on things like childcare. Because my attitude is, we've got a solemn obligation to those who put on the uniform to protect the United States of America.

And in the past, there have been times, frankly, where we didn't live up to that obligation. I mean, Veterans Affairs is a great example. When we came in, for all the talk about how we were going to take care of veterans, the truth was, the backlogs were so bad, and a lot of the facilities for veterans were just not up to

snuff. So we actually raised the Veterans Administration's budget by 11 percent—the biggest hike in 30 years—just so we could catch up and start making sure that our veterans got the kind of care that they deserve.

Now, but what I may have been referring to is this. When you look at a place like Afghanistan or you look at a place like Iraq, so many of our military personnel are having to engage in work that really should be civilian work: helping to build schools, helping to build bridges, helping to set up rule of law and courts, helping—agricultural specialists to help people learn how to irrigate their fields so that they can grow more food. And the problem is, is that we don't have a civilian effort that has always matched up to the military effort.

So the military goes in there, they clear out everything, they're making everything secure, and now the question is, all right, can we get the civilians to come in to work with the local governments to improve the situation? And a lot of times, that civilian side of it has been underresourced.

So what I'm trying to say is, don't put all the burden on the military. Make sure that we've got a civilian expeditionary force that when we go out into some village somewhere and the military makes it secure, let's have that agricultural specialist right there, let's have that person who knows how to train a police force right there. Let's have all those personnel, and let's make sure that we are giving them the support that they need in order for us to be successful on our mission.

And that means that—by the way, the State Department, our diplomatic arms, we've got to give them more support. A lot of times—we really support our military, but I'll be honest with you, when you go up to Congress and you start talking to them about the budget for training our diplomats and training our development specialists and all that, then people want to cut their budget because they think, aw, that's just foreign aid; that's not—we don't want to spend our money on that.

But the problem is, is that if you shortchange that, you may end up having to send our troops in to a very dangerous situation because a country's collapsed. We didn't do the good diplomatic work, and it's too late, and now the only solution is a military solution that might cost us five times as much. So we've just got to be smart about using all the elements of American power, not just one element of American power. All right?

Okay. Right there, in the green. Right there, in the green blouse.

Military Personnel's Quality of Life

Q. First of all, thank you very much for all that you do.

The President. Thank you.

Q. I would like to continue on the subject of the military just a little bit. Would you consider improving the quality of life of our military men and women in a couple areas? One would be more counseling, more available—eliminating that stigma——

The President. Yes.

Q.——that terrible stigma that's there. And the other one would be if they are actively in a war zone and they are deployed back to the United States, could we be sure that they have time to reground themselves before they are sent back into a similar——

The President. Yes.

Q.——situation again?

The President. Absolutely. Well, you've just identified two things that we're working on as we speak that are really critical. The first is making sure that counseling support for our troops is there in theater as well as when they get back home. And there has been in the past this sort of stigma around mental health issues. But you know what? If you send somebody into a war zone, that's going to be a shock on the system. They may engage in enormous heroism, enormous courage—our troops do just spectacular things—but it's going to have an impact. And when they've been on two tours or three tours or four tours sometimes, that impact adds up.

And in the past, things like posttraumatic stress disorder weren't really talked about. Now we're starting to talk about it. And we've actually—I was mentioning what we're doing for veterans as well as active duty—this whole issue of posttraumatic stress disorder, PTSD, we are really emphasizing this. And now up

and down the chain of command, we're saying, people should not be embarrassed about seeking out counseling in these situations. So that's point number one.

Second point you're making is there needs to be that rest in between deployments, and that's part of the reason why we actually increased the number of marines. The Army and Marines have really borne the biggest burden in terms of these very quick and rapid and stressful deployments. And what we've been saying is, let's start getting back to a point where there is ample time between deployments.

And we are actually—for the Marines, I think we're just about there. For the Army, I think we've got another year before we get it to where we want to be, although we've spaced it out a lot more than it was, for example, 2 years or 3 years ago.

But you're right, people need to be able to decompress in ways that they have not always had a chance to do. So thank you very much for your question.

All right, let me make sure the folks up here are getting—I'll call on that gentleman way up there. Way—yes, you. Right. [*Laughter*] That guy.

Q. Thanks for coming to see us.

The President. You bet.

National Economy/American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009/Deficit Reduction

Q. I'd recommend the O&H kringle and the Johnsonville brats. [*Laughter*] My question is if you could remind us why the stimulus spending was a good idea and how we should judge its effectiveness at this point in time.

The President. I think it's a great question. Here's what happened. As I said, when I came in, we were losing 750,000 jobs a month, and the economy was contracting at about 6 percent, which is just a huge contraction. And that was happening at every level. That was happening in terms of individual consumers because either they were losing their jobs or they were worried about maybe losing a job, they had seen their home values plummet, et cetera. So everybody pulled back on spending. All right? People would say, you know what, I better cut out the—that dinner out or maybe I'm not going—I'm going to cancel my gym membership or—everybody was doing some belt tightening, either because they had seen their 401(k) drop or they had lost their job or some reason. All right?

Businesses, then they're starting to say, you know what, I'm losing consumer—customers, because the gym membership just got canceled, so suddenly, I've seen a 5-percent drop in the number of customers I have; or if you make widgets, suddenly you're supplying an auto company and the auto company says, you know what, people aren't buying new cars right now. So that demand was going down.

All this meant that the State and the local governments—suddenly, their revenues are dropping because most of their revenues are based on things like sales taxes or property taxes that were all going down.

So what you have is, suddenly, what's called a negative cycle, where everybody's worried about the recession, so they pull back, which means that businesses pull back, which means they lay off people, which makes them more worried, and they pull back. And pretty soon you've got a vicious cycle, where the economy just keeps on shrinking and shrinking with no end in sight.

So the job of the Recovery Act was to essentially step in and say, you know what, this is an emergency, so we're going to plug that hole in demand in the economy temporarily so that everybody kind of settles down.

So we sent—about $250 billion, about a third of that Recovery Act was in the form of tax cuts to all of you. You may not have noticed it because it just went into your weekly paycheck. But everybody here—I won't say everybody, because if you're really rich, you might not have gotten one—[*laughter*]—but 95 percent of workers got a tax cut last year.

So what that meant was even though you had seen your 401(k) go down or maybe you were a small-business owner and you were tightening your belt, you had a little bit of extra money to cushion the blow. And that meant you were spending those dollars and circulating those into the economy. All right? So that was about a third of it.

About a third of it was help to States and local governments so that they could plug their budget holes. So, for example, Jim Doyle here, I think, will testify, had we not provided this Federal aid, the States would have had to cut much more severely police officers, teachers, firefighters, and so forth. Now, not only is that bad in terms of people then not getting services and being less safe or kids not—having a larger class sizes or all those things, but obviously, when those people lose their jobs, they can't spend money buying a new car or buying clothes or buying the computer for their kids. So it was—it put the States and local governments in a better position to kind of sustain themselves.

And then the last third of it was infrastructure and long-term investments. So, for example, we've got more road projects going on here in Wisconsin and around the country than at any time since—[*applause*]—road projects, sewer projects, a whole bunch of deferred stuff that needed to be done. But we also looked to the future, and we said, let's invest in clean energy, let's invest in research and development, let's invest in broadband lines to link rural communities with—who don't have broadband lines, so they can be part of the global economy. All those infrastructure investments and R&D investments not only put to—people back to work short term to help plug that hole that had been created, but it also lays the foundation for long-term economic growth. So that here in Wisconsin, there may be some roads that not only were repaired, but also were suddenly linked up to create a new industrial park that would facilitate long-term economic development beyond this immediate crisis.

So those were the things that we did through the Recovery Act. Now, every economist who's looked at it has said that the recovery did its job. It put a brake on the collapse of the economy. We avoided a great depression. We are now growing again. The problem is, number one, it's hard to argue sometimes, things would have been a lot worse. Right? So people kind of say, yes, but unemployment's still at 9.6. Yes, but it's not 12 or 13 or 15. People say, well, the stock market didn't fully recover. Yes, but it's recovered more than people expected last year.

So part of the challenge in delivering this message about all that the Recovery Act accomplished is that things are still tough, they just aren't as bad as they could have been. They could have been a catastrophe. In that sense, it worked.

Now, the other reason that it has been—it has generated some controversy is, for example, I just pointed out the fact that 95 percent of you got a tax cut, and most of you didn't know it. Most of you didn't know it. Now, the reason you didn't know it was because it turns out that economists will tell you, if you get—if you give that tax break to people each time they get a paycheck, as opposed to in one lump sum, then they're more likely to spend it, and that is a better way to stimulate the economy. It wasn't a good way to advertise the tax cut. So if I had been just thinking politics, I would have sent you one big check with my picture on it—[*laughter*]—and said, "Here's your tax cut."

In terms of infrastructure, it turns out the way we structured this—because we knew this was such a bad recession that 2010 would still be pretty bad, even though it was better than 2009—we structured it so that not all the money was spent in 2009; some of it was spent this year. So a lot of the road projects you're now seeing are part of the Recovery Act we passed last year, but last year, everybody was looking around saying, how come we haven't created more jobs yet? But we structured it because we knew that we didn't want it all to be front-loaded and not have anything—and have it run out too quick.

Now, here's the last point I want to make: Having said all that, I'm still not satisfied with where we're at. We're growing at about 2.5, 3 percent growth. We need to be growing at 4 percent or 5 percent. So we've—there are still more things we can do. I mentioned a couple of them.

We should pass a bill that helps small businesses get more loans. If we can help the big banks, then we should certainly be able to help small-business lending. And a lot of small businesses are still having trouble getting credit.

We've done some work on that, but we can do more.

I think that we could spur more economic development. Here's one idea, just an example, something that we've been promoting, but hasn't passed through Congress yet: Everybody would benefit from more energy efficiency in their home. The problem—and everybody knows that. I mean, the truth is—I was back home in Chicago the other day—it's nice when you're in your own house and—I mean, the White House is nice, don't get me wrong, but—[*laughter*]—you know, you just like kind of tooling around your own place and seeing how the garden's doing and looking in the basement, seeing what kind of stuff needs to get done. But everybody—every homeowner here, if you haven't already done it, you could probably retrofit your home and save 10, 15, 20 percent on your electricity and your heating bills.

But the problem is, a lot of people don't have cash right now to make the investments. So what we've said is, why don't we give everybody a tax credit to retrofit their homes. That will help Home Depots and Lowe's, where you're buying the insulation or the new windows. That will help a lot of these small construction companies that have been out of work—they were doing remodeling on homes, and now that business isn't there—give them a little bit of business. All that would help stimulate the economy.

You could, with a relatively small investment, help put people back to work, and by the way, we could save on our energy bills and reduce the amount of greenhouse gases we're sending into the atmosphere and—so it's a win-win-win situation.

But the—we haven't been able to get, particularly, my Republican friends on the other side of the aisle to move on this. So I'm going to make—I know this is a long question, but it was—long answer, but it was an important question. I see you, Reggie. Reggie's saying I'm going to have to go soon, but—[*laughter*].

Let me make one last point, and that is about the spending issue. People, I think, have a very real and legitimate concern that after having spent $700 billion on the Recovery Act, after having intervened with the autos and had to deal with the banks—even though, by the way, the banks will have paid back all this money and the auto companies are now up and running—GM and Chrysler—and if we hadn't intervened, they would have collapsed and all those folks would have lost their jobs—but the fact is, is that everybody looks at this, and they start saying, you know what, that looks like just a lot of money going out there. The debt's getting bigger, the deficit's getting bigger. How do we get Government spending under control?

And that's a legitimate question. And whether you're a Democrat, an Independent, or a Republican, all of us should be worried about the fact that we have been running the credit card on—in the name of future generations. And somebody's going to have to pay that back. And by the way, when we borrow all that money, we have to pay interest on that to other countries and other investors. So we've got to get our debt and our deficits under control.

Here's the thing: The steps we took—the emergency steps that we took added, let's say, a trillion dollars to our debt. That's with a "t," that's serious money. But our structural deficit—and what that means is the amount of money that we're paying out versus the amount of money we're taking in, the gap between what we're spending and how much money we have—has been out of whack for years now. That's why I inherited a $1.3 trillion deficit.

Our big problem is not the emergency steps we took last year. Our big problem is the fact that when you add in what's happening with Medicare, what's happening with Social Security, the population is aging, when you add all those things in, if we don't change how we do business medium and long term, then that's going to be our big problem.

So we've got a tough job, but I think it's a job that we can accomplish. And that is, we stimulated the economy, we got it moving again, it's growing again; we now have to, in a gradual way, reduce spending, particularly on those big-ticket items, but do so in a way that doesn't hurt people. And that is a challenge.

That's why I've set up a fiscal commission to take a look and figure out how are we going to reorder our priorities so that we're spending the same—we're not spending any more than we're

taking in, but we're doing it in a way that doesn't hurt the economy and doesn't hurt ordinary people. And that's going to be our project for the next couple of years. All right? But everybody's going to have to be patient because we're not going to be able to change that overnight.

All right, I'm going to take—thank you for the question, though. That was very helpful.

All right, I guess it's a lady's turn. Okay. I'm going to call on that young lady right there, in the white T-shirt. Right. Right there.

Job Creation/Education/Infrastructure/Health Care/Research and Development/Trade

Q. One man cannot create this country again the way it needs to be built, so we as a nation need to work together.

The President. Right.

Q. What are we doing as a nation to bring jobs back into this country that have left so that we the people can give you the resources that you need to do the job you need to do?

The President. Well, it's a great question. Well, this actually connects to the previous question, because I was talking about what we were doing for the emergency and what we were doing for the local economy. But obviously, now we live in a global economy, so we've got to compete with other countries like we've never had to compete before.

It used to be that because you didn't have an Internet and you didn't have jet planes and—if somebody made something in China, they couldn't get it here fast enough to sell it, or it was too expensive to ship. And so basically, we had a protected market, and we—whatever was made here, we could sell here. Now it's a global market.

Some of that we can't stop. I mean, that's just technology; the world has shrunk. We've got to be more competitive. And what that means is our workers have to be better trained than we've ever been, which means we've got to make sure our education system is the best in the world and that our kids are going to get secondary school and community college and university educations.

So to—back to that gentleman's question up there—people may not have known, but this Recovery Act was also the biggest investment that we've ever made in education in our history. We—at the Federal level, we helped universities and community colleges to create new labs and set up a better infrastructure.

And as part of the health care bill—a lot of people don't know this—that as part of the health care bill, we also had an education bill in there. It's just the health care bill was getting so much attention, people miss the fact that we changed the rules so that the way previously the student loan program was working, it would go through a bank or a financial institution, and they took out billions of dollars of profits, even though the loan was guaranteed so they weren't taking any risk. So we said, well, if the Government's guaranteeing this loan, why are we going through a bank? Let's just give it directly to the student. We'll take that money to reduce the cost of the loan.

So all those steps are critical to bring jobs back here, because companies will come to where they've got the most highly skilled workforce. That's point number one.

Second thing we've got to do is infrastructure, what I just mentioned. If we've got a third-class infrastructure, it's hard for us to have a first-class economy. So we've got to upgrade our infrastructure. And I don't just mean the old infrastructure, like roads. I mean new infrastructure, like broadband and wireless and what are we doing in terms of making our electricity grid reliable and efficient. Those are all investments that we make that help bring more jobs back to places like Racine. That's the second thing.

Third thing we've got to do is we've got to get control of our health care costs. Part of the reason we did health care reform—[*applause*]—a lot of the reason to do health care reform was because it was the right thing to do. I was tired of hearing stories about parents who were worried about whether they could get health care for their kids or somebody with a preexisting condition who wasn't able to get insurance because they were discriminated against.

But part of it was it's a huge burden on businesses. The costs for businesses of health care have been going up and up and up. And what

we're doing in health care reform is trying to control the costs of health care so that we're improving quality but people are getting a better bang for their health care dollar. That helps make our businesses more competitive.

And then we've got to put more money into research and development, because ultimately, the jobs that are being created here are going to be created by small businesses, by startups, by entrepreneurs who've got a new idea. And we've got to make sure that we're investing in research on things like clean energy. So that's another aspect of it.

Couple other elements: In terms of our tax structure, one of the things that we've done—one of the things we've proposed was eliminating the capital gains tax for small businesses, because small businesses create businesses—or create jobs. Startups create jobs. So there are things we can do with the tax structure that encourages more job creation.

The last thing I want to talk about is trade, because I think a lot of people focus on trade, and they say, you know what, that's been the thing that has driven so many jobs away. It is absolutely true that a lot of our manufacturing left to go to China and other low-wage countries because—and a lot of these were U.S. companies, by the way, but they took their operations over there, and then they shipped the goods back.

And so we've got to make sure that the countries we're trading with are being fair. I believe in free trade. I think we can compete with anybody in the world. We've got the best workers in the world. We've got the best universities in the world. We've got the best ideas in the world. We can sell to anybody. And I want to expand our exports. I want to be able to sell products from Wisconsin all around the world. All right?

But that means things have to be fair. So, for example, if China has a currency that's undervalued, that makes our exports more expensive, it makes their imports cheaper. So we've been putting pressure on them to say, you know what, let's make sure that we're not favoring one side or the other in this trade deal. If it turns out that there's a country where they're selling cars here in the United States but we can't sell cars there, that's a problem.

So we're—we want to enter into trade arrangements with other countries, but we want to make sure that there's a quid pro quo, that if we open up our markets, they're also opening up theirs. And that's got to be a top priority. All right?

Okay. Let me—I've only got time for one more question. I—only got time for one. I'm going to call on this young man right here, since he's right in front—although it looks like there are two of them. [*Laughter*] The other guy just sprung up. Did you see that? [*Laughter*] All right, go ahead.

Postsecondary Education

Q. My name is Gerald.

Q. And I am Spencer.

The President. I think they've practiced this. [*Laughter*]

Q. All the way here.

Q. We go to the Prairie School here in Racine.

Q. We hope to go to college one day soon and——

Q. ——we were wondering about student loans.

The President. Well, you guys—you were so busy practicing your question, you didn't hear that I answered it over here. [*Laughter*] I'm teasing you. What grade are you guys in?

Q. Seventh.

The President. You're in seventh grade? The—well, first of all, you guys are very well-spoken young men, so very impressive.

Q. Thank you.

Q. Thank you.

The President. And I want everybody to note the attitude here, which is, we want all our young people to just take for granted they're going to college. We want high expectations for our young people.

So here was the answer. What we're doing is we're putting more money into student loans. We're also talking to universities and colleges about how they can control their costs so that tuition's not so expensive. And we need to make sure that colleges and universities are doing their part. They can't just keep on jacking up

rates 15 percent a year and then expect Uncle Sam to come in and help students pay more and more money. So they've got to control their costs as well.

But if you guys do well in school, my goal is to make sure that, through loans and grants, you are going to be able to afford to go to college. And—because we need to have the highest—I want us to have the highest college graduation rate of any country in the world.

And by the way, I want to make clear, this doesn't just mean a 4-year college. Community colleges are doing great work. And one of the things that we're trying to do is to work with community colleges so that they can be matched up with businesses and employers to help set up—sometimes it might just be a 1-year training program, sometimes it might just be a 6-month training program—that would help workers train for jobs that are actually there, that actually exist so that when you go through that program, you know that there's a job there for you.

And part of the thing that you guys will discover—your generation, but it's already true for the generation that's now entering into the workforce—it used to be you went to work at one job and you might keep that job for 30 years. Now, because the economy moves so fast, you might go into a whole—one industry, and the industry might disappear 10 years later, and you've got to retrain for a new industry.

And so not only do we want to make sure that you have the money you need for college in those first 4 years, or first 2 if you're going to community college, but you have the opportunity for lifelong learning so that a worker who is 35 or 40 wants to suddenly make a career change, or suddenly, they've got new computers and equipment in their plant and they've got to retrain, that they've got an opportunity to get that training so that they can keep on upgrading their skills, get more money, get a higher paycheck, get more job security.

That's what we're fighting for. We're fighting for you.

Thank you so much, everybody. Great question. Appreciate you guys. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:24 p.m. at Memorial Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Bishop Darrell L. Hines, pastor and founder, Christian Faith Fellowship Church in Milwaukee, WI; Justine Boerger, student, William Horlick High School, Racine, WI; House Minority Leader John A. Boehner; Rep. Joseph L. Barton; and Personal Aide to the President Reginald L. Love.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of General David H. Petraeus as Commander of the NATO International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan

June 30, 2010

I am extremely grateful to the Senate for acting so quickly to confirm General Petraeus to lead our military effort in Afghanistan. General Petraeus is a pivotal part of our effort to succeed in Afghanistan, and in our broader effort to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida, and he has my full confidence. The Senate's quick action and General Petraeus's unrivaled experience will ensure we do not miss a beat in our strategy to break the Taliban's momentum and build Afghan capacity.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Financial Regulatory Reform and Consumer Protection Legislation

June 30, 2010

Today's House vote in favor of Wall Street reform puts us on the cusp of passing a law that will give consumers greater protection and safeguard our economy against future financial crises. It has been a long fight against the defenders of the status quo on Wall Street, but today's vote is a victory for every American who has been affected by the recklessness and irresponsibility that led to the loss of millions of jobs and trillions in wealth.

I want to thank Chairman Dodd and Chairman Frank for their tireless commitment to passing the most far reaching reform since the Great Depression. It will put in place the strongest consumer financial protections in history, curbing abuses by banks, mortgage and credit card companies and giving their customers the information they need to make responsible financial decisions. It will make our financial system more transparent, so that complex transactions that escaped scrutiny in the past will now be done in the light of day. And it will put an end to the idea that any financial firm is too big to fail, and therefore entitled to taxpayer bailouts. The law also will put in place the Volcker rule so that banks don't put the savings of millions of Americans at risk.

America's economic future depends on a thriving financial sector to provide the capital families require to meet their needs and businesses must have to grow and hire. But, as we have seen, it also must operate within a sensible framework of rules and regulations adequate to hold financial institutions accountable. The comprehensive law the House passed today achieves this goal, and I look forward to passage in the Senate and signing the bill into law.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 4173.

Appendix A—Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this book.

January 1

In the morning, in Kailua, HI, the President had an intelligence briefing.

January 2

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

January 3

In the evening, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Sasha and Malia returned to Washington, DC, arriving the following morning.

January 4

In the afternoon, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Adviser John O. Brennan to discuss the reviews of terrorist watch-listing procedures and airport security detection capabilities and counterterrorism efforts.

January 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, they had an economic briefing. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Situation Room, the President and Vice President Biden met with Federal agency and department heads and national security advisers to discuss the reviews of terrorist watch list procedures and airport security detection capabilities, intelligence sharing improvements, and counterterrorism efforts. Later, in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates. Then, also in the Oval Office, they met with House of Representatives and Senate Democratic leaders.

January 6

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, he had separate telephone conversations with Sens. Christopher J. Dodd and Byron L. Dorgan to discuss their decisions to not seek reelection.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President met with Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi, House Committee on Energy and Commerce Chairman Henry A. Waxman, House Committee on Ways and Means Chairman Charles B. Rangel, House Committee on Education and Labor Chairman George Miller, and House Committee on Rules Chairman Louise McIntosh Slaughter.

January 7

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with former President William J. Clinton. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Later in the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with Sens. Max S. Baucus and Christopher J. Dodd.

January 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

January 9

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

January 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with labor leaders. Later, in the Cabinet Room, he met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Deputy Secretary of Defense William J. Lynn III, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and combatant commanders.

In the evening, in the Blue Room, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a dinner for Secretary Gates and his wife Becky, Deputy Secretary Lynn and his wife Mary Murphy, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and combatant commanders and their spouses, and six wounded U.S. military personnel.

January 12

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Wilmington, DE, where they attended funeral services for Catherine E. "Jean" Finnegan Biden, mother of Vice President Joe Biden.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with the U.S. Ladies Professional Golf Association team. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

Later in the afternoon, the President was informed of the earthquake in Haiti.

In the evening, national security staff members briefed the President on the situation in Haiti and disaster response and relief efforts.

January 13

In the morning, the President received several updates from National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., and the Department of Homeland Security National Operations Center on the situation in Haiti and disaster response, recovery, and relief efforts following the January 12 earthquake. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, they met with Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid.

Later in the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Rajiv J. Shah to discuss disaster response and recovery efforts in Haiti. Later, in the Cabinet Room, he and Vice President Biden met with House of Representatives and Senate Democratic leaders.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with U.S. Ambassador to Haiti Kenneth H. Merten, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil, Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada, President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico, and President Michelle Bachelet Jeria of Chile to discuss international disaster response, recovery, and relief efforts in Haiti and to express his condolences to Secretary-General Ban and President Lula for United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti personnel killed during the earthquake.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with former President George W. Bush to ask him if he would help former President William J. Clinton in coordinating long-term relief, recovery, and fundraising efforts for Haiti. Later, in the Situation Room, he and Vice President Biden met with Government and military officials to discuss U.S. disaster response efforts in Haiti.

January 14

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Vice President Biden. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he joined in a meeting between Vice President Biden and Vice President Adil Abd

Al-Mahdi of Iraq. Then, in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with President Leonel Fernandez Reyna of the Dominican Republic to thank him for his nation's help in evacuating U.S. citizens from Haiti after the January 12 earthquake and for allowing his nation to act as a staging area for rescue teams and relief supplies headed to Haiti and to hear President Fernandez's assessment of the situation in Haiti after his visit to Port-au-Prince.

January 15

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Rene Garcia Preval of Haiti to discuss the situation in Haiti and disaster response, recovery, and relief efforts following the January 12 earthquake. Later, in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President had an economic briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

January 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with former Presidents William J. Clinton and George W. Bush to discuss coordinating long-term relief, recovery, and fundraising efforts for Haiti.

January 17

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Boston, MA. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

January 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers. Later, at So Others Might Eat (SOME) soup kitchen, he, Mrs. Obama, their daughters Sasha and Malia, and his mother-in-law Marian Robinson, served lunch and visited with guests and volunteers.

In the afternoon, at American Red Cross headquarters, the President and Mrs. Obama visited the disaster operations center, where they met with and made remarks to staff members and volunteers.

January 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. He then traveled to Falls Church, VA, where, at Graham Road Elementary School, he and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan met with sixth grade students. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with Sen. George V. Voinovich.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Vice President Joe Biden. Then, in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Sen. Christopher J. Dodd.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Senator-elect Scott P. Brown of Massachusetts to congratulate him on his election victory and to discuss economic strengthening efforts. He then had a telephone conversation with Massachusetts Attorney General Martha M. Coakley to thank her for running for the U.S. Senate.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jeffrey R. Moreland to be Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors.

The President announced his intention to nominate Dana K. Bilyeu and Michael D. Kennedy to be members of the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate JoAnn Lynn Balzer and Cynthia Chavez Lamar to be members of the Board of Trustees of the Institute of American Indian and Alaska Native Culture and Arts Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daryl J. Boness to be chairman of the Marine Mammal Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael F. Tillman to be a member of the Marine Mammal Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate the following individuals to be members of the National Museum and Library Services Board and the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities:

John Coppola;
Carla D. Hayden;
Winston Tabb; and
Robert Wedgeworth.

The President announced his intention to nominate Hernan D. Vera to be a member of the Board of Directors of the State Justice Institute.

The President announced his intention to appoint Steven Gunderson as a member of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships.

The President announced that he has appointed Edward Drusina as U.S. Commissioner of the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico.

January 20

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

Later, in the Roosevelt Room, the President participated in an interview with George Stephanopoulos of ABC News.

The President announced his intention to nominate Katherine G. Hammack to be Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations and Environment.

The President announced his intention to nominate Theodore Sedgwick to be Ambassador to Slovakia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Dennis P. Walsh to be Chairman of the Special Panel on Appeals.

The President announced his intention to nominate Marsha J. Rabiteau to be a member of the Board of Directors of the State Justice Institute.

The President announced his intention to nominate Earl F. Weener to be a member of the National Transportation Safety Board.

The President announced that he has nominated Stephanie A. Finley to be U.S. attorney for the Western District of Louisiana.

The President announced that he has nominated R. Booth Goodwin II to be U.S. attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia.

The President announced that he has nominated David J. Hale to be U.S. attorney for the Western District of Kentucky.

The President announced that he has nominated Kerry B. Harvey to be U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky.

The President announced that he has nominated Loretta E. Lynch to be U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York.

The President announced that he has nominated Jon E. DeGuilio to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Indiana.

The President announced that he has nominated Audrey Goldstein Fleissig to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri.

The President announced that he has nominated Lucy Haeran Koh to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California.

The President announced that he has nominated Jane E. Magnus-Stinson and Tanya Walton Pratt to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana.

The President announced that he has nominated Christopher T. Hoye to be U.S. marshal for the District of Nevada.

The President announced that he has nominated Gervin Kazumi Miyamoto to be U.S. marshal for the District of Hawaii.

The President announced that he has nominated Peter C. Munoz to be U.S. marshal for the Western District of Michigan.

The President announced that he has nominated Kelly M. Nesbit to be U.S. marshal for the Western District of North Carolina.

The President announced that he has nominated Brian T. Underwood to be U.S. marshal for the District of Idaho.

January 21

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board Chairman Paul A. Volcker.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

January 22

In the morning, the President traveled to Elyria, OH, where he toured EMC Precision Machining and met with employees.

In the afternoon, at Smitty's Place bar and restaurant, the President had lunch and visited with patrons. Then, at Lorain County Community College, he toured the wind turbine and manufacturing lab facilities and the Nord Advanced Technologies Center. Later, at Riddell sporting goods main office and factory, he toured the factory and met with employees.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

January 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

January 24

The President declared an emergency in Arizona and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm beginning on January 20 and continuing.

January 25

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Vice President Joe Biden. Later, in the State Dining Room, he participated in an interview with Diane Sawyer of ABC's "World News with Diane Sawyer." Then, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Kurdistan Regional Government President Masoud Barzani.

The President announced his intention to nominate Elisabeth A. Hagen to be Under Secretary for Food Safety at the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michele M. Leonhart to be Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration.

January 26

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President had lunch with business leaders. He then had a telephone conversation with Head Coach John Calipari and members of the University of Kentucky men's basketball team to thank them for raising over $1 million to help with the earthquake relief efforts in Haiti. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Krakow, Poland, to attend the commemoration of the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz on January 27:

Julius M. Genachowski (head of delegation);
Lee A. Feinstein;
Hannah Rosenthal;
Susan S. Sher;
Roman R. Kent;
Charlene P. Schiff; and
Edwarda Sternberg-Powidzki.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Tegucigalpa, Honduras, to attend the inauguration of Porfirio Lobo Sosa as President of Honduras on January 27:

Arturo A. Valenzuela (head of delegation);
Hugo Llorens;
Jose W. Fernandez; and
Craig A. Kelly.

January 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia to thank him for his work and leadership during new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) negotiations and discuss Russia-U.S. relations. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

January 28

In the morning, the President traveled to MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, FL, arriving in the afternoon, where he was joined by Vice President Joe Biden.

Later in the afternoon, the President and Vice President Biden toured a maintenance hangar and met with servicemembers working on a KC–135 Stratotanker. Later, they traveled to the University of Tampa Bob Martinez Sports Center. He then returned to Washington, DC.

January 29

In the morning, in the Cabinet Room, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with members of the Cabinet. Later, he traveled to Baltimore, MD, where he toured Chesapeake Machine Company. He then traveled to the Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

The President announced his intention to nominate Larry Robinson to be Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Management at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jeffrey A. Lane to be Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Paul S. Miller and Dennis J. Toner to be Governors of the Board of Governors of the U.S. Postal Service.

The President announced his intention to nominate J. Patricia Wilson Smoot to be a Commissioner of the U.S. Parole Commission at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lana Pollack to be a Commissioner of the International Joint Commission at the Department of State.

January 30

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with former President George H.W. Bush.

In the afternoon, at the Verizon Center, the President and Vice President Joe Biden attended a Georgetown University-Duke University men's basketball game, and during the second half, he talked with CBS announcers Clark Kellogg and Verne Lundquist and provided some television commentary of the game.

The President declared an emergency in Oklahoma and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm beginning on January 28 and continuing.

February 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then had a telephone conversation with King Abdullah II of Jordan to discuss Middle East peace efforts, U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell's most recent trip to the Middle East, and Jordan-U.S. relations. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with President-elect Sebastian Pinera Echenique of Chile to congratulate him on his January 17 election victory and discuss Chile-U.S. relations. He then joined a meeting between Vice President Joe Biden and Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi of Iraq. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

February 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, he traveled to Nashua, NH, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President toured ARC Energy LLC. He then traveled to Nashua High School North. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President declared a major disaster in North Carolina and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms and flooding from December 18 through 25, 2009.

February 3

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Vice President Biden. Later, in the Cabinet Room, he and Vice President Biden led a Cabinet-level exercise to discuss preparedness, crisis response, and incident management procedures for the upcoming 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with Illinois Democratic senatorial candidate Alexi Giannoulias and Gov. Patrick J. Quinn III of Illinois to congratulate them on their primary election victories.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Committee for the Preservation of the White House:

Pamela Bass-Bookey;
Lonnie Bunch;
Robert G. Clark;
Thelma Golden;
Richard H. Jenrette;
Lew Manilow;
Richard C. Nylander;
Linda Johnson Rice;
Paul Schimmel;
Michael S. Smith;
Beth White; and
John Wilmerding.

February 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President had lunch with business leaders. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid, Sen. Richard J. Durbin, and Rep. Steny H. Hoyer. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

The President announced his intention to nominate Richard M. Lobo to be Director of the International Broadcasting Bureau.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lowell Junkins to be Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Federal Agricultural Mortgage Corporation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sara L. Faivre-Davis and Myles Watts to be members of the Board of Directors of the Federal Agricultural Mortgage Corporation.

The President announced that he has nominated David Fein to be U.S. attorney for the District of Connecticut.

The President announced that he has nominated Timothy Q. Purdon to be U.S. attorney for the District of North Dakota.

The President announced that he has nominated Loren Carl to be U.S. marshal for the Eastern District of Kentucky.

The President announced that he has nominated Kerry Forestal to be U.S. marshal for the Southern District of Indiana.

The President announced that he has nominated Gerald S. Holt to be U.S. marshal for the Western District of Virginia.

The President announced that he has nominated Clifton T. Massanelli to be U.S. marshal for the Eastern District of Arkansas.

The President announced that he has nominated Scott J. Parker to be U.S. marshal for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

The President announced that he has nominated Elizabeth Erny Foote to be a judge on

the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Louisiana.

The President announced that he has nominated Mark A. Goldsmith to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan.

The President announced that he has nominated Marc Thomas Treadwell to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Georgia.

The President announced that he has nominated Josephine Staton Tucker to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

The President announced his intention to appoint James H. Douglas and Christine O. Gregoire as Cochairs of the Council of Governors.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Council of Governors:

Janice K. Brewer;
Luis G. Fortuno;
C. Bradford Henry;
Robert F. McDonnell;
Jeremiah W. "Jay" Nixon;
Martin J. O'Malley;
Beverly Eaves Perdue; and
M. Michael Rounds.

February 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an economic briefing followed by an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Langley, VA. He then returned to Washington, DC.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Lanham, MD. Later, he returned to Washington, DC. Then, in the East Room, he met with the 2009 Little League World Series champion Park View Little League team of Chula Vista, CA.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Brian Cowen of Ireland to the White House on March 17.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities:

Chuck Close;
Fred Goldring;
Sheila Johnson;
Pamela Joyner;
Jhumpa Lahiri; and
Ken Solomon.

The President declared a major disaster in New Jersey and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a snowstorm on December 19 and 20, 2009.

February 6

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

February 7

In the evening, the President participated in an interview with Katie Couric of the "CBS Evening News with Katie Couric." Later, he and Mrs. Obama hosted a Super Bowl party for Members of Congress, Cabinet members, and U.S. military personnel wounded in Afghanistan and Iraq and their families.

February 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, he had a telephone conversation with New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees to congratulate him on the team's Super Bowl victory.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with Secretary of the Interior Kenneth L. Salazar.

February 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Vice President Biden. Later, in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

February 10

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with African American leaders to discuss the economy and the current job situation.

February 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with President-elect Viktor Yanukovych of Ukraine to congratulate him on his February 7 election victory and discuss Ukraine-U.S. relations. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, he had a telephone conversation with President-elect Laura Chinchilla of Costa Rica to congratulate her on her February 7 election victory and discuss Costa Rica-U.S. relations.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he signed the 2010 Economic Report of the President. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with 2009 and 2010 March of Dimes ambassadors Katelyn Hall and Joshua Hoffman.

February 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa to congratulate him on the 20th anniversary of his release from prison. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. He then met with his senior advisers.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Sa'ad al-Din al-Hariri of Lebanon.

In the afternoon, in the Diplomatic Reception Room, the President taped a Lunar New Year's message for later broadcast.

February 13

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced that he has appointed Rashad Hussain as U.S. Special Envoy to the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

February 14

In the afternoon, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Sasha and Malia traveled to Camp David, MD.

In the evening, the President, Mrs. Obama and their daughters returned to Washington, DC.

February 15

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

February 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then traveled to Lanham, MD, where he toured a job training center at the IBEW Local 26 headquarters. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had an economic briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Shaun L.S. Donovan.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Croatia to attend the inauguration of President-elect Ivo Josipovic on February 18: Jacob J. Lew (head of delegation); and James B. Foley.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert Stephen Ford to be Ambassador to Syria.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jonathan Andrew Hatfield to be Inspector General of the Corporation for National and Community Service.

The President declared a major disaster in Virginia and ordered Federal aid to supplement the Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm and

snowstorm from December 18 through 20, 2009.

February 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Later, in the Situation Room, he and Vice President Biden met with their national security team to discuss the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Then, in the Private Dining Room, he had lunch with King Juan Carlos I of Spain. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, U.S. Forces—Iraq, and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Christopher R. Hill.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers.

February 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, they met with National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform Cochairs Erskine B. Bowles and Alan K. Simpson. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with international human rights activists.

Later in the morning, in the Map Room, the President met with Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Denver, CO. While en route aboard Air Force One, Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Adviser John O. Brennan briefed him on the plane crash at an IRS building in Austin, TX.

In the evening, the President traveled to Las Vegas, NV, where, at a private residence, he attended and made remarks at a Democratic National Committee fundraiser.

February 19

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

The President declared a major disaster in Maryland and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm and snowstorm from December 18 through 20, 2009.

February 20

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

February 22

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Gov. Arnold A. Schwarzenegger of California. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Agriculture Thomas J. Vilsack.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis.

February 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Vice President Biden. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with U.S. Trade Representative Ronald Kirk. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

In the evening, in the State Dining Room, the President had dinner with business leaders.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Kiev, Ukraine, to attend the inauguration of President-elect Viktor Yanukovych on February 25:

James L. Jones, Jr. (head of delegation);
John F. Tefft;
Melanne Verveer;
Philip H. Gordon; and

Kristina A. Kvien.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stephen T. Ayers to be Architect of the Capitol.

The President announced his intention to nominate Eduardo M. Ochoa to be Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education at the Department of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate the following individuals to be members of the National Board for Education Sciences at the Department of Education:

Deborah Loewenberg Ball;
Adam Gamoran;
Bridget Terry Long; and
Margaret R. "Peggy" McLeod.

February 24

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a credentialing ceremony for newly appointed Ambassadors. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Commerce Gary F. Locke.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with former Vice President Richard B. Cheney to wish him well in his recovery after suffering a heart attack earlier in the week.

The President announced that he has nominated Goodwin Hon Liu to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

The President announced that he has nominated Robert N. Chatigny to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

The President announced that he has nominated Sharon Johnson Coleman and Gary Scott Feinerman to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

The President announced that he has nominated William J. Martinez to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado.

The President announced that he has nominated John Foster to be U.S. marshal for the Southern District of West Virginia.

The President announced that he has nominated Paul Ward to be U.S. marshal for the District of North Dakota.

The President announced that he has nominated Gary M. Gaskins to be U.S. marshal for the Northern District of West Virginia.

The President announced that he has nominated Laura E. Duffy to be U.S. attorney for the Southern District of California.

The President announced that he has nominated Wifredo A. Ferrer to be U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Florida.

The President announced that he has nominated Alicia Limtiaco to be U.S. attorney for the Districts of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands.

The President announced that he has nominated John B. Stevens, Jr., to be U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Texas.

February 25

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Montevideo, Uruguay, to attend the inauguration of President-elect Jose Mujica on March 1: Hillary Rodham Clinton (head of delegation); David D. Nelson; and Carmen Lomellin.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the National Council on Federal Labor-Management Relations:

Carol A. Bonosaro;
William Dougan;
Michael B. Filler;
John Gage;
David Holway;
Gregory Junemann;
Colleen M. Kelley;
H.T. Nguyen; and
Darryl Perkinson.

The President declared a major disaster in Oklahoma and ordered Federal aid to supple-

ment State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm on December 24 and 25, 2009.

The President declared a major disaster in Nebraska and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms and snowstorm from December 22, 2009, through January 8, 2010.

The President declared a major disaster in Iowa and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm and snowstorm from December 23 through 27, 2009.

February 26

In the morning, Vice President Joe Biden presented the Middle Class Task Force Annual Report to the President. Later, he had a video teleconference with Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom and Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany. Then, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Georgios Andreas Papandreou of Greece to the White House on March 9.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael J. McCord to be Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller).

The President announced his intention to nominate Katherine M. Gehl and Michael J. Warren to be members of the Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

The President announced his intention to appoint William R. Harvey as Chairman of the President's Board of Advisers on Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the President's Board of Advisers on Historically Black Colleges and Universities:

Lawrence S. Bacow;
Evelynn M. Hammonds;
Beverly Wade Hogan;
Edward Lewis;
Ronald Mason, Jr.;
Valerie Mosley;
Willie Pearson, Jr.;
Beverly Daniel Tatum;
Kenneth Tolson; and
David Wilson.

The President announced his intention to appoint David Duong and Marjorie Margolies as members of the Vietnam Education Foundation.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the President's Advisory Committee on the Arts for the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts:

Bruce Bastian;
Colleen Bell;
Charles A. Clarkson;
Lester Coney;
Sylvia Davis;
Jill Goldman;
Howard Gottlieb;
Victor J. Herlinsky, Jr.;
Kaki Hockersmith;
Sharon Hoffman;
Candace Bond McKeever;
Robert Monks;
Wendy Riva;
Cari Sacks; and
Amy K. Singh.

The President announced that he has named the following individuals as members of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform:

David M. Cote;
Ann M. Fudge;
Alice M. Rivlin; and
Andrew L. Stern.

The President declared a major disaster in North Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the areas struck by a severe winter storm from January 20 through 25.

February 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Situation Room, he had a conference call with Deputy National Security Adviser Thomas E. Donilon, U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Rajiv J. Shah, White House Chief of Staff Rahm I. Emanuel, and other Cabinet officials to discuss the earthquake in Chile and the tsunami warnings for Hawaii, Guam, and American Samoa.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with President Michelle Bachelet Jeria of Chile to express his condolences for the loss of life due to the earthquake, commend her on the Chilean Government's disaster response efforts, and offer U.S. assistance.

February 28

In the morning, the President traveled to Bethesda, MD, where, at the National Naval Medical Center, he had his annual physical examination and met with U.S. military personnel wounded in Afghanistan and Iraq. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

March 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office he had an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of Transportation Raymond H. LaHood. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael C. Camunez to be Assistant Secretary for Market Access and Compliance at the Department of Commerce.

March 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Savannah, GA.

In the afternoon, the President toured Savannah Technical College. Later, he had lunch and visited with patrons at Mrs. Wilkes' Dining Room. He then toured Chatham Steel Corporation.

Later, the President toured Meddin Studios. He then returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate James L. Taylor to be Chief Financial Officer at the Department of Labor.

The President announced his intention to appoint Woody N. Peterson as a Commissioner on the District of Columbia Judicial Nomination Commission.

The President declared a major disaster in West Virginia and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm and snowstorm from December 18 through 20, 2009.

March 3

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Disabled American Veterans National Commander Roberto Barrera. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with American Legion Commander Clarence Hill. Then, in the Blue Room, he hosted a reception for Members of Congress to thank them for their efforts to pass statutory pay-as-you-go legislation.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Abdullah Gul of Turkey.

The President announced that he has nominated Scott M. Matheson, Jr., to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit.

The President announced that he has nominated Kenneth J. Gonzales to be U.S. attorney for the District of New Mexico.

The President announced that he has nominated Michael C. Ormsby to be U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Washington.

The President announced that he has nominated Willie R. Stafford III to be U.S. marshal for the Middle District of North Carolina.

The President declared a major disaster in the District of Columbia and ordered Federal aid to supplement the District's recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm and snowstorm from December 18 through 20, 2009.

March 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he stopped by a meeting between Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius and representatives from the Nation's largest health insurance companies.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a bill signing ceremony for H.R. 2935, the Travel Promotion Act of 2009.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with Members of the House of Representatives. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with the leaders of the New Democrat Coalition. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Sen. Charles E. Schumer.

March 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden had an economic briefing.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Arlington, VA, where he toured Opower. He then returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Rene Garcia Preval of Haiti to the White House on March 10.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Santiago, Chile, to attend the inauguration of President-elect Sebastian Pinera Echenique of Chile on March 11: James L. Jones, Jr. (head of delegation); Paul E. Simons; and Russell C. Crandall.

The President announced his intention to nominate David K. Mineta to be Deputy Director for Demand Reduction at the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Recovery Independent Advisory Panel:

Steven Koch;
Chris Sale;
Malcolm K. Sparrow; and
Edward Tufte.

The President declared a major disaster in Oklahoma and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm from January 28 through 30.

March 6

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

March 8

In the morning, the President traveled to Glenside, PA.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert A. Harding to be Assistant Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security/Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration.

The President announced his intention to nominate Cheryl A. LaFleur and Philip D. Moeller to be Commissioners of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lawrence J. Pijeaux, Jr., to be a

member of the National Museum and Library Services Board.

The President declared a major disaster in California and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms, flooding, and debris and mud flows from January 17 through February 6.

March 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with business leaders. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Prime Minister Georgios Andreas Papandreou of Greece. Then, in the Roosevelt Room, he greeted and thanked members of the President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

Later in the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President met with a bipartisan group of Senators to discuss energy policy. Later, in the East Room, the President and Prime Minister Papandreou attended a reception honoring Greek Independence Day.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mimi E. Alemayehou to be Executive Vice President of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Elizabeth A. McGrath to be Deputy Chief Management Officer at the Department of Defense.

The President declared a major disaster in South Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm and snowstorm from December 23 through 27, 2009.

The President declared a major disaster in Kansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms and snowstorms from December 22, 2009, through January 8, 2010.

March 10

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to St. Louis, MO.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced that he has nominated Raymond J. Lohier, Jr., to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

The President announced that he has nominated Thomas E. Delahanty II to be U.S. attorney for the District of Maine.

The President announced that he has nominated Wendy J. Olson to be U.S. attorney for the District of Idaho.

The President declared a major disaster in South Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm from January 20 through 26.

March 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with grassroots leaders of the comprehensive immigration reform movement. Later, in the State Dining Room, he met with members of the Congressional Black Caucus. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with Sens. Charles E. Schumer and Lindsey O. Graham to discuss immigration reform legislation.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Then, in the Family Theater, he and Mrs. Obama hosted a screening of the HBO series "The Pacific."

In the evening, in the State Dining Room, the President met with members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

The President announced his intention to appoint W. James McNerney, Jr., as Chair of the President's Export Council.

The President announced his intention to appoint Ursula M. Burns as Vice Chair of the President's Export Council.

March 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Situation Room, he met with his national security team to discuss the situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In the afternoon, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President met with the President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology.

March 13

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

March 14

The President declared an emergency in North Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area threatened by flooding beginning on February 26 and continuing.

March 15

In the morning, the President traveled to Strongsville, OH, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

March 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Democratic National Committee Chairman Timothy M. Kaine. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

March 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Blue Room, the President participated in an interview with Bret Baier of FOX News.

The President announced that he has nominated Leonard P. Stark to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Delaware.

The President announced that he has nominated Amy Totenberg to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia.

March 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia to inform him that he was postponing his trip to Indonesia.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Kevin M. Rudd of Australia to inform him that he was postponing his trip to Australia.

The President declared a major disaster in Arizona and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms and flooding from January 18 through 22.

March 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, he traveled to Fairfax, VA.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Private Dining Room, he had lunch with Vice President Biden.

March 20

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

March 21

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with former President William J. Clinton to discuss the upcoming House of Representatives vote on health care reform legislation. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he, Vice President Joe Biden, and White House staff members and advisers watched coverage of the House of Representatives vote on health care reform legislation.

March 22

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico, who congratulated him on the passage of health care reform legislation. They also discussed Mexico-U.S. relations and counternarcotics efforts. Later, he had a telephone conversation with King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia to receive his congratulations on the passage of health care reform legislation and discuss Saudi Arabia-U.S. relations.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rafael Moure-Eraso to be Chairperson of the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark A. Griffon to be a member of the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert M. "Skipp" Orr to be U.S. Executive Director of the Asian Development Bank, with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Carl Wieman to be Associate Director for Science at the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

March 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had a meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel.

In the evening, in the Oval Office, the President again met with Prime Minister Netanyahu.

The President declared a major disaster in New Jersey and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm and snowstorm from February 5 through 6.

March 24

In the morning, in the Situation Room, the President met with Sens. John F. Kerry and Richard G. Lugar to discuss the ongoing consultations regarding the expansion of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Sen. Christopher J. Dodd and Rep. Barney Frank to discuss financial regulatory reform.

Later in the morning, the President had a video teleconference with Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom, Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, and President Nicolas Sarkozy of France.

The President declared a major disaster in the District of Columbia and ordered Federal aid to supplement the District's recovery efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms and snowstorms from February 5 through 11.

March 25

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, he traveled to Iowa City, IA, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President visited Prairie Lights Books. He then returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced that he has nominated Robert R. Almonte to be U.S. marshal for the Western District of Texas.

The President announced that he has nominated Dallas S. Neville to be U.S. marshal for the Western District of Wisconsin.

The President announced that he has nominated Frank Leon-Guerrero to be U.S. marshal for the Districts of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands.

The President announced that he has nominated Mary H. Murguia to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

The President announced that he has nominated Melinda L. Haag to be U.S. attorney for the Northern District of California.

The President announced that he has nominated Jerry E. Martin to be U.S. attorney for the Middle District of Tennessee.

The President announced that he has nominated James A. Lewis to be U.S. attorney for the Central District of Illinois.

The President announced that he has nominated Todd E. Edelman and Judith Anne Smith to be associate judges in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

The President declared a major disaster in Maine and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms and flooding from February 23 through March 2.

March 26

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Later, also in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing. He then had a telephone conversation with President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia, in which they reached an agreement on the expansion of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) and agreed to a meeting in Prague, Czech Republic, on April 8 to sign the treaty.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Camp David, MD.

The President announced his intention to nominate Steve A. Linick to be Inspector General of the Federal Housing Finance Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas Hicks to be a Commissioner of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission.

March 27

In the evening, the President traveled to Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, arriving the following evening.

The President announced his intention to recess appoint Jeffrey Goldstein as Under Secretary for Domestic Finance at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to recess appoint Michael F. Mundaca as Assistant Secretary for Tax Policy at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to recess appoint Eric L. Hirschhorn as Under Secretary for Export Administration and head of the Bureau of Industry and Security at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to recess appoint Michael Punke as Deputy U.S. Trade Representative—Geneva Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

The President announced his intention to recess appoint Francisco J. Sanchez as Under Secretary for International Trade at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to recess appoint Islam A. Siddiqui as Chief Agricultural Negotiator at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

The President announced his intention to recess appoint Alan D. Bersin as Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to recess appoint Jill Long Thompson as a member of the Farm Credit Administration Board.

The President announced his intention to recess appoint Rafael Borras as Under Secretary for Management at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to recess appoint Craig Becker and Mark G. Pearce as members of the National Labor Relations Board.

The President announced his intention to recess appoint Jacqueline A. Berrien as Chair of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

The President announced his intention to recess appoint Chai R. Feldblum and Victoria A. Lipnic as Commissioners of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

The President announced his intention to recess appoint P. David Lopez as General Counsel of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

March 28

In the evening, upon arrival at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, the President traveled to Kabul, Afghanistan, where, at the Presidential Palace, he met with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan. Later, he met with President Karzai and his Cabinet. He then had dinner with President Karzai and his Cabinet.

Later in the evening, the President returned to Bagram Airfield. Later, he met with

Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan, and U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl W. Eikenberry.

March 29

In the morning, the President visited a medical clinic, where he met with wounded U.S. military personnel. Then, at Dragon Mess Hall, he met with U.S. military personnel. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

In the afternoon, in the Rose Garden and the Colonnade, the President participated in an interview with Matt Lauer of NBC's "Today" program. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a credentialing ceremony for newly appointed Ambassadors.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia to offer his condolences for the loss of life and injuries due to the terrorist attack in Moscow.

In the evening, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President and Mrs. Obama held a Seder to mark the beginning of Passover.

The President announced his intention to nominate Teresa Takai to be Assistant Secretary for Networks and Information Integration at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate S. Leslie Ireland to be Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis at the Department of the Treasury.

The President declared a major disaster in West Virginia and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, mudslides, and landslides beginning on March 12 and continuing.

The President declared a major disaster in Rhode Island and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding beginning on March 12 and continuing.

The President declared a major disaster in New Hampshire and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm from February 23 through March 3.

The President declared a major disaster in Massachusetts and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding beginning on March 12 and continuing.

March 30

Later, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. He then traveled to Alexandria, VA.

Later in the morning, the President returned to Washington, DC.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Then, in the Private Dining Room, he had lunch with Vice President Biden. Later, in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with President Nicolas Sarkozy of France.

In the evening, in the Private Residence, the President and Mrs. Obama had dinner with President Sarkozy and his wife Carla Bruni-Sarkozy.

The President declared an emergency in Rhode Island and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding beginning on March 12 and continuing.

March 31

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then traveled to Joint Base Andrews, MD. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with the family of farm labor and civil rights leader Cesar E. Chavez and Arturo S. Rodriguez, president, and Dolores C. Huerta, cofounder, United Farm Workers of America and signed a proclamation designating March 31 as Cesar Chavez Day.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea to offer his support following the sinking of the South Korean Navy patrol ship *Cheonan* on March 26 and express his condolences for the loss of life due to the sinking of

the ship and the ensuing rescue efforts, and to discuss the upcoming Global Nuclear Security Summit.

The President declared a major disaster in Delaware and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms and snowstorms from February 5 through 11.

April 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Portland, ME. Later, he traveled to Framingham, MA, where, at the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, he was briefed by Gov. Deval L. Patrick of Massachusetts and local officials on the flooding in the Northeast and disaster response efforts. He then met with workers and volunteers coordinating the response efforts.

In the evening, the President traveled to Boston, MA. Later, he returned to Washington, DC. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with President Hu Jintao of China to discuss the upcoming Global Nuclear Security Summit and China-U.S. relations.

April 2

In the morning, the President traveled to Charlotte, NC.

In the afternoon, the President toured Celgard, LLC's manufacturing facilities. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

April 3

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

April 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Later, on the South Lawn, he read "Green Eggs and Ham" to children participating in the White House Easter egg roll. Then, at the White House basketball and tennis courts, he played basketball with children and visited with them and their parents.

In the afternoon, at Nationals Park, the President threw out the ceremonial first pitch to open the game between the Washington Nationals and Philadelphia Phillies. He then watched a portion of the game.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Gov. Joseph Manchin III of West Virginia to express his condolences for the loss of life due to the Upper Big Branch mine explosion and offered Federal assistance in ongoing rescue operations.

April 6

In the morning, the President met with African American religious leaders. Later, in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing. Then, he had a telephone conversation with President Mikheil Saakashvili of the Republic of Georgia.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an economic briefing. Then, in the Private Dining Room, they had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

Later in the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Head Coach Mike Krzyzewski of Duke University men's basketball team to congratulate him on the team's April 5 NCAA championship. He then had a telephone conversation with Head Coach Brad Stevens and members of the Butler University men's basketball team to congratulate them on their season and their performance in the NCAA championship game against Duke. Later, he met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

In the evening, the President hosted a screening of the documentary film "Nuclear Tipping Point."

The President announced his intention to appoint Marina C. McCarthy as Chair of the Commission on Presidential Scholars.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Commission on Presidential Scholars:

Jose Miguel Amaya;
Michael A. Caplin;
Martha A. Darling;
I. King Jordan;
Colin Kippen;

Yvette Lewis;
Reginald Lewis;
Sheldon Pang;
Srinija Srinivasan;
Donald M. Stewart; and
Cynthia A. Telles.

April 7

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Head Coach Geno Auriemma and members of the University of Connecticut women's basketball team to congratulate them on their April 6 NCAA championship and back-to-back undefeated seasons. He also had a telephone conversation with the family of coal miners who were killed in the Upper Big Branch Mine explosion on April 5.

In the evening, the President traveled to Prague, Czech Republic, arriving the following morning.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues:

Lonnie Ali;
Anita L. Allen;
Barbara Atkinson;
Nita A. Farahany;
Alexander G. Garza;
Christine Grady;
Stephen L. Hauser;
Raju Kucherlapati;
Nelson Michael; and
Daniel Sulmasy.

April 8

In the morning, upon arrival at Prague Ruzyne Airport, the President traveled to Prague Castle, where he participated in an arrival ceremony with President Vaclav Klaus of the Czech Republic. He then participated in a photograph with President Klaus and President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the Hilton Prague hotel.

In the evening, the President traveled to the U.S. Ambassador's residence, where he hosted a dinner for Prime Minister Boyko Borisov of Bulgaria, Bulgaria's newly appointed Ambassador to the U.S. Elena B. Poptodorova, Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor of Croatia, President Vaclav Klaus and Prime Minister Jan Fischer of the Czech Republic, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves of Estonia, Prime Minister Gordon Bajnai of Hungary, President Valdis Zatlers of Latvia, Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius of Lithuania, Prime Minister Donald Tusk of Poland, President Traian Basescu of Romania, Prime Minister Robert Fico of Slovakia, and Prime Minister Borut Pahor of Slovenia. Later, he returned to the Hilton Prague hotel.

April 9

In the morning, the President traveled to Prague Castle, where he had breakfast and met with President Vaclav Klaus of the Czech Republic. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Supreme Court Associate Justice John Paul Stevens after he announced his retirement from the Court.

April 10

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Donald Tusk of Poland to express his condolences for the deaths of President Lech Kaczynski and First Lady Maria Kaczynska of Poland and other Polish officials and military officers in a plane crash in Smolensk, Russia.

April 11

In the afternoon, at Blair House, the President met with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India. Later, he met with President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan. He then met with Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani of Pakistan.

Later in the afternoon, at Blair House, the President met with Acting President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria.

April 12

In the morning, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, the President attended the Global Nuclear Security Summit. He then met with King Abdullah II of Jordan. Later, he met with Prime Minister Mohamed Najib bin Abdul Razak of Malaysia.

In the afternoon, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, the President met with President Viktor Yanukovych of Ukraine. Later, he met with President Serzh Sargsian of Armenia. He then met with President Hu Jintao of China.

Later in the afternoon, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, the President welcomed heads of delegations to the Global Nuclear Security Summit.

In the evening, in the Walter E. Washington Convention Center dining room, the President hosted a summit working dinner. Later, he met separately with Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada and Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama of Japan.

April 13

In the morning, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, the President participated in the Global Nuclear Security Summit heads of delegation photograph. Then, he and Vice President Joe Biden attended a plenary session of the Global Nuclear Security Summit.

In the afternoon, in the Walter E. Washington Convention Center dining room, the President attended a working lunch for heads of delegation. During the lunch, he met separately with President Sebastian Pinera Echenique of Chile and Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende of the Netherlands. Later, he met with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey.

Later in the afternoon, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, the President attended a plenary session of the Global Nuclear Security Summit. Later, he met with President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner of Argentina. He then attended a reception for heads of delegation.

During the day, the President met separately with President Mikheil Saakashvili of the Republic of Georgia and Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

In the evening, the President met with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Krakow, Poland, to attend the state funeral of President Lech Kaczynski and First Lady Maria Kaczynska on April 18.

April 14

In the morning, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Then, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with musician Garth Brooks and presented him with the Grammy on the Hill Award.

The President announced that he has nominated Arthur D. Baylor to be U.S. marshal for the Middle District of Alabama.

The President announced that he has nominated Michael R. Bladel to be U.S. marshal for the Southern District of Iowa.

The President announced that he has nominated Kevin A. Carr to be U.S. marshal for the Eastern District of Wisconsin.

The President announced that he has nominated Kevin C. Harrison to be U.S. marshal for the Middle District of Louisiana.

The President announced that he has nominated Darryl K. McPherson to be U.S. marshal for the Northern District of Illinois.

The President announced that he has nominated Henry L. Whitehorn, Sr., to be U.S. marshal for the Western District of Louisiana.

The President announced that he has nominated Donald J. Cazayoux, Jr., to be U.S. attorney for the Middle District of Louisiana.

The President announced that he has nominated Pamela C. Marsh to be U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Florida.

The President announced that he has nominated Zane D. Memeger to be U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

The President announced that he has nominated Peter J. Smith to be U.S. attorney for the Middle District of Pennsylvania.

The President announced that he has nominated Edward L. Stanton III to be U.S. attorney for the Western District of Tennessee.

The President announced that he has nominated John F. Walsh to be U.S. attorney for the District of Colorado.

The President announced that he has nominated Stephen R. Wigginton to be U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Illinois.

The President announced that he has nominated John A. Gibney, Jr., to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia.

The President announced that he has nominated Edward C. DuMont to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

April 15

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis and Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health Joseph A. Main. Later, he traveled to Cape Canaveral, FL, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, at Cape Canaveral Air Station, the President toured a commercial rocket processing facility. Later, he traveled to Miami, FL, where, at a private residence, he attended a Democratic National Committee fundraiser.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate William J. Boarman to be Public Printer of the U.S.

The President announced his intention to appoint Michael Marshall as Alternate Federal Cochair of the Delta Regional Authority.

April 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Situation Room, they met with the President's national security team to discuss the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch.

The President declared a major disaster in Pennsylvania and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms and snowstorm from February 5 through 11.

The President declared a major disaster in New York and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding from March 13 through 15.

April 17

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Acting President Bronislaw Komorowski of Poland to inform him that he had to cancel his trip to Krakow, Poland, to attend the state funeral of President Lech Kaczynski and First Lady Maria Kaczynska due to the closure of European airspace caused by the spread of volcanic ash from the eruption of Eyjafjallajokull volcano in Iceland.

April 19

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan J. Scott Gration. Later, he traveled to Los Angeles, CA.

The President announced that he has nominated Donald M. Berwick to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President declared a major disaster in Minnesota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by flooding beginning on March 1 and continuing.

April 20

In the morning, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with Sen. Scott P. Brown to discuss immigration reform and financial regulatory reform. He also had separate

telephone conversations with Sens. Richard G. Lugar, George S. LeMieux, Lisa Murkowski, and Judd A. Gregg to discuss immigration reform.

April 21

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had lunch with Vice President Biden. Later, in the Diplomatic Reception Room, he and Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis attended a reception for Group of Twenty (G–20) nations' labor ministers. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

Later in the afternoon, on the State Floor, the President and Mrs. Obama welcomed members of the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic teams. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates. Then, also in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius.

The President announced his intention to nominate Luis E. Arreaga-Rodas to be Ambassador to Iceland.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rose M. Likins to be Ambassador to Peru.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jonathan Woodson to be Assistant Secretary for Health Affairs at the Department of Defense.

The President announced that he has nominated Leslie E. Kobayashi to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii.

The President announced that he has nominated Susan Richard Nelson to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota.

The President announced that he has nominated Ellen Lipton Hollander and James K. Bredar to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland.

The President announced that he has nominated Edmond E-Min Chang to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

The President declared a major disaster in North Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm from April 1 through 3.

The President declared a major disaster in Nebraska and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, ice jams, and flooding from March 6 through April 3.

April 22

In the morning, the President traveled to New York City.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Oval Office, he was briefed by senior Government officials on the April 20 Deepwater Horizon oil rig explosion and subsequent sinking in the Gulf of Mexico, the ensuing oil spill response efforts, and the U.S. Coast Guard's search and rescue efforts for the 11 missing oil rig crewmembers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with the crew of the Space Shuttle *Endeavour*.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christopher A. Masingill to be Federal Cochair of the Delta Regional Authority.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mary Minow to be a member of the National Museum and Library Services Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Catherine E. Woteki to be Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics at the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to appoint Renee Mauborgne as a member of the President's Board of Advisers on Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

The President announced that he has named Stephanie Cutter as Assistant to the President for Special Projects.

April 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President was briefed on the April 20 Deepwater Horizon oil rig explosion and subse-

quent sinking in the Gulf of Mexico, the ensuing oil spill response efforts, and the U.S. Coast Guard's search and rescue efforts for the 11 missing oil rig crewmembers. He was then briefed on the terrorist attacks in Baghdad and Khalidya, Iraq.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Asheville, NC.

The President declared a major disaster in West Virginia and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms and snowstorms from February 5 through 11.

The President declared a major disaster in Connecticut and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding beginning on March 12 and continuing.

April 24

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

April 25

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the home of Rev. Billy Graham, where he met and had a private prayer session with Rev. Graham. Later, he traveled to Beckley, WV, where he was joined by Vice President Joe Biden. Then, at the Beckley-Raleigh County Convention Center, they met with the family members of miners killed in the Upper Big Branch mine explosion on April 5.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

April 26

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, he dropped by a meeting between National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., and Minister of Defense Ehud Barak of Israel.

Later in the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Gov. Haley R. Barbour of Mississippi to express his condolences for the loss of life due to the April 24 tornadoes and discuss disaster response and recovery efforts and to discuss the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico caused by the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig explosion and subsequent sinking and the Federal Government's response efforts. He also had a separate telephone conversation with President Porfirio Lobo Sosa of Honduras.

April 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, in the Roosevelt Room, he greeted members of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform. Later, he traveled to Fort Madison, IA, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President toured the Siemens wind turbine blade manufacturing plant. Later, he traveled to Mount Pleasant, IA, where he toured the MogoOrganic farm. He then visited Jerry's Family Restaurant.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Ottumwa, IA.

In the evening, the President traveled to Des Moines, IA.

The President declared a major disaster in Virginia and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms and snowstorms from February 5 through 11.

April 28

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Macon, MO, arriving in the afternoon. While en route, he stopped in Monroe City, MO, and visited Peggy Sue's Cafe and LaRue Insurance Agency, Inc., and met with residents.

In the afternoon, the President toured POET Biorefining. Later, he traveled to Palmyra, MO, where he toured the Schachtsiek family farm and met with the Schachtsiek family. He then traveled to Quincy, IL. Upon arrival, he had a telephone conversation with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening. While en route aboard Air Force One, he

was briefed on the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico that occurred after the April 20 Deepwater Horizon oil rig explosion and subsequent sinking and the Federal Government's response efforts.

The President announced his intention to nominate Tracie Stevens to be Chair of the National Indian Gaming Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Malcolm D. Jackson to be Assistant Administrator for Environmental Information at the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced that he has nominated Denise Jefferson Casper to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts.

The President announced that he has nominated Paul Kinloch Holmes III to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Arkansas.

The President announced that he has nominated Carlton W. Reeves to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi.

The President announced that he has nominated Patti B. Saris to be a Commissioner and the Chair of the U.S. Sentencing Commission.

The President announced that he has nominated Dabney Langhorne Friedrich to be a Commissioner of the U.S. Sentencing Commission.

The President announced that he has nominated Barry R. Grissom to be U.S. attorney for the District of Kansas.

The President announced that he has nominated Charles Gillen Dunne to be U.S. marshal for the Eastern District of New York.

April 29

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing, in which he was briefed on the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico that occurred after the April 20 Deepwater Horizon oil rig explosion and subsequent sinking and the Federal Government's response efforts. Later, at the Washington National Cathedral, he, Mrs. Obama, and Vice President Joe Biden attended the funeral of civil rights leader Dorothy I. Height.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Vice President Biden. Later, in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with Gov. Piyush "Bobby" Jindal of Louisiana, Gov. Charles J. Crist, Jr., of Florida, Gov. J. Richard Perry of Texas, Gov. Robert R. Riley of Alabama, and Gov. Haley R. Barbour of Mississippi to discuss the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico that occurred after the April 20 Deepwater Horizon oil rig explosion and subsequent sinking and the Federal Government's response efforts.

In the evening, at a private residence, the President attended a Democratic National Committee fundraising dinner.

The President announced his intention to nominate Janet L. Yellen to be Vice-Chair of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

The President announced his intention to nominate Peter A. Diamond and Sarah Bloom Raskin to be Governors of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

The President declared a major disaster in Mississippi and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding on April 23 and 24.

April 30

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Beltsville, MD, where he toured the James J. Rowley Training Center and observed U.S. Secret Service training procedures and met with Secret Service personnel. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President declared a major disaster in North Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by flooding beginning on February 26 and continuing.

May 1

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Ann Arbor, MI, where, at the University of Michigan,

he received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree and administered the oath of office to ROTC graduates during the university's spring commencement ceremony.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

May 2

In the morning, the President traveled to Andrews Air Force Base, MD. While en route aboard Marine One, Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Adviser John O. Brennan briefed him on the May 1 attempted terrorist attack in Times Square and the New York Police Department's investigation into the attack. Upon arrival at Andrews Air Force Base, he traveled to New Orleans, LA, arriving in the afternoon. While en route aboard Air Force One, he was briefed on the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico caused by the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig explosion and subsequent sinking and Federal and State disaster response efforts.

In the afternoon, upon arrival at Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport, the President met with Gov. Piyush "Bobby" Jindal of Louisiana. He then traveled to Coast Guard Station Venice, LA. While en route, he had a telephone conversation with Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York City to discuss the attempted terrorist attack and the investigation into the attack. He then had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Georgios Andreas Papandreou of Greece to discuss Greece's financial reform program and International Monetary Fund and euro area economic assistance.

Later in the afternoon, the President was briefed on the Gulf of Mexico oil spill and disaster response efforts by Federal, State, and local officials and met with first-responders. Later, he traveled to Plaquemines Parish, where he met with fishermen who are being affected by the oil spill. Then, aboard Marine One, he, Gov. Jindal, Coast Guard Commandant Thad W. Allen, and Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Adviser John O. Brennan took an aerial tour of the coastline that will be affected by the oil spill.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, he was updated on the New York Police Department's investigation into the attempted terrorist attack in Times Square.

May 3

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel to discuss Middle East peace efforts.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with Gov. Philip N. Bredesen, Jr., of Tennessee and Gov. Steven L. Beshear of Kentucky to express his condolences for the loss of life due to the flooding taking place in their States, discuss damage and recovery efforts, and offer Federal assistance. He also had a conference call with U.S. Coast Guard Commandant Thad W. Allen and State and local government officials in the Gulf Coast region to discuss the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico caused by the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig explosion and subsequent sinking and Federal and State disaster response efforts. He also had a telephone conversation with Duane Jackson, a Times Square vendor who reported the suspicious car to police officers on the evening of May 1.

Also, throughout the day, the President was briefed on the attempted terrorist attack in Times Square and the New York Police Department's investigation into the attack.

In the evening, in the State Dining Room, the President hosted a dinner for the Business Council.

The President declared an emergency in Massachusetts and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local response efforts in the area affected by a water main break beginning on May 1 and continuing.

The President declared a major disaster in Alabama and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, straight-line winds, and flooding on April 24 and 25.

May 4

In the morning, Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Adviser John O. Brennan informed the President about the arrest of Faisal

Shahzad for his suspected involvement in the May 1 attempted terrorist attack in Times Square. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

Later in the morning, he had separate telephone conversations with Lance Orton, a Times Square vendor who reported the suspicious car to police officers on the evening of May 1, and New York Police Officers Wayne Rhatigan and Pam Duffy, who were the first officers on the scene of the attempted terrorist attack and began the evacuation of citizens and tourists from Times Square and the surrounding areas.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Nobel Prize winner, author, and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection Alan Bersin to thank him for the agency's work in the investigation into the May 1 attempted terrorist attack in Times Square and their assistance in arresting the bombing suspect, Faisal Shahzad. He also had separate telephone conversations with Gov. Mickey D. Beebe of Arkansas and Gov. Haley R. Barbour of Mississippi to discuss the recent storms, tornadoes, and flooding in their States and damage and recovery efforts. Also, in the Situation Room, he met with administration officials during a terrorism threat briefing to discuss the attempted car bombing in Times Square, the investigation into the bombing, and the arrest of Faisal Shahzad.

The President declared a major disaster in Tennessee and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, straight-line winds, and tornadoes beginning on April 30 and continuing.

May 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Sen. Jon L. Kyl.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with Sen. Orrin G. Hatch.

May 6

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Adviser John O. Brennan briefed him on the disaster response efforts in Tennessee and the other States in the Southeast affected by storms, tornadoes, and flooding. Later, in the Situation Room, he met with his national security team to discuss the situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan and the investigation into the May 1 attempted terrorist attack in Times Square.

In the afternoon, Secretary of Treasury Timothy F. Geithner and National Economic Council Director Lawrence H. Summers briefed the President on the economic situation in Europe and Greece. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

The President declared a major disaster in Maryland and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms and snowstorms from February 5 through 11.

May 7

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to San Jose, Costa Rica, to attend the inauguration of Laura Chinchilla as President of Costa Rica on May 8:

Susan E. Rice (head of delegation);
Anne S. Andrew;
Christopher J. Dodd; and
Nancy H. Sutley.

The President announced his intention to nominate Philip Carter III to be Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gerald M. Feierstein to be Ambassador to Yemen.

The President announced his intention to nominate Peter M. McKinley to be Ambassador to Colombia.

The President announced his intention to appoint Patricia J. Niehaus as a member of the National Council on Federal Labor-Management Relations.

The President announced his intention to appoint John D. Arras as a member of the Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues.

The President declared a major disaster in California and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by an earthquake beginning on April 4 and continuing.

May 8

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

May 9

In the morning, the President traveled to Hampton, VA, where, at Hampton University, he met with Hampton University President William R. Harvey and his family and members of the university's board of trustees. He then had a telephone conversation with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to discuss the economic situation in Europe and European Union financial markets stabilization efforts. Later, during the Hampton University spring graduation ceremony, he was awarded an honorary doctor of laws degree.

Later in the morning, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Nicolas Sarkozy of France to discuss the economic situation in Europe and European Union financial markets stabilization efforts.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with U.S. Solicitor General Elena Kagan to inform her of his decision to nominate her to be a Supreme Court Associate Justice.

May 10

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with the President's Intelligence Advisory Board. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Then, in the Situation Room, he met with Cabinet members and White House staff to review BP p.l.c.'s efforts to stop the oil leak from the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico and discuss efforts to mitigate the damage from the oil spill and Federal Government assistance to affected Gulf Coast States.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Energy Steven Chu.

May 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero of Spain to discuss the economic situation in Europe and European Union financial markets stabilization efforts and send his best wishes to King Juan Carlos I after his recent surgery.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary Clinton and U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl W. Eikenberry.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Sen. Patrick J. Leahy. Later, also in the Oval Office, Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator W. Craig Fugate briefed him on the storms and tornadoes in Oklahoma. He then had a telephone conversation with Gov. C. Bradford Henry of Oklahoma to discuss damage and recovery efforts and offer Federal assistance.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan, and Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority to discuss Middle East peace efforts. He also had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom to congratulate him on his appointment to the office and discuss United Kingdom-U.S. relations.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Alan Garcia Perez of Peru to the White House on June 1.

The President declared a major disaster in Kentucky and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, mudslides, and tornadoes beginning on May 1 and continuing.

May 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President had lunch with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Sa'ad al-Din al-Hariri of Lebanon to the White House on May 24.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as U.S. delegates to the 63d World Health Assembly of the World Health Organization from May 17 through 21: Kathleen Sebelius (chief delegate); Betty E. King; and Nils Daulaire.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as alternate U.S. delegates to the 63d World Health Assembly of the World Health Organization from May 17 through 21:

Kerri-Ann Jones;
Nicole Lurie;
Regina M. Benjamin;
Margaret A. Hamburg;
Mary K. Wakefield;
Ann S. Blackwood; and
David E. Hohman.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark Feierstein to be Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate Osvaldo Luis Gratacos Munet to be Inspector General of the Export-Import Bank of the U.S.

The President declared a major disaster in New Hampshire and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding from March 14 through 31.

May 13

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia to inform him that he was sending the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) to the Senate for its consideration and to discuss Middle East peace efforts and efforts to reach an agreement on U.N. Security Council sanctions against Iran. Later, in the Oval Office, the President had an economic briefing. He then traveled to Cheektowaga, NY, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, upon arrival at Buffalo Niagara International Airport, the President met with family members of victims of the Continental Connection Flight 3407 crash, which occurred on February 12, 2009, in Clarence, NY. He then stopped for lunch at Duff's Famous Wings and visited with patrons. Later, he traveled to Buffalo, NY, where he toured Industrial Support Inc.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to New York City, where, at One Police Plaza, he toured the New York Police Department's Real Time Crime Center and met with police officers.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the National Advisory Council on Indian Education:

Thomas R. Acevedo;
Derek J. Bailey;
Robin A. Butterfield;
Robert B. Cook;
Deborah Jackson-Dennison; and

Alyce Spotted Bear.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Joint Public Advisory Committee of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation:

Irasema Coronado;
Geoffrey Garver;
Felicia Marcus;
Diane Takvorian; and
Jonathan Waterhouse.

The President declared a major disaster in South Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm on April 2 and continuing.

May 14

In the morning, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with Cabinet members and White House staff to review BP p.l.c.'s efforts to stop the oil leak from the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico and discuss efforts to mitigate the damage from the oil spill and Federal Government assistance to affected Gulf Coast States.

The President declared a major disaster in Mississippi and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding on May 1 and 2.

May 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea to discuss the investigation into the March 26 sinking of the South Korean Navy patrol ship *Cheonan*, South Korea-U.S. relations, and U.N. Security Council sanctions against North Korea in response to their nuclear weapons development program.

The President announced his intention to nominate John S. Pistole to be Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration.

The President announced his intention to nominate Helen P. Reed-Rowe to be Ambassador to Palau.

The President announced his intention to appoint Harold Varmus as Director of the National Cancer Institute.

May 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Later, he traveled to Youngstown, OH, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President toured V&M STAR Ohio. Later, he returned to Washington, DC. Then, at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, he met with Jewish members of the Senate Democratic Caucus and the House Democratic Caucus.

The President announced his intention to nominate Patrick S. Moon to be Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christopher W. Murray to be Ambassador to the Republic of the Congo.

The President announced his intention to appoint Milford W. Donaldson as Chair of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

May 19

In the morning, on the South Lawn, the Pesident, Mrs. Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, and his wife Jill T. Biden welcomed President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico and his wife Margarita Esther Zavala Gomez del Campo.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with U.S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland Louis B. Susman. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to discuss Brazil and Turkey's nuclear energy deal with Iran, Iraq's continued efforts to form a Government, and Middle East peace efforts.

In the evening, on the North Portico, the President and Mrs. Obama welcomed President Calderon and Mrs. Zavala. Then, on the Grand Staircase, they participated in a photograph

with President Calderon and Mrs. Zavala. Later, on the South Lawn, he and President Calderon made remarks prior to a state dinner reception and entertainment.

May 20

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Sen. Arlen Specter. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

The President announced that he has nominated Susan L. Carney to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

The President announced that he has nominated Anthony J. Battaglia to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California.

The President announced that he has nominated Edward J. Davila to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California.

The President announced that he has nominated Robert L. Wilkins to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

The President announced that he has nominated David J. Hickton to be U.S. attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania.

The President announced that he has nominated William C. Killian to be U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Tennessee.

May 21

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Sen. Christopher J. Dodd and Rep. Barney Frank to discuss financial regulatory reform.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Vice President Biden.

The President announced his intention to nominate James M. Cole to be Deputy Attorney General at the Department of Justice.

May 22

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then traveled to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, NY.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to congratulate her on achieving parliamentary approval of the country's contribution to the European stabilization fund and to discuss financial regulatory reform and Iran's nuclear weapons development program.

During the day, on the White House basketball court, the President participated in an interview with Marv Albert of Turner Network Television (TNT).

May 24

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, on the State Floor, he attended a reception for the Federal Judges Association. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in the daily Gulf of Mexico oil spill briefing conference call with Gov. Piyush "Bobby" Jindal of Louisiana, Gov. Haley R. Barbour of Mississippi, Gov. Robert R. Riley of Alabama, and Gov. Charles J. Crist, Jr., of Florida. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Prime Minister Sa'ad al-Din al-Hariri of Lebanon. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia to the White House on May 27.

The President declared a major disaster in Oklahoma and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, and straight-line winds from May 10 through 13.

May 25

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, at the U.S. Capitol, the President addressed the Senate Republican Caucus. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with President Giorgio Napolitano of Italy.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to San Francisco, CA. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with Secretary of Energy Steven Chu, who provided him with his scientific and technical assessment of British Petroleum's plan to stop the Deepwater Horizon oil rig leak in the Gulf of Mexico.

In the evening, at a private residence, the President attended a reception for Sen. Barbara Boxer and the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark C. Storella to be Ambassador to Zambia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Matthew J. Bryza to be Ambassador to Azerbaijan.

The President announced his intention to appoint Melissa Savage and C. Kenneth Smith as members of the Board of Directors of the Valles Caldera Trust.

May 26

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Fremont, CA, where he toured Solyndra, Inc., and met with construction workers building an addition to the Solyndra facility. He then met with Gov. Arnold A. Schwarzenegger of California.

Later in the morning, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

Throughout the day, White House Deputy Chief of Staff James A. Messina briefed the President on the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and British Petroleum's efforts to stop the leak.

May 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, on the North Portico, they participated in a photograph with former President William J. Clinton and the U.S. World Cup soccer team. Then, in the Private Dining Room, he had lunch with former President Clinton.

In the afternoon, in the Situation Room, the President and Vice President Biden were briefed on the 2010 hurricane season forecast and the Federal Government's national hurricane preparedness.

In the evening, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Sasha and Malia traveled to Chicago, IL. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama of Japan to discuss the North Korean attack on the South Korean Navy patrol ship *Cheonan*, North Korea and Iran's nuclear weapons development programs, and Japan-U.S. relations.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority to the White House on June 9.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands to attend Memorial Day ceremonies commemorating the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II on May 29 and 30:

Eric K. Shinseki (head of delegation);
Ivo H. Daalder;
Fay Hartog Levin;
Howard W. Gutman;
Cynthia Stroum; and
Charles Payne.

The President announced his intention to nominate Paul M. Tiao to be Inspector General of the Department of Labor.

The President announced his intention to nominate Neile L. Miller to be Principal Deputy Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Eric D. Benjaminson to be Ambassador to Gabon.

The President announced his intention to nominate J. Thomas Dougherty to be Ambassador to Burkina Faso.

The President announced his intention to nominate the following individuals to be members of the National Board for Education Sciences:

Anthony S. Bryk;
Kris D. Gutierrez;
Beverly L. Hall; and
Robert A. Underwood.

The President announced his intention to appoint Philip Conkling as Alternate Commissioner of the Roosevelt Campobello International Park Commission.

The President announced that he has nominated Max O. Cogburn, Jr., to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of North Carolina.

The President announced that he has nominated James E. Shadid to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Central District of Illinois.

The President announced that he has nominated William J. Ihlenfeld II to be U.S. attorney for the Northern District of West Virginia.

The President announced that he has nominated John W. Vaudreuil to be U.S. attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin.

May 28

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India to discuss the upcoming U.S.-India Strategic Dialogue and to express his condolences for the May 22 plane crash in Mangalore and the May 28 train attack. Later, he traveled to New Orleans, LA.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Fourchon Beach, LA. While en route aboard Marine One, he was briefed by Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG, in his capacity as national incident commander for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, and Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change Carol M. Browner on the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Later, he traveled to Grand Isle, LA.

In the afternoon, at U.S. Coast Guard Station Grand Isle, the President attended a briefing by Adm. Allen on the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Later, he returned to Chicago, IL.

May 29

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

May 30

During the day, the President was briefed by Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG, in his capacity as national incident commander for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, and Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change Carol M. Browner on the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

May 31

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel to discuss the postponement of their meeting and to express his regret for the loss of life that took place during an Israeli military raid on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, a group of ships bound for Gaza with humanitarian aid. Later, he traveled to Elwood, IL, where he participated in a Memorial Day wreath-laying ceremony at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery.

In the afternoon, the President met with veterans and servicemembers and their families. Later, he returned to Chicago, IL. While en route, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada to discuss the Israeli military raid of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla and the upcoming G–8 and G–20 summits.

Later in the afternoon, at the Hines Fisher House, the President met with veterans and servicemembers who were being treated at the Hines VA Hospital and their families. Later, he, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Sasha and Malia traveled to Andrews Air Force Base, MD, arriving in the evening.

During the day, the President had two additional telephone conversations with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel to discuss the military raid on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla.

Later in the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

June 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to express his condolences for the loss of life and injuries of Turkish citizens that occurred during an Israeli commando raid on the MV *Mavi Marmara*, which was part of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, and to discuss humanitarian assistance for Gaza and Middle East peace efforts.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Bethlehem to attend the Palestine Investment Conference from June 2 through 4:

George J. Mitchell (head of delegation);
Neal Wolin;
Daniel Rubinstein;
Alonzo Fulgham;
Mara Rudman;
Ziad Asali; and
Saed Nashef.

June 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, U.S. Forces—Iraq. He then traveled to Pittsburgh, PA, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

June 3

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Vice President Joe Biden. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Gov. Janice K. Brewer of Arizona.

Later in the afternoon, in the Diplomatic Reception Room, the President participated in an interview with Larry King of CNN's "Larry King Live." Then, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers.

In the evening, the President had separate telephone conversations with Prime Minister Kevin M. Rudd of Australia and President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia to inform them that he was postponing his trip to Asia and Australia that was scheduled for later this month and to discuss Australia-U.S. relations and Indonesia-U.S. relations.

The President announced his intention to nominate Maura Connelly to be Ambassador to Lebanon.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel B. Smith to be Ambassador to Greece.

The President announced his intention to nominate Subra Suresh to be Director of the National Science Foundation.

June 4

In the morning, the President and Vice President Joe Biden traveled to Hyattsville, MD, where they toured K. Neal International Trucks, Inc. Later, they returned to Washington, DC.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to New Orleans, LA, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President and Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG, in his capacity as national incident commander for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, traveled to Grand Isle, LA.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

June 5

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister-designate Naoto Kan of Japan to congratulate him on his election and discuss Japan-U.S. relations.

June 7

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Later, he traveled to Kalamazoo, MI. Later, at the Radisson Plaza Hotel at Kalamazoo Center, he

attended two Democratic Party fundraisers. He then participated in an interview with Matt Lauer of NBC's "Today" program.

Later in the afternoon, at Western Michigan University, the President met with members of Kalamazoo Central High School's graduating class.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Gov. Theodore Strickland of Ohio to express his and Mrs. Obama's condolences for those killed during the June 6 tornado and offer Federal assistance.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

June 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had a briefing on the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. Later, he traveled to Wheaton, MD.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Sen. Byron L. Dorgan of North Dakota.

June 9

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Benigno S. Aquino III of the Philippines to congratulate him on his May 10 election victory and discuss Philippines-U.S. relations. Then, in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing, in which he was briefed on the shooting death of a 15-year-old Mexican boy along the U.S.-Mexican border by a U.S. Border Patrol agent. He then had an economic briefing, also in the Oval Office.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had a briefing on the Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

The President announced his intention to nominate James F. Entwistle to be Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mimi E. Alemayehou, Johnnie Carson, and Edward W. "Ward" Brehm to be members of the Board of Directors of the African Development Foundation.

The President announced that he has nominated Robert E. O'Neill to be U.S. attorney for the Middle District of Florida.

The President announced that he has nominated Mark L. Ericks to be U.S. marshal for the Western District of Washington.

The President announced that he has nominated Joseph P. Faughnan, Sr., to be U.S. marshal for the District of Connecticut.

The President announced that he has nominated Donald M. O'Keefe to be U.S. marshal for the Northern District of California.

The President announced that he has nominated H. Michael Oglesby to be U.S. marshal for the Western District of Arkansas.

The President announced that he has nominated Kenneth J. Runde to be U.S. marshal for the Northern District of Iowa.

The President announced that he has nominated Charles T. Weeks II to be U.S. marshal for the Western District of Oklahoma.

June 10

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Cabinet Room, he had a briefing on the Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

In the afternoon, in the State Dining Room, the President met with family members of the workers killed during the Deepwater Horizon oil rig explosion. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Sen. Arlen Specter. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

Later in the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with business leaders and energy experts to discuss energy reform.

The President announced that he has nominated James E. Graves, Jr., to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

June 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a briefing on the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with

small-business owners. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia to the United States from June 22 through 24.

The President announced his intention to nominate Anne M. Harrington to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation at the National Nuclear Security Administration.

The President announced his intention to nominate Laurence D. Wohlers to be Ambassador to the Central African Republic.

June 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Gov. Michael D. Beebe of Arkansas to express his condolences for those killed and those who went missing during the June 11 flash flooding at the Albert Pike campground in Ouachita National Forest and to offer Federal assistance.

June 14

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Biloxi, MS. He then traveled to Gulfport, MS.

In the afternoon, at the Chimneys Restaurant, the President had lunch with Gov. Haley R. Barbour of Mississippi and his wife Marsha, Mayor George Schloegel of Gulfport, MS, Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG, in his capacity as national incident commander for the British Petroleum oil spill, community members, and local business owners to discuss the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. He then traveled to Theodore, AL. Later, he traveled to Dauphin Island, AL.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Fort Morgan, AL. He then traveled to Orange Beach, AL, where, at Tacky Jack's Tavern & Grill, he had dinner and met with patrons.

In the evening, the President traveled to Pensacola, FL.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling:

Frances G. Beinecke;
Donald Boesch;
Terry D. Garcia;
Cherry A. Murray; and
Frances Ulmer.

June 15

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Gov. Charles J. Crist, Jr., of Florida toured Pensacola Beach.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command, to discuss his condition after collapsing earlier in the morning during a Senate hearing.

The President announced his intention to nominate Judith R. Fergin to be Ambassador to Timor-Leste.

The President announced his intention to appoint Suzan D. Johnson Cook as Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to appoint Felice D. Gaer and William J. Shaw as members of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

The President announced that he has appointed Michael R. Bromwich as chief adviser for efforts to reform the Minerals Management Service and Federal regulations and oversight of offshore oil and gas drilling.

June 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Vice President Biden. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Sen. Scott P. Brown.

June 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he had a briefing on the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Veterans of Foreign Wars Commander-in-Chief Thomas J. Tradewell, Sr.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of the Navy Raymond E. Mabus, Jr. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps and Commandant of the Marine Corps nominee Gen. James F. Amos.

During the day, Vice President Joe Biden presented the "Summer of Recovery: Project Activity Increases in Summer 2010" report to the President.

The President announced that he has nominated James E. Boasberg and Amy Berman Jackson to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

The President announced that he has nominated Sue E. Myerscough to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Central District of Illinois.

The President announced that he has nominated James T. Fowler to be U.S. marshal for the Eastern District of Tennessee.

The President announced that he has nominated Craig E. Thayer to be U.S. marshal for the Eastern District of Washington.

June 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Columbus, OH.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Los Angeles Lakers head coach Phil Jackson to congratulate him and his team on winning the NBA Finals for the second year in a row and on his 11th championship as a head coach.

In the evening, at Nationals Park, the President and his daughters Sasha and Malia attended the Washington Nationals-Chicago White Sox baseball game.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael S. Owen to be Ambassador to Sierra Leone.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the American Battle Monuments Commission:

Darrell Dorgan;
John L. Estrada;
Evelyn Foote;
Rolland Kidder;
Richard L. Klass;
Merrill A. McPeak;
Constance Morella; and
Maura C. Sullivan.

June 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

June 20

The White House announced that the President will welcome King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia to the White House on June 29.

June 21

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had separate telephone conversations with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany and Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero of Spain.

In the afternoon, on the South Lawn, the President hosted a Father's Day mentoring barbecue.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had an economic briefing, followed by a meeting with his senior advisers. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada to discuss the upcoming Group of Eight (G–8) summit in Muskoka, Canada, and Group of Twenty (G–20) summit in Toronto, Canada.

June 22

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a video teleconference with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan. Then, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with health insurance executives and State insurance commissioners to discuss implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Vice President Biden. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom. He was also briefed on the wildfires in Arizona and had a telephone conversation with Gov. Janice K. Brewer of Arizona to discuss Federal and State efforts to contain the wildfires and to offer continued Federal assistance.

June 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan, to accept his resignation. Later, in the Situation Room, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with the President's national security team to discuss the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command, to discuss the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan and his intention to nominate Gen. Petraeus to assume Gen. McChrystal's former command.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan to inform him of his decision to accept Gen. McChrystal's resignation and his intention to nominate Gen. Petraeus to assume command of NATO's International Security Assistance Force. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom, who confirmed that British Army Lt. Gen. Nick Parker would serve as acting commander of NATO's International Security Assistance Force and passed on to the President Gen. Parker's commitment that he would continue to carry out the current strategy in Afghanistan.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

The President announced his intention to appoint Drew Brees and Dominique Dawes as Cochairs of the President's Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the President's Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition:

Dan Barber;
Tedy Bruschi;
Carl Edwards;
Allyson Felix;
Grant H. Hill;
Billie Jean King;
Michelle Kwan;
Risa Lavizzo-Mourey;
Cornell McClellan;
Stephen L. McDonough;
Chris Paul;
Curtis Pride;
Donna Richardson Joyner; and
Ian Smith.

June 24

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia. Then, in the Cabinet Room, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with President Medvedev.

In the afternoon, the President and President Medvedev traveled to Arlington, VA, where, at Ray's Hell Burger, they had lunch.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with the U.S. men's soccer team to congratulate them on their June 23 World Cup victory against Algeria and wish them luck on their June 26 match against Ghana. He also had a telephone conversation with

President-elect Juan Manuel Santos Calderon of Colombia to congratulate him on his June 20 runoff election victory and discuss Colombia-U.S. relations.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Julia E. Gillard of Australia to congratulate her on assuming the position of Prime Minister and discuss Australia-U.S. relations and Australian assistance in Afghanistan.

The President announced his intention to nominate the following individuals to be members of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service:

Richard Christman;
Jane Hartley;
Marguerite W. Kondracke;
Matthew F. McCabe;
John D. Podesta;
Lisa Quiroz; and
Phyllis N. Segal.

The President declared a major disaster in West Virginia and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, mudslides, and landslides beginning on June 12 and continuing.

The President declared a major disaster in Puerto Rico and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding from May 26 through 31.

June 25

In the morning, the President traveled to Muskoka, Canada. Upon arrival at Huntsville/Deerhurst Resort Airport, he traveled to the Deerhurst Resort.

In the afternoon, the President attended the Group of Eight (G–8) summit working lunch. Later, he participated in a photograph with G–8 leaders.

Later in the afternoon, the President participated in a G–8 summit session with G–8 leaders, President Herman Van Rompuy of the European Council, and the leaders of Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa. They all then participated in a G–8 summit working session with the leaders of Colombia, Haiti, and Jamaica. Later, they all participated in a G–8 summit photograph.

In the evening, the President and G–8 leaders met with participants of My Summit 2010, the official international youth summit. He then attended the G–8 summit working dinner. Later, he met with Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada to discuss the progress made during the G–8 summit and the upcoming G–20 summit in Toronto, Canada.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Manila, Philippines, to attend the inauguration of Benigno S. Aquino III as President of the Philippines on June 30: Ronald Kirk (head of delegation); and Harry K. Thomas, Jr.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert P. Jackson to be Ambassador to Cameroon.

The President announced his intention to nominate James F. Jeffrey to be Ambassador to Iraq.

The President announced his intention to nominate Alejandro D. Wolff to be Ambassador to Chile.

The President announced his intention to nominate Pamela Young-Holmes to be a member of the National Council on Disability.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ramona E. Romero to be General Counsel for the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to nominate Father Joseph Pius Pietrzyk and Harry J.F. Korrell III to be members of the Legal Services Corporation.

The President announced his intention to appoint Mary Ciuniq Pete as a member of the U.S. Arctic Research Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Joseph Jeu and Michael J. Lyden as members of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled.

June 26

In the morning, the President participated in a G–8 summit working session. Later, he and Prime Minister David Cameron of the

United Kingdom traveled to Toronto, Canada, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, upon arrival at Toronto Pearson International Airport, the President and Prime Minister Cameron traveled to the InterContinental Toronto Centre.

In the evening, the President traveled to the Fairmont Royal York Hotel, where he was joined by Mrs. Obama. He then met with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey. They then attended the Group of Twenty (G–20) summit working dinner.

Later in the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama returned to the InterContinental Toronto Centre.

June 27

In the morning, the President traveled to the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Later, he participated in the G–20 summit opening plenary session. He then participated in the G–20 summit leaders working session.

Later in the morning, the President participated in a G–20 summit plenary session.

In the afternoon, the President participated in a photograph with G–20 leaders. Later, he met with participants of My Summit 2010, the official international youth summit. He then participated in the G–20 summit working lunch.

Later in the afternoon, the President participated in two G–20 summit plenary sessions. Later, he returned to the InterContinental Toronto Centre.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

June 28

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he met with Supreme Court Associate Justice nominee Elena Kagan before her Senate confirmation hearings.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, in the Old Family Dining Room, he met with community groups and grassroots activists to discuss immigration reform.

The President announced his intention to nominate Norman L. Eisen to be Ambassador to the Czech Republic.

The President announced his intention to nominate Scot A. Marciel to be Ambassador to Indonesia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Terence P. McCulley to be Ambassador to Nigeria.

The President announced his intention to nominate Larry L. Palmer to be Ambassador to Venezuela.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the National Advisory Council on Indian Education:

Samuel McCracken;
Mary Jane Oatman-Wak Wak;
Alapaki Nahale-a; and
S. Alan Ray.

June 29

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing with Federal Reserve Chairman Ben S. Bernanke. Later, in the Cabinet Room, he met with a bipartisan group of Senators to discuss energy and climate legislation.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President was briefed on the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Later, in the Old Family Dining Room, he had a working lunch with King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. Then, in the State Dining Room, he met with members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Shanghai, China, to attend the U.S.A. National Day at Expo 2010 Shanghai on July 2:

Madeleine K. Albright (head of delegation);
Christopher P. Lu;
Capricia Penavic Marshall;
Robert Goldberg;
Jose H. Villarreal;

Elizabeth Frawley Bagley;
Ivan K. Fong;
Christina Tchen;
Leocadia Zak;
Beatrice Camp;
Bonnie Thie; and
Maya Lin.

The President declared an emergency in Texas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts due to the emergency conditions resulting from Tropical Storm Alex beginning on June 27 and continuing.

June 30

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, he traveled to Racine, WI.

In the afternoon, at O&H Danish Bakery, the President met with Mayor John Dickert of Racine, WI. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

Appendix B—Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service Officers.

Submitted January 20

Louis B. Butler, Jr.,
of Wisconsin, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Wisconsin, vice John C. Shabaz, retired.

Edward Milton Chen,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of California, vice Martin J. Jenkins, resigned.

Jon E. DeGuilio,
of Indiana, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Indiana, vice Allen Sharp, retired.

Stephanie A. Finley,
of Louisiana, to be U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Louisiana for the term of 4 years, vice Donald W. Washington.

Audrey Goldstein Fleissig,
of Missouri, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Missouri, vice E. Richard Webber, retired.

R. Booth Goodwin II,
of West Virginia, to be U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia for the term of 4 years, vice Karl K. Warner II.

David J. Hale,
of Kentucky, to be U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Kentucky for the term of 4 years, vice David L. Huber, resigned.

Kerry B. Harvey,
of Kentucky, to be U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky for the term of 4 years, vice Amul R. Thapar, resigned.

Christopher Tobias Hoye,
of Nevada, to be U.S. Marshal for the District of Nevada for the term of 4 years, vice Gary D. Orton.

Lucy Haeran Koh,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of California, vice Ronald M. Whyte, retired.

Milton C. Lee, Jr.,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years, vice Jerry Stewart Byrd, retired.

Loretta E. Lynch,
of New York, to be U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York for the term of 4 years, vice Roslynn R. Mauskopf, resigned.

Jane E. Magnus-Stinson,
of Indiana, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Indiana, vice Larry J. McKinney, retired.

Gervin Kazumi Miyamoto,
of Hawaii, to be U.S. Marshal for the District of Hawaii for the term of 4 years, vice Mark Moki Hanohano.

Peter Christopher Munoz,
of Michigan, to be U.S. Marshal for the Western District of Michigan for the term of 4 years, vice James Robert Dougan, resigned.

Kelly McDade Nesbit,
of North Carolina, to be U.S. Marshal for the Western District of North Carolina for the term of 4 years, vice Patrick Carroll Smith, Sr.

Tanya Walton Pratt,
of Indiana, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Indiana, vice David F. Hamilton, elevated.

Brian Todd Underwood,
of Idaho, to be U.S. Marshal for the District of Idaho for the term of 4 years, vice Patrick E. McDonald.

JoAnn Lynn Balzer,
of New Mexico, to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Institute of American Indian and Alaska Native Culture and Arts Development for a term expiring May 19, 2012, vice Letitia Chambers, term expired.

Craig Becker,
of Illinois, to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of 5 years expiring December 16, 2014, vice Dennis P. Walsh.

Dana Katherine Bilyeu,
of Nevada, to be a member of the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board for a term expiring October 11, 2011, vice Thomas A. Fink, term expired.

Daryl J. Boness,
of Maine, to be a member of the Marine Mammal Commission for a term expiring May 13, 2010, vice Paul K. Dayton, term expired.

John Coppola,
of Florida, to be a member of the National Museum and Library Services Board for a term expiring December 6, 2013, vice Gail Daly, resigned.

Katherine Hammack,
of Arizona, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army, vice Keith E. Eastin.

Carla D. Hayden,
of Illinois, to be a member of the National Museum and Library Services Board for a term expiring December 6, 2014, vice Kevin Owen Starr, term expired.

Dawn Elizabeth Johnsen,
of Indiana, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Jack Landman Goldsmith III, resigned.

Michael D. Kennedy,
of Georgia, to be a member of the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board for a term expiring September 25, 2010, vice Gordon Whiting, term expired.

Michael D. Kennedy,
of Georgia, to be a member of the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board for a term expiring September 25, 2014 (reappointment).

Cynthia Chavez Lamar,
of New Mexico, to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Institute of American Indian and Alaska Native Culture and Arts Development for a term expiring May 19, 2010, vice Allen E. Carrier.

Jeffrey R. Moreland,
of Texas, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of 5 years, vice David McQueen Laney, term expired.

Marsha J. Rabiteau,
of Connecticut, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the State Justice Institute for a term expiring September 17, 2010, vice Sandra A. O'Connor, term expired.

Christopher H. Schroeder,
of North Carolina, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Elisebeth C. Cook, resigned.

Theodore Sedgwick,
of Virginia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Slovak Republic.

Mary L. Smith,
of Illinois, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Nathan J. Hochman, resigned.

Winston Tabb,
of Maryland, to be a member of the National Museum and Library Services Board for a term expiring December 6, 2013, vice Beverly Allen, term expired.

Michael F. Tillman,
of California, to be a member of the Marine Mammal Commission for a term expiring May

13, 2011, vice John Elliott Reynolds III, term expired.

Hernan D. Vera,
of California, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the State Justice Institute for a term expiring September 17, 2012, vice Terrence B. Adamson, term expired.

Dennis P. Walsh,
of Maryland, to be Chairman of the Special Panel on Appeals for a term of 6 years, vice John L. Howard, term expired.

Robert Wedgeworth,
of Illinois, to be a member of the National Museum and Library Services Board for a term expiring December 6, 2013, vice Amy Owen, term expired.

Earl F. Weener,
of Oregon, to be a member of the National Transportation Safety Board for the remainder of the term expiring December 31, 2010, vice Mark V. Rosenker, resigned.

Withdrawn January 21

Roszell Hunter,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank of the U.S. for a term expiring January 20, 2013, vice J. Joseph Grandmaison, term expired, which was sent to the Senate on October 1, 2009.

Erroll G. Southers,
of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security, vice Edmund S. Hawley, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on September 17, 2009.

Jide J. Zeitlin,
of New York, to be Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations for U.N. Management and Reform, with the rank of Ambassador, which was sent to the Senate on September 24, 2009.

Jide J. Zeitlin,
of New York, to be Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations during his tenure of service as Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations for U.N. Management and Reform, which was sent to the Senate on September 24, 2009.

Submitted January 26

Elisabeth Ann Hagen,
of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Food Safety, vice Richard A. Raymond, resigned.

Submitted February 1

Jeffrey A. Lane,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs), vice Lisa E. Epifani, resigned.

Paul Steven Miller,
of Washington, to be a Governor of the U.S. Postal Service for a term expiring December 8, 2016, vice Carolyn L. Gallagher, term expired.

Lana Pollack,
of Michigan, to be a Commissioner on the part of the U.S. on the International Joint Commission, U.S. and Canada, vice Allen I. Olson.

J. Patricia Wilson Smoot,
of Maryland, to be a Commissioner of the U.S. Parole Commission for a term of 6 years, vice Deborah Ann Spagnoli, resigned.

Dennis J. Toner,
of Delaware, to be a Governor of the U.S. Postal Service for the remainder of the term expiring December 8, 2012, vice Katherine C. Tobin, resigned.

Submitted February 2

Michele Marie Leonhart,
of California, to be Administrator of Drug Enforcement, vice Karen P. Tandy, resigned.

Submitted February 4

Daryl J. Boness,
of Maine, to be a member of the Marine Mammal Commission for a term expiring May 13, 2013 (reappointment).

Parker Loren Carl,
of Kentucky, to be U.S. Marshal for the Eastern District of Kentucky for the term of 4 years, vice Dennis Michael Klein.

David B. Fein,
of Connecticut, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Connecticut for the term of 4 years, vice Kevin J. O'Connor, resigned.

Elizabeth Erny Foote,
of Louisiana, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Louisiana, vice Tucker L. Melancon, retired.

Kerry Joseph Forestal,
of Indiana, to be U.S. Marshal for the Southern District of Indiana for the term of 4 years, vice Peter Manson Swaim.

Mark A. Goldsmith,
of Michigan, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan, vice John Corbett O'Meara, retired.

Gerald Sidney Holt,
of Virginia, to be U.S. Marshal for the Western District of Virginia for the term of 4 years, vice G. Wayne Pike.

Clifton Timothy Massanelli,
of Arkansas, to be U.S. Marshal for the Eastern District of Arkansas for the term of 4 years, vice Robert Gideon Howard, Jr.

Scott Jerome Parker,
of North Carolina, to be U.S. Marshal for the Eastern District of North Carolina for the term of 4 years, vice Clyde R. Cook, Jr.

Timothy Q. Purdon,
of North Dakota, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of North Dakota for the term of 4 years, vice Drew Howard Wrigley.

Larry Robinson,
of Hawaii, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, vice William J. Brennan, resigned.

Marc T. Treadwell,
of Georgia, to be U.S. District Judge for the Middle District of Georgia, vice Hugh Lawson, retired.

Josephine Staton Tucker,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Central District of California, vice Alicemarie H. Stotler, retired.

Submitted February 22

Robert Stephen Ford,
of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Syrian Arab Republic.

Jonathan Andrew Hatfield,
of Virginia, to be Inspector General, Corporation for National and Community Service, vice Gerald Walpin, resigned.

Larry Robinson,
of Florida, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, vice William J. Brennan, resigned.

Withdrawn February 22

Larry Robinson,
of Hawaii, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, vice William J. Brennan, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on February 4, 2010.

Submitted February 24

Sharon Johnson Coleman,
of Illinois, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois, vice Mark R. Filip, resigned.

Laura E. Duffy,
of California, to be U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of California for a term of 4 years, vice Carol Chien-Hua Lam.

Gary Scott Feinerman,
of Illinois, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois, vice Robert W. Gettleman, retired.

Wifredo A. Ferrer,
of Florida, to be U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida for the term of 4 years, vice R. Alexander Acosta.

John Dale Foster,
of West Virginia, to be U.S. Marshal for the Southern District of West Virginia for the term of 4 years, vice James Duane Dawson.

Gary Michael Gaskins,
of West Virginia, to be U.S. Marshal for the Northern District of West Virginia for the term of 4 years, vice J.C. Raffety, resigned.

Alicia Anne Garrido Limtiaco,
of Guam, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Guam and concurrently U.S. Attorney for the District of the Northern Mariana Islands for the term of 4 years, vice Leonardo M. Rapadas.

William Joseph Martinez,
of Colorado, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Colorado, vice Edward W. Nottingham, resigned.

John B. Stevens, Jr.,
of Texas, to be U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Texas for the term of 4 years, vice Rebecca A. Gregory.

Paul Ward,
of North Dakota to be U.S. Marshal for the District of North Dakota for the term of 4 years, vice David Scott Carpenter.

Stephen T. Ayers,
of Maryland, to be Architect of the Capitol for the term of 10 years, vice Alan M. Hantman, resigned.

Deborah Loewenberg Ball,
of Michigan, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Board for Education Sciences for a term expiring November 28, 2012, vice Caroline M. Hoxby, term expired.

Robert Neil Chatigny,
of Connecticut, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Second Circuit, vice Guido Calabresi, retired.

Adam Gamoran,
of Wisconsin, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Board for Education Sciences for a term expiring November 28, 2011, vice Richard James Milgram, term expired.

Goodwin Liu,
of California, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit, vice a new position created by Public Law 110–177, approved January 7, 2008.

Bridget Terry Long,
of Massachusetts, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Board for Education Sciences for a term expiring November 28, 2012, vice Joseph K. Torgesen, term expired.

Margaret R. McLeod,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Board for Education Sciences for a term expiring November 28, 2012, vice Elizabeth Ann Bryan, term expired.

Eduardo M. Ochoa,
of California, to be Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education, Department of Education, vice Diane Auer Jones, resigned.

Submitted March 1

Katherine M. Gehl,
of Wisconsin, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation for a term expiring December 17, 2010, vice Collister Johnson, Jr., term expired.

Michael J. McCord,
of Virginia, to be Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) (new position).

Michael James Warren,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation for a term expiring December 17, 2011, vice Diane M. Ruebling, term expired.

Submitted March 2

Michael C. Camunez,
of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce, vice David Steele Bohigian, resigned.

Submitted March 3

Kenneth J. Gonzales,
of New Mexico, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of New Mexico for the term of 4 years, vice David Claudio Iglesias.

Scott M. Matheson, Jr.,
of Utah, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Tenth Circuit, vice Michael W. McConnell, resigned.

Michael C. Ormsby,
of Washington, to be U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington for the term of 4 years, vice James A. McDevitt.

Willie Ransome Stafford III,
of North Carolina, to be U.S. Marshal for the Middle District of North Carolina for the term of 4 years, vice Harlon Eugene Costner.

James L. Taylor,
of Virginia, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Labor, vice Douglas W. Webster, resigned.

Submitted March 8

Maj. Gen. Robert A. Harding, USA (Ret.),
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security, vice Edmund S. Hawley, resigned.

David K. Mineta,
of California, to be Deputy Director for Demand Reduction, Office of National Drug Control Policy, vice Bertha K. Madras.

Submitted March 9

Cheryl A. LaFleur,
of Massachusetts, to be a member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the term expiring June 30, 2014, vice Suedeen G. Kelly, term expired.

Philip D. Moeller,
of Washington, to be a member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the term expiring June 30, 2015 (reappointment).

Lawrence J. Pijeaux, Jr.,
of Alabama, to be a member of the National Museum and Library Services Board for a term expiring December 6, 2014, vice A. Wilson Greene, term expired.

Submitted March 10

Thomas Edward Delahanty II,
of Maine, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Maine for the term of 4 years, vice Jay Patrick McCloskey.

Catherine C. Eagles,
of North Carolina, to be U.S. District Judge for the Middle District of North Carolina, vice Norwood Carlton Tilley, Jr., retired.

Cathy Jo Jones,
of Ohio, to be U.S. Marshal for the Southern District of Ohio for the term of 4 years, vice James Michael Wahlrab, resigned.

Raymond Joseph Lohier, Jr.,
of New York, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Second Circuit, vice Sonia Sotomayor, elevated.

John J. McConnell, Jr.,
of Rhode Island, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Rhode Island, vice Ernest C. Torres, retired.

Kimberly J. Mueller,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of California, vice Frank C. Damrell, Jr., retired.

Wendy J. Olson,
of Idaho, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Idaho for the term of 4 years, vice Thomas E. Moss.

Kathleen M. O'Malley,
of Ohio, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Federal Circuit, vice Alvin A. Schall, retired.

Mimi E. Alemayehou,
of the District of Columbia, to be Executive Vice President of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, vice John A. Simon, resigned.

Elizabeth A. McGrath,
of Virginia, to be Deputy Chief Management Officer of the Department of Defense (new position).

Submitted March 17

Leonard Philip Stark,
of Delaware, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Delaware, vice Kent A. Jordan, elevated.

Amy Totenberg,
of Georgia, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Georgia, vice Jack T. Camp, Jr., retired.

Submitted March 24

Mark A. Griffon,
of New Hampshire, to be a member of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board for a term of 5 years, vice Carolyn W. Merritt, term expired.

Rafael Moure-Eraso,
of Massachusetts, to be a member of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board for a term of 5 years, vice Gary Lee Visscher, term expired.

Rafael Moure-Eraso,
of Massachusetts, to be Chairperson of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board for a term of 5 years, vice John S. Bresland, resigned.

Robert M. Orr,
of Florida, to be U.S. Director of the Asian Development Bank, with the rank of Ambassador, vice Curtis S. Chin.

Carl Wieman,
of Colorado, to be an Associate Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, vice Sharon Lynn Hays, resigned.

Submitted March 25

Robert R. Almonte,
of Texas, to be U.S. Marshal for the Western District of Texas for the term of 4 years, vice LaFayette Collins.

Todd E. Edelman,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years, vice Cheryl M. Long, retired.

Melinda L. Haag,
of California, to be U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of California for the term of 4 years, vice Joseph P. Russoniello.

Frank Leon-Guerrero,
of Guam, to be U.S. Marshal for the District of Guam and concurrently U.S. Marshal for the District of the Northern Mariana Islands for the term of 4 years, vice Joaquin L. G. Salas.

James A. Lewis,
of Illinois, to be U.S. Attorney for the Central District of Illinois for the term of 4 years, vice Rodger A. Heaton.

Jerry E. Martin,
of Tennessee, to be U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Tennessee for the term of 4 years, vice Edward Meacham Yarbrough.

Mary Helen Murguia,
of Arizona, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit, vice Michael D. Hawkins, retired.

Dallas Stephen Neville,
of Wisconsin, to be U.S. Marshal for the Western District of Wisconsin for the term of 4 years, vice Stephen Gilbert Fitzgerald.

Judith Anne Smith,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years, vice Geoffrey M. Alprin, retired.

Submitted April 12

Thomas Hicks,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Election Assistance Commission for a term expiring January 12, 2013, vice Gracia M. Hillman, term expired.

S. Leslie Ireland,
of Massachusetts, to be Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis, Department of the Treasury, vice Janice B. Gardner, resigned.

Steve A. Linick,
of Virginia, to be Inspector General of the Federal Housing Finance Agency (new position).

Teresa Takai,
of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice John G. Grimes.

Withdrawn April 12

Maj. Gen. Robert A. Harding, USA (Ret.),
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security, vice Edmund S. Hawley, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on March 8, 2010.

Dawn Elizabeth Johnsen,
of Indiana, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Jack Landman Goldsmith III, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on January 20, 2010.

Submitted April 14

Arthur Darrow Baylor,
of Alabama, to be U.S. Marshal for the Middle District of Alabama for the term of 4 years, vice Jesse Seroyer, Jr.

Michael Robert Bladel,
of Iowa, to be U.S. Marshal for the Southern District of Iowa for the term of 4 years, vice Charles E. Beach, Sr.

Kevin Anthony Carr,
of Wisconsin, to be U.S. Marshal for the Eastern District of Wisconsin for the term of 4 years, vice William P. Kruziki, resigned.

Donald J. Cazayoux, Jr.,
of Louisiana, to be U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Louisiana for the term of 4 years, vice David R. Dugas.

Edward Carroll DuMont,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Federal Circuit, vice Paul R. Michel, retiring.

John A. Gibney, Jr.,
of Virginia, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Virginia, vice Robert E. Payne, retired.

Kevin Charles Harrison,
of Louisiana, to be U.S. Marshal for the Middle District of Louisiana for the term of 4 years, vice William Carey Jenkins, retired.

Pamela Cothran Marsh,
of Florida, to be U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Florida for the term of 4 years, vice Gregory Robert Miller.

Darryl Keith McPherson,
of Illinois, to be U.S. Marshal for the Northern District of Illinois for the term of 4 years, vice Kim Richard Widup.

Zane David Memeger,
of Pennsylvania, to be U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania for the term of 4 years, vice Patrick Leo Meehan.

Peter J. Smith,
of Pennsylvania, to be U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Pennsylvania for the term of 4 years, vice Thomas A. Marino, resigned.

Edward L. Stanton III,
of Tennessee, to be U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Tennessee for the term of 4 years, vice David F. Kustoff, resigned.

John F. Walsh,
of Colorado, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Colorado for the term of 4 years, vice Troy A. Eid, resigned.

Henry Lee Whitehorn, Sr.,
of Louisiana, to be U.S. Marshal for the Western District of Louisiana for the term of 4 years, vice William R. Whittington, resigned.

Stephen R. Wigginton,
of Illinois, to be U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois for the term of 4 years, vice Ronald J. Tenpas, resigned.

Withdrawn April 14

Stephanie Villafuerte,
of Colorado, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Colorado for the term of 4 years, vice Troy A. Eid, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on September 30, 2009.

Submitted April 19

Donald M. Berwick,
of Massachusetts, to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, vice Mark B. McClellan.

William J. Boarman,
of Maryland, to be Public Printer, vice Robert Charles Tapella, resigned.

Submitted April 21

Craig Becker,
of Illinois, to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of 5 years expiring December 16, 2014, vice Dennis P. Walsh, to which position he was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

Jacqueline A. Berrien,
of New York, to be a member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for a term expiring July 1, 2014, vice Christine M. Griffin, term expired, to which position she was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

Alan D. Bersin,
of California, to be Commissioner of Customs, Department of Homeland Security, vice W. Ralph Basham, to which position he was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

Rafael Borras,
of Maryland, to be Under Secretary for Management, Department of Homeland Security, vice Elaine C. Duke, resigned, to which position he was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

James Kelleher Bredar,
of Maryland, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Maryland, vice J. Frederick Motz, retiring.

Edmond E-Min Chang,
of Illinois, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois, vice Elaine F. Bucklo, retired.

Chai Rachel Feldblum,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for a term expiring July 1, 2013, vice Leslie Silverman, term expired, to which position she was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

Jeffrey Alan Goldstein,
of New York, to be an Under Secretary of the Treasury, vice Robert K. Steel, resigned, to which position he was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

Eric L. Hirschhorn,
of Maryland, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Export Administration, vice Mario Mancuso, resigned, to which position he was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

Ellen Lipton Hollander,
of Maryland, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Maryland, vice Andre M. Davis, elevated.

Leslie E. Kobayashi,
of Hawaii, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Hawaii, vice Helen W. Gillmor, retired.

Victoria A. Lipnic,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for the remainder of the term expiring July 1, 2010, vice Naomi Churchill Earp, to which position she was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

P. David Lopez,
of Arizona, to be General Counsel of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for a term of 4 years, vice Ronald S. Cooper, resigned, to which position he was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

Michael F. Mundaca,
of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, vice Eric Solomon, resigned, to which position he was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

Susan Richard Nelson,
of Minnesota, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Minnesota, vice James M. Rosenbaum, retired.

Mark Gaston Pearce,
of New York, to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of 5 years expiring August 27, 2013, vice Peter N. Kirsanow, to which position he was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

Michael W. Punke,
of Montana, to be a Deputy U.S. Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador, vice Peter F. Allgeier, resigned, to which position he was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

Francisco J. Sanchez,
of Florida, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade, vice Christopher A. Padilla, resigned, to which position he was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

Islam A. Siddiqui,
of Virginia, to be Chief Agricultural Negotiator, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador, vice Richard T. Crowder, to which position he was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

Jill Long Thompson,
of Indiana, to be a member of the Farm Credit Administration Board, Farm Credit Administration, vice Nancy C. Pellett, term expired, to which position she was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

Submitted April 22

Luis E. Arreaga-Rodas,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Iceland.

Rose M. Likins,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Peru.

Jonathan Woodson,
of Massachusetts, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice S. Ward Casscells.

Withdrawn April 22

Timothy McGee,
of Louisiana, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce, vice Phillip A. Singerman, which was sent to the Senate on December 21, 2009.

Submitted April 26

Christopher A. Masingill,
of Arkansas, to be Federal Cochairperson, Delta Regional Authority, vice P.H. Johnson, resigned.

Mary Minow,
of California, to be a member of the National Museum and Library Services Board for a term expiring December 6, 2014, vice Kim Wang, term expired.

Catherine E. Woteki,
of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Research, Education, and Economics, vice Rajiv J. Shah, resigned.

Submitted April 28

Denise Jefferson Casper,
of Massachusetts, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Massachusetts, vice Reginald C. Lindsay, deceased.

Charles Gillen Dunne,
of New York, to be U.S. Marshal for the Eastern District of New York for the term of 4 years, vice Eugene James Corcoran.

Dabney Langhorne Friedrich,
of Virginia, to be a member of the U.S. Sentencing Commission for a term expiring October 31, 2015 (reappointment).

Barry R. Grissom,
of Kansas, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Kansas for the term of 4 years, vice Eric F. Melgren.

Paul Kinloch Holmes III,
of Arkansas, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Arkansas, vice Robert T. Dawson, retired.

Carlton W. Reeves,
of Mississippi, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Mississippi, vice William H. Barbour, Jr., retired.

Patti B. Saris,
of Massachusetts, to be Chair of the U.S. Sentencing Commission, vice William K. Sessions III.

Patti B. Saris,
of Massachusetts, to be member of the U.S. Sentencing Commission for a term expiring October 31, 2015, vice William K. Sessions III, term expired.

Submitted April 29

Peter A. Diamond,
of Massachusetts, to be a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for the unexpired term of 14 years from February 1, 2000, vice Frederic S. Mishkin.

Malcolm D. Jackson,
of Illinois, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Molly A. O'Neill, resigned.

Sarah Bloom Raskin,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for the unexpired term of 14 years from February 1, 2002, vice Donald L. Kohn, resigned.

Tracie Stevens,
of Washington, to be Chairman of the National Indian Gaming Commission for the term of 3 years, vice Philip N. Hogen, resigned.

Janet L. Yellen,
of California, to be a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for a term of 14 years from February 1, 2010, vice Mark W. Olson, resigned.

Janet L. Yellen,
of California, to be Vice Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for a term of 4 years, vice Donald L. Kohn, resigned.

Submitted May 7

Phillip Carter III,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire.

Gerald M. Feierstein,
of Pennsylvania, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Yemen.

Peter Michael McKinley,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Colombia.

Withdrawn May 7

Steven L. Jacques,
of Kansas, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, vice Cathy M. MacFarlane, which was sent to the Senate on September 29, 2009.

Submitted May 10

Elena Kagan,
of Massachusetts, to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the U.S., vice John Paul Stevens, retiring.

Submitted May 13

Mark Feierstein,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, vice Paul J. Bonicelli.

Osvaldo Luis Gratacos Munet,
of Puerto Rico, to be Inspector General, Export-Import Bank, vice Michael W. Tankersley, resigned.

Submitted May 17

John S. Pistole,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security, vice Edmund S. Hawley, resigned.

Submitted May 18

Helen Patricia Reed-Rowe,
of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Palau.

Submitted May 19

Patrick S. Moon,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Christopher W. Murray,
of New York, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of the Congo.

Submitted May 20

Anthony J. Battaglia,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of California, vice M. James Lorenz, retired.

Susan L. Carney,
of Connecticut, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Second Circuit, vice Barrington D. Parker, retired.

Edward J. Davila,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of California, vice Marilyn Hall Patel, retired.

David J. Hickton,
of Pennsylvania, to be U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania for the term of 4 years, vice Mary Beth Buchanan, term expired.

William C. Killian,
of Tennessee, to be U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Tennessee for the term of 4 years, vice James Russell Dedrick.

Robert Leon Wilkins,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Columbia, vice James Robertson, retired.

Submitted May 24

James Michael Cole,
of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Attorney General, vice David W. Ogden, resigned.

Submitted May 26

Matthew J. Bryza,
of Illinois, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mark Charles Storella,
of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Zambia.

Submitted May 27

Eric D. Benjaminson,
of Oregon, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Gabonese Republic, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe.

Anthony Bryk,
of California, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Board for Education Sciences for a term expiring November 28, 2011, vice Herbert John Walberg, term expired.

Max Oliver Cogburn, Jr.,
of North Carolina, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of North Carolina, vice Lacy H. Thornburg, retired.

J. Thomas Dougherty,
of Wyoming, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Burkina Faso.

Kris D. Gutierrez,
of Colorado, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Board for Education Sciences for a term expiring November 28, 2012, vice Gerald Lee, term expired.

Beverly L. Hall,
of Georgia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Board for Education Sciences for a term expiring March 15, 2012, vice Craig T. Ramey, term expired.

William J. Ihlenfeld II,
of West Virginia, to be U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of West Virginia for the term of 4 years, vice Sharon Lynn Potter.

Neile L. Miller,
of Maryland, to be Principal Deputy Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration, vice William Charles Ostendorff, resigned.

James E. Shadid,
of Illinois, to be U.S. District Judge for the Central District of Illinois, vice Michael M. Mihm, retired.

Paul M. Tiao,
of Maryland, to be Inspector General, Department of Labor, vice Gordon S. Heddell, resigned.

Robert Anacletus Underwood,
of New Jersey, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Board for Education Sciences for a term expiring November 28, 2012, vice Robert C. Granger, term expired.

John William Vaudreuil,
of Wisconsin, to be U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin for the term of 4 years, vice Erik C. Peterson.

Submitted June 7

James R. Clapper,
of Virginia, to be Director of National Intelligence, vice Dennis Cutler Blair, resigned.

Submitted June 8

Maura Connelly,
of New Jersey, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Lebanon.

Daniel Bennett Smith,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Greece.

Subra Suresh,
of Massachusetts, to be Director of the National Science Foundation for a term of 6 years, vice Arden Bement, Jr., resigned.

Withdrawn June 8

Paul Steven Miller,
of Washington, to be a Governor of the U.S. Postal Service for a term expiring December 8, 2016, vice Carolyn L. Gallagher, term expired, which was sent to the Senate on February 1, 2010.

Submitted June 9

Mimi E. Alemayehou,
Executive Vice President of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the African Development Foundation for a term expiring September 22, 2015, vice Lloyd O. Pierson, term expired.

Edward W. Brehm,
of Minnesota, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the African Development Foundation for a term expiring September 22, 2011, vice Claude A. Allen, term expired.

Johnnie Carson,
an Assistant Secretary of State (African Affairs), to be a member of the Board of Directors of the African Development Foundation for a term expiring September 27, 2015, vice Jendayi Elizabeth Frazer, term expired.

James Frederick Entwistle,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mark Lloyd Ericks,
of Washington, to be U.S. Marshal for the Western District of Washington for the term of 4 years, vice William Joseph Hawe.

Joseph Patrick Faughnan, Sr.,
of Connecticut, to be U.S. Marshal for the District of Connecticut for the term of 4 years, vice John Francis Bardelli, resigned.

Harold Michael Oglesby,
of Arkansas, to be U.S. Marshal for the Western District of Arkansas for the term of 4 years, vice Richard James O'Connell, term expired.

Donald Martin O'Keefe,
of California, to be U.S. Marshal for the Northern District of California for the term of 4 years, vice Federico Lawrence Rocha, term expired.

Robert E. O'Neill,
of Florida, to be U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Florida for the term of 4 years, vice A. Brian Albritton.

Kenneth James Runde,
of Iowa, to be U.S. Marshal for the Northern District of Iowa for the term of 4 years, vice Timothy Anthony Junker, term expired.

Charles Thomas Weeks II,
of Oklahoma, to be U.S. Marshal for the Western District of Oklahoma for the term of 4 years, vice Michael Wade Roach, term expired.

Submitted June 10

James E. Graves, Jr.,
of Mississippi, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit, vice Rhesa H. Barksdale, retired.

Submitted June 14

Anne M. Harrington,
of Virginia, to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation, National Nuclear Security Administration, vice William H. Tobey, resigned.

Earl F. Weener,
of Oregon, to be a member of the National Transportation Safety Board for a term expiring December 31, 2015 (reappointment).

Laurence D. Wohlers,
of Washington, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Central African Republic.

Submitted June 16

Suzan D. Johnson Cook,
of New York, to be Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, vice John V. Hanford III, resigned.

Judith R. Fergin,
of Washington, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

Submitted June 17

James Emanuel Boasberg,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Columbia, vice Thomas F. Hogan, retired.

James Thomas Fowler,
of Tennessee, to be U.S. Marshal for the Eastern District of Tennessee for the term of 4 years, vice Arthur Jeffrey Hedden, resigned.

Amy Berman Jackson,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Columbia, vice Gladys Kessler, retired.

Sue E. Myerscough,
of Illinois, to be U.S. District Judge for the Central District of Illinois, vice Joe B. McDade, retired.

Craig Ellis Thayer,
of Washington, to be U.S. Marshal for the Eastern District of Washington for the term of 4 years, vice Michael Lee Kline, term expired.

Submitted June 28

Richard Christman,
of Kentucky, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for the remainder of the term expiring October 6, 2012, vice Tom Osborne, resigned.

Jane D. Hartley,
of New York, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring October 6, 2014, vice Donna N. Williams, resigned.

Robert Porter Jackson,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Cameroon.

James Franklin Jeffrey,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Iraq.

Marguerite W. Kondracke,
of Tennessee, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring June 10, 2014, vice Richard Allan Hill, term expired.

Harry James Franklyn Korrell III,
of Washington, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2011, vice Jonann E. Chiles, term expired.

Matthew Francis McCabe,
of Pennsylvania, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring October 6, 2013, vice Leona White Hat, term expired.

Joseph Pius Pietrzyk,
of Ohio, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2011, vice Thomas A. Fuentes, term expired.

John D. Podesta,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring October 6, 2014, vice Alan D. Solomont, resigned.

Lisa M. Quiroz,
of New York, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring February 8, 2014, vice Vince J. Juaristi, term expired.

Ramona Emilia Romero,
of Pennsylvania, to be General Counsel of the Department of Agriculture, vice Marc L. Kesselman, resigned.

Phyllis Nichamoff Segal,
of Massachusetts, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring October 6, 2013, vice Jacob Joseph Lew, term expired.

Alejandro Daniel Wolff,
of California, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Chile.

Pamela Young-Holmes,
of Wisconsin, to be a member of the National Council on Disability for a term expiring September 17, 2013 (reappointment).

Pamela Young-Holmes,
of Wisconsin, to be a member of the National Council on Disability for the remainder of the term expiring September 17, 2010, vice Chad Colley, resigned.

Submitted June 29

Norman L. Eisen,
of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Czech Republic.

Scot Alan Marciel,
of California, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Indonesia.

Terence Patrick McCulley,
of Oregon, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Larry Leon Palmer,
of Georgia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Appendix C—Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released January 4

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Released January 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released January 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Expands "Educate to Innovate" Campaign for Excellence in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education

Released January 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano, and Assistant to the President for Counterterrorism and Homeland Security John O. Brennan

Text: Summary of the White House Review of the December 25, 2009 Attempted Terrorist Attack

Released January 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Awards $2.3 Billion for New Clean-Tech Manufacturing Jobs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the fifth anniversary of the Sudanese comprehensive peace agreement

Fact sheet: $2.3 Billion in New Clean Energy Manufacturing Tax Credits

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer on the employment situation in December

Released January 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesman Mike Hammer on National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr.'s travel to the Middle East

Announcement: President Obama Signs Executive Order Establishing Council of Governors

Released January 12

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Released January 13

Fact sheet: The Economic Impact of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009: Second Quarterly Report (dated January 12; embargoed until January 13)

Released January 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun L.S. Donovan Announces $2 Billion in Recovery Act Grants To Stabilize Neighborhoods, Rebuild Local Economies

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Proposes Financial Crisis Responsibility Fee To Recoup Every Last Penny for American Taxpayers

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Welcomes CEOs to White House Forum on Modernizing Government

Fact sheet: White House Forum on Modernizing Government

Released January 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesman Mike Hammer on the Middle East visit of National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr.

Text: Public Summary of the Inventory of Files Related to Fort Hood Shooting

Released January 17

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing on relief efforts in Haiti by Denis R. McDonough, Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications; Tim Callaghan, Senior Regional Adviser for Latin America and the Caribbean for the USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance; and Col. Albert "Buck" Elton, USAF, commander, Special Operations Command South Haiti

Text: United States Government Haiti Earthquake Disaster Response Update

Released January 18

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing on the U.S. Government response to the Haiti earthquake by Capt. John Kirby, USN, spokesman for Joint Task Force Haiti; Tim Callaghan, USAID Senior Regional Adviser for Latin America and the Caribbean for the USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance; Rear Adm. Michael S. Rogers, USN, Director of Intelligence for the Joint Staff; and Capt. Andrew C. Stevermer, USPHS Commissioned Corps, commander of the Incident Response Coordination Team for Health and Human Services

Statement by the Press Secretary: President and Mrs. Obama, Cabinet Secretaries, Senior Administration Officials Honor Martin Luther King, Jr., National Day of Service by Participating in Community Service Projects Around Washington, DC

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's State of the Union Address

Text: United States Government Haiti Earthquake Disaster Response Update

Released January 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing on the U.S. Government response to the Haiti earthquake by Tim Callaghan, USAID Senior Regional Adviser for Latin America and the Caribbean for the USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance; Maj. Gen. Daniel B. Allyn, USA, deputy commander, Joint Task Force Haiti; Joe Knerr, Fairfax County Urban Search and Rescue Team Leader; and Capt. John Kirby, USN, spokesman for Joint Task Force Haiti

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama To Announce Plans for "Race to the Top" Expansion (dated January 18; embargoed until January 19)

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Massachusetts Senate race

Text: United States Government Haiti Earthquake Disaster Response Update

Released January 20

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing on the U.S. Government response to the Haiti earthquake by Capt. Andrew C. Stevermer, USPHS Commissioned Corps, commander of the Incident Response Coordination Team for Health and Human Services

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Directs Administration To Crack Down on Tax Cheats Seeking Government Contracts

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesman Mike Hammer on the meeting between National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., and Minister of Foreign Affairs Abu Abdallah Bakr al-Qirbi of Yemen

Text: United States Government Haiti Earthquake Disaster Response Update

Advance text of the President's remarks on signing the tax delinquency memorandum

Released January 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board Chief Economist Austan Goolsbee

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Calls for New Restrictions on Size and Scope of Financial Institutions To Rein in Excesses and Protect Taxpayers

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Launches Citizens Medal Public Nomination Process

Text: United States Government Haiti Earthquake Disaster Response Update

Released January 22

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary: First Open Gov Deadline Brings Online Treasure Trove of Information

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 4462

Advance text of the President's opening remarks at a town hall meeting in Elyria, OH

Released January 24

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Arizona

Released January 25

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama and Vice President Biden Preview Initiatives for Middle Class Families

Fact sheet: Supporting Middle Class Families

Released January 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released January 27

Statement by the Press Secretary: Rescue, Rebuild, Restore—A New Foundation for Prosperity

Statement by the Press Secretary on statutory pay-as-you-go legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 2949

Excerpts of the President's State of the Union Address

Advance text of the President's State of the Union Address

Text: Guest list for the First Lady's Box at the 2010 State of the Union

Released January 28

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama, Vice President Biden To Announce $8 Billion for High-Speed Rail Projects Across the Country

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama To Propose New Small Business Jobs and Wages Tax Cut

Fact sheet: Small Business Jobs and Wages Tax Cut

Released January 29

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Sets Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Target for Federal Operations

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces New Proposal To Create Jobs, Cut Taxes for Small Businesses

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President has signed H.R. 1817, H.R. 2877, H.R. 3072, H.R. 3319, H.R. 3539, H.R. 3667, H.R. 3767, H.R. 3788, and H.R. 4508.

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer on the Advance Estimate of GDP for the Fourth Quarter of 2009

Released January 30

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Oklahoma

Released February 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a press briefing by Office of Management and Budget Director Peter R. Orszag and Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama To Outline New Small Business Lending Fund

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1377 and S. 692

Fact sheet: Administration Announces New $30 Billion Small Business Lending Fund

Released February 2

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Outlines New Small Business Lending Fund

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to North Carolina

Excerpts of the President's remarks at a town hall meeting in Nashua, NH (dated February 1; embargoed until February 2)

Advance text of the President's opening remarks at a town hall meeting in Nashua, NH

Released February 3

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary: Obama Announces Steps To Boost Biofuels, Clean Coal

Released February 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Arkansas

Released February 5

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Outlines Latest in a Series of New Small Business Proposals

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama and CIA Director Panetta Speak at CIA Memorial Service

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of Prime Minister Brian Cowen of Ireland

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to New Jersey

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer on the employment situation in January

Excerpts of Central Intelligence Agency Director Leon E. Panetta's remarks at a memorial service for CIA officers in Langley, VA

Released February 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released February 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer

Statement by the Press Secretary: Dr. Christina Romer Discusses the Economic Report of the President

Statement by the Press Secretary on the release of the draft Senate jobs bill

Released February 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Sebelius, Solis Announce Nearly $1 Billion Recovery Act Investment in Advancing Use of Health IT, Training Workers for Health Jobs of the Future

Statement by the Press Secretary on Haiti

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.J. Res. 45

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesman Mike Hammer on National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr.'s visit to Afghanistan and Pakistan

Released February 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Obama Administration Announces Loan Guarantees To Construct New Nuclear Power Reactors in Georgia

Statement by the Press Secretary on the naming of Robert Ford as U.S. Ambassador to Damascus

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 730

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Virginia

Advance text of the President's remarks on energy in Lanham, MD

Announcement: Administration Officials Visiting Over 35 Communities This Week To Survey Recovery Act Progress, Job Creation at One-Year Mark

Excerpts of the Vice President's annual report to the President on progress implementing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

Released February 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Secretary LaHood Announces Funding for Over 50 Innovative, Strategic Transportation Projects through Landmark Competitive TIGER Program

Statement by the Press Secretary: Recovery by the Numbers: The Recovery Act at One Year

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of King Juan Carlos I of Spain to the White House

Released February 18

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Establishes Bipartisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's meeting with Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's meeting with international human rights activists

Released February 19

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama, Department of Education Announce Race to the Top High School Commencement Challenge

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces Help for Hardest Hit Housing Markets

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Maryland

Fact sheet: Help for the Hardest Hit Housing Markets (dated February 18; embargoed until February 19)

Released February 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Calls for New Steps To Prepare America's Children for Success in College and Careers

Fact sheet: Preparing Students for Success in College and the Workforce

Released February 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released February 24

Advance text of the President's remarks to the Business Roundtable

Released February 25

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Nebraska

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Iowa

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Oklahoma

Released February 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Signs Executive Order Promoting Excellence, Innovation, and Sustainability at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Re-establishes President's Board of Advisors on Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of Prime Minister Georgios Andreas Papandreou of Greece to the White House

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to North Dakota

Released February 27

Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Announces Julianna Smoot as Social Secretary

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President has signed H.R. 3961 and H.R. 4532

Released February 28

Text: Release of President's Medical Exam

Released March 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces Steps To Reduce Dropout Rates and Prepare Students for College and Careers

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President has signed S. 2950

Fact sheet: Reducing the Dropout Rate and Helping All Students Graduate College and Career Ready

Released March 2

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Iowa

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to West Virginia

Fact sheet: Home Star Energy Efficiency Retrofit Program

Released March 3

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that on March 2 the President signed H.R. 4691

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to the District of Columbia

Excerpts of the President's remarks on health care reform

Advance text of the President's remarks on health care reform

Released March 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President has signed H.R. 1299

Released March 5

Statement by the Press Secretary on A New Beginning: Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of President Rene Garcia Preval of Haiti to the White House

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Oklahoma

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer on the employment situation in February

Released March 7

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama To Host Space Conference in Florida in April

Released March 8

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to California

Excerpts of the President's remarks on health care reform in Glenside, PA

Released March 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Senate cloture vote on legislation extending various Tax Code provisions and unemployment aid

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Kansas

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to South Dakota

Released March 10

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces New Effort To Crack Down on Waste and Fraud

Statement by the Press Secretary on the passing of Egyptian cleric Sheikh Mohammed Sayyed Tantawi

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to South Dakota

Excerpts of remarks by Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius at the America's Health Insurance Plans conference

Text: United States Government Haiti Earthquake Disaster Response

Released March 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement: The President Donates Nobel Prize Money to Charity

Fact sheet: President Obama Details Administration Efforts To Support Two Million New Jobs by Promoting More U.S. Exports

Advance text of the President's remarks at the Export-Import Bank's annual conference

Released March 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on First Lady Michelle Obama's visit to Mexico City, Mexico

Released March 14

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to North Dakota

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesman Mike Hammer on the murder of individuals associated with the U.S. Consulate in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico

Released March 15

Transcript of a press briefing by National Security Council Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough, National Security Council Senior Director for East Asian Affairs Jeff Bader, and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes on the President's visit to Guam, Indonesia, and Australia

Advance text of the President's remarks on health care reform in Strongsville, OH

Released March 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released March 17

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 2968

Released March 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President delaying his visit to Indonesia and Australia

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Arizona

Advance text of the President's remarks on signing the HIRE Act

Released March 19

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Minnesota

Advance text of the President's remarks at George Mason University in Fairfax, VA

Released March 21

Text: Statement by Deputy Communications Director H. Daniel Pfeiffer concerning an Executive order ensuring enforcement of restrictions on the use of Federal funds for abortions

Released March 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released March 23

Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Announces Forum on Workplace Flexibility

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to New Jersey

Released March 24

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to the District of Columbia

Released March 25

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3433

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Maine

Fact sheet: Key Facts About the New START Treaty

Advance text of the President's remarks on health care reform in Iowa City, Iowa

Released March 26

Transcript of a press briefing Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Adm. Michael G. Mullen, USN

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 4938 and S. 3186

Advance text of the President's remarks on the new START Treaty

Released March 28

Transcript of a press gaggle by a senior administration official

Released March 29

Statement by the Press Secretary on China

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to West Virginia

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Rhode Island

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to New Hampshire

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Massachusetts

Released March 30

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Signs Historic Health Care and Education Legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Rhode Island

Text: Letter from Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada, President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea, Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom, President Barack Obama of the United States, and President Nicolas Sarkozy of France to their G–20 counterparts in preparation for the G–20 summit in Toronto, Canada

Released March 31

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary: Obama Administration Announces Comprehensive Strategy for Energy Security

Statement by the Press Secretary: President and First Lady Host White House Forum on Workplace Flexibility

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 4957 and S. 1147

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Delaware

Advance text of the President's remarks on energy at Andrews Air Force Base, MD

Released April 1

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Fact sheet: Small Business Health Care Tax Credit

Advance text of the President's remarks on health care reform in Portland, ME

Released April 2

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Kenyan Parliament's approval of a new draft Constitution

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to New Jersey

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer on the employment situation in March

Announcement: White House To Host Childhood Obesity Meeting on Friday, April 9

Released April 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released April 7

Statement by the Press Secretary: Obama Administration Marks Major Open Government Milestone

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.J. Res. 80 and H.R. 4621

Announcement: Updated: White House To Host Childhood Obesity Meeting on Friday, April 9

Released April 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, and Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Russian Affairs Michael McFaul

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Presses for Answers on Mine Safety

Statement by the Press Secretary on the situation in Kyrgyzstan

Advance text of the President's remarks on signing the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty in Prague, Czech Republic

Released April 9

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by National Security Council Coordinator for Arms Control and Nonproliferation Gary Samore and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes on the nuclear security summit

Transcript of a press gaggle by National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Denis R. McDonough

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama, Department of Education Announce Race to the Top High School Commencement Challenge Finalists

Released April 10

Transcript of a press briefing by National Economic Council member Brian Deese, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Tax Policy Michael Mundaca, and Vice President Biden's Chief Economist Jared Bernstein on Recovery Act tax credits available to American families (dated April 9; embargoed until April 10)

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's meeting with President Viktor Yanukovych of Ukraine

Fact sheet: Recovery Act Tax Relief (dated April 9; embargoed until April 10)

Released April 11

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communication Benjamin J. Rhodes, Senior Director for Russia and the Caucasus Michael McFaul, and Senior Director for Weapons of Mass Destruction, Terrorism, and Threat Reduction Laura S.H. Holgate on the President's bilateral meetings and the nuclear security summit

Text: Joint Statement on the Meeting between President Obama and Kazakhstan President Nazarbayev

Released April 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and Assistant to the President for Counterterrorism and Homeland Security John O. Brennan

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by National Security Council Senior Director for Asian Affairs Jeff Bader

Statement by the Press Secretary on Prime Minister Stephen Harper's announcement that Canada will return nuclear fuel to the U.S.

Fact sheet: Ukraine's Non-Proliferation Efforts

Fact sheet: Recovery Act Tax Savings for American Families

Released April 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communication Benjamin J. Rhodes, National Security Council Coordinator for Arms Control and Nonproliferation Gary Samore, and Senior Director for Weapons of Mass Destruction, Terrorism, and Threat Reduction Laura S.H. Holgate

Statement by the Press Secretary: Trilateral Announcement Between Mexico, the United States, and Canada on Nuclear Security

Statement by the Press Secretary on a bipartisan meeting to discuss the Supreme Court vacancy

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's visit to Poland to attend the state funeral of President Lech Kaczynski and First Lady Maria Kaczynska

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama To Host Olympic and Paralympic Athletes at the White House

Text: National Statement of the United States (Nuclear Security Summit)

Text: Communique of the Washington Nuclear Security Summit

Text: Work Plan of the Washington Nuclear Security Summit

Text: Nuclear Security Summit Work Plan Reference Document

Text: Key Facts about the Nuclear Security Summit

Text: Highlights of National Commitments

Released April 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner

Statement by the Press Secretary: New CEA Report Finds Recovery Act Already Responsible for about 2.5 Million Jobs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the earthquake in China

Released April 15

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 4851

Fact sheet: Florida's Space Workers and the New Approach to Human Spaceflight (dated April 13; released April 15)

Fact sheet: A Bold Approach for Space Exploration and Discovery

Advance text of the President's remarks at the John F. Kennedy Space Center in Merritt Island, FL

Announcement: White House Releases President Obama and Vice President Biden's 2009 Tax Returns

Released April 16

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Pennsylvania

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to New York

Released April 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's visit to New York City to deliver remarks on financial reform at the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President and Vice President attending the memorial service for the victims of the Upper Big Branch mine disaster in Beckley, WV

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Minnesota

Released April 20

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary on elections in Sudan

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama To Visit Iowa, Missouri, and Illinois for Next Stops of the White House to Main Street Tour

Fact sheet: President's Export Control Reform Initiative

Announcement: New Details: President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama To Host Olympic and Paralympic Athletes at the White House

Released April 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Vice President Biden Kicks Off Five Days of Earth Day Activities With Announcement of Major New Energy Efficiency Effort

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to North Dakota

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Nebraska

Excerpts of remarks by National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Transcript of remarks by National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Released April 22

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Announcement: President Obama To Honor World Series Champion New York Yankees at the White House

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's Oval Office meeting to discuss the situation in the Gulf of Mexico

Advance text of the President's remarks on financial reform at Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York City

Announcement: Public Voting Begins Monday for Race to the Top High School Commencement Challenge

Announcement: President Obama To Honor World Series Champion New York Yankees at the White House

Released April 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, National Security Council Senior Director for Global Engagement Pradeep Ramamurthy, Commerce Department Under Secretary for International Trade Francisco Sanchez, and State Department Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Judith McHale on the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship

Statement by the Press Secretary on the detention of three American hikers in Iran

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Connecticut

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to West Virginia

Released April 25

Excerpts of the President's remarks at a memorial service for victims of the Upper Big Branch mine disaster in Beckley, WV

Advance text of the President's remarks at a memorial service for victims of the Upper Big Branch mine disaster in Beckley, WV

Announcement: Public Voting Begins Tomorrow for Race to the Top High School Commencement Challenge

Released April 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Advance text of the President's remarks at the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship

Released April 27

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton and Secretary of Agriculture Thomas J. Vilsack

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Virginia

Fact sheet: Young Adults and the Affordable Care Act

Advance text of the President's remarks on the first meeting of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform

Advance text of the President's remarks at Siemens Energy, Inc., in Fort Madison, IA

Transcript of remarks by National Economic Council Director Lawrence H. Summers at the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship

Released April 28

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Advance text of the President's remarks at POET Biorefining in Macon, MO

Advance text of the President's remarks on financial regulatory reform in Quincy, IL

Released April 29

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano, Department of the Interior Deputy Secretary David J. Hayes, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change Carol M. Browner, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Administrator Jane Lubchenco, and Rear Adm. Sally Brice-O'Hara, USCG, Deputy Commandant for Operations, Coast Guard Headquarters, on the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President will address the annual meeting of the Business Council

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Mississippi

Text: Statement from Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius on News that California Insurer, Anthem, is Withdrawing Proposed 39-Percent Rate Increase

Released April 30

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama To Travel to Central New Jersey

Statement by the Press Secretary: Top 3 Finalists Announced for Race to the Top High School Commencement Challenge

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 5147 and S. 3253

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to North Dakota

Text: Romer Post: Statement on the Advance Estimate of GDP for First Quarter of 2010

Released May 1

Advance text of the President's commencement address at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, MI

Released May 2

Transcripts of press gaggles by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the cancellation of the President's May 5 visit to New Jersey

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's briefing on the attempted terrorist attack in Times Square

Released May 3

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Top Administration Officials Discuss Ongoing Oil Spill Response With BP Leadership

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Alabama

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Massachusetts

Released May 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Kalamazoo Central High School Wins Commencement Challenge

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Tennessee

Fact sheet: The Affordable Care Act's Early Retirees Reinsurance Program

Released May 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released May 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and Deputy Treasury Secretary Neal Wolin

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator W. Craig Fugate, Mayor Karl Dean of Nashville, TN, and American Red Cross Senior Vice President for Disaster Relief Joe Becker on the flooding in Tennessee

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama to Welcome NCAA Champion University of Connecticut Women's Basketball Team

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's travel to the Buffalo, NY, area on May 13 to discuss the economy

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's Southeastern flood briefing

Statement by the Press Secretary on the situation in Greece

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Maryland

Released May 7

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes and Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Adviser for Iraq and Afghanistan Lt. Gen. Douglas E. Lute on the upcoming visit by President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan

Statement by the Press Secretary: Senior Administration Officials Visit Tennessee To Support Response and Recovery Efforts

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 4360

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to California

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer on the employment situation in April

Released May 9

Advance text of the President's commencement address at Hampton University in Hampton, VA

Released May 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl W. Eikenberry, and Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan

Statement by the Press Secretary: President and First Lady To Host White House Jewish American Heritage Month Reception

Released May 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator W. Craig Fugate

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Releases National Strategy To Reduce Drug Use and Its Consequences

Statement by the Press Secretary: Child Obesity Task Force Unveils Action Plan: Solving the Problem of Childhood Obesity Within a Generation

Statement by the Press Secretary: Cabinet and Senior Administration Officials Scheduled To Join in National Lab Day Events To Promote "Educate to Innovate" Campaign for Excellence in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Education

Statement by the Press Secretary on Egypt's state of emergency extension

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of President Alan Garcia Perez of Peru to the White House

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Kentucky

Released May 12

Transcript of a press briefing by White House Domestic Policy Council Director Melody C. Barnes, Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change Carol M. Browner, and Office of Management and Budget Acting Deputy Director Jeffrey B. Liebman on oil spill response legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary: First Lady Michelle Obama Announces Presidential Directive on Military Families

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of Prime Minister Sa'ad al-Din al-Hariri of Lebanon

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to New Hampshire

Fact sheet: Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Legislative Package

Released May 13

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama To Welcome NCAA Champion University of Connecticut Women's Basketball Team

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's visit to Youngstown, OH

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Submission of the new START Treaty to the Senate

Statements by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to South Dakota

Fact sheet: The New START Treaty—Maintaining a Strong Nuclear Deterrent

Advance text of the President's remarks at Industrial Support, Inc., in Buffalo, NY

Released May 14

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President has signed H.R. 5146

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Mississippi

Released May 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama To Welcome NCAA Men's Basketball Champion Duke University Blue Devils at the White House

Statement by the Press Secretary on Iran

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President has signed H.R. 3714

Released May 18

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by a senior administration official on the visit of President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico

Advance text of the President's remarks at V&M STAR Ohio in Youngstown, OH

Released May 19

Statement by the Press Secretary on the sinking of South Korean Navy patrol ship *Cheonan*

Text of remarks by President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico at a White House welcoming ceremony

Text: Joint Pakistan-U.S. statement on the visit of National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., and Central Intelligence Agency Director Leon E. Panetta to Pakistan on May 18 and 19

Released May 20

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on a Malawi court ruling criminalizing the sexual orientation and gender identity of Steven Monjeza and Tiwonge Chimbalanga

Released May 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Directs Administration To Create First-Ever National Efficiency and Emissions Standards for Medium- and Heavy-Duty Trucks

Released May 22

Advance text of the President's commencement address at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, NY

Released May 24

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, U.S. Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Thad W. Allen, and Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change Carol M. Browner

Statement by the Press Secretary: President and First Lady To Host Concert Honoring Paul McCartney in the East Room

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama, Vice President Biden To Participate in Memorial Day Ceremonies

Statement by the Press Secretary on the sinking of the South Korean Navy patrol ship *Cheonan*

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President has signed H.R. 1121, H.R. 1442, H.R. 2802, H.R. 5148, H.R. 5160, and S. 1067

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Oklahoma

Text: Letter from Office of Management and Budget Director Peter R. Orszag in response to a letter from Sens. Carl Levin and Joseph I. Lieberman and Rep. Patrick Murphy regarding "don't ask, don't tell"

Released May 25

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Calls on Congress To Pass a Small Business Jobs Package

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's visit to Louisiana's Gulf Coast

Fact sheet: President Obama Calls for Passage of Small Business Jobs Package, Including Two New Lending Initiatives

Advance text of the President's remarks calling on Congress to pass small-business jobs legislation

Statement by National Security Council Spokesman Mike Hammer on the parliamentary elections in Ethiopia

Text: Letter from Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John O. Brennan and National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., to Sen. Carl Levin, conveying the President's decision to provide additional support for strategic and integrated Southwest border security

Released May 26

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's visit to Chicago, IL

Text: Transcript of remarks by Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John O. Brennan at the Center for Strategic and International Studies

Released May 27

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama To Travel to Louisiana

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Senate introduction of Home Star legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President has signed H.R. 5014, S. 1782, and S. 3333

Fact Sheet: Advancing Our Interests: Actions in Support of the President's National Security Strategy

Released May 28

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Text: Statement by National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., on the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference

Text: Memorandum from White House Counsel Robert Bauer regarding the review of discussions relating to Rep. Joe Sestak

Text: Excerpt of Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer's op-ed: Keeping Teachers in the Classroom

Released May 29

Statement by the Press Secretary on President Bingu wa Mutharika of Malawi pardoning Steven Monjeza and Tiwonge Chimbalanga

Released May 31

Advance text of the President's Memorial Day remarks at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, IL

Advance text of the President's Memorial Day remarks at Andrews Air Force Base, MD

Released June 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on Iraq's Federal Supreme Court certification of Iraqi election results

Released June 2

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary on the resignation of Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama of Japan

Excerpts of the President's remarks at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA

Advance text of the President's remarks at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA

Released June 3

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statements by the Press Secretary on President Obama's return visit to the Louisiana Gulf Coast

Statement by the Press Secretary on Andrew Romanoff's Colorado Senate race

Statement by the Press Secretary on the 2011 APEC leaders meeting in Honolulu, HI

Released June 4

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Cabinet Secretaries, Senior Officials Hold Events Across the Country To Highlight Administration's Commitment to Job Creation, Economic Growth

Statement by the Press Secretary: Chefs Answer the First Lady's Call To Join *Let's Move!*

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesman Mike Hammer on the election of Naoto Kan as Prime Minister of Japan

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesman Mike Hammer on the Israeli military's raid on the Turkish ferry MV *Mavi Marmara*

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer on the employment situation in May

Released June 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and National Incident Commander for the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Honors Outstanding Mathematics and Science Teachers

Statement by the Press Secretary: Seniors Across America To Host Local Meetings, Participate in Health Care Tele-Town Hall Meeting with President Obama

Excerpts of the President's commencement address at Kalamazoo Central High School in Kalamazoo, MI

Advance text of the President's commencement address at Kalamazoo Central High School in Kalamazoo, MI

Released June 8

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's visit to Gulf Coast States on June 14 and 15

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President has signed H.R. 5128 and H.R. 5139

Fact sheet: The Affordable Health Care Act: Strengthening Medicare, Combating Misinformation, and Protecting America's Seniors

Released June 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President has signed H.R. 2711, H.R. 3250, H.R. 3634, H.R. 3892, H.R. 4017, H.R. 4095, H.R. 4139, H.R. 4214, H.R. 4238, H.R. 4425, H.R. 4547, H.R. 4628, and H.R. 5330

Fact sheet: U.S. Assistance to the West Bank and Gaza

Fact sheet: New U.N. Security Council Sanctions on Iran

Released June 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Text: Letter from Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill National Incident Commander Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG, to BP p.l.c. Chairman of the Board Carl-Henric Svanberg

Released June 11

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama To Celebrate Father's Day

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia

Advance text of the President's remarks on small-business legislation

Released June 13

Statement by the Press Secretary on Israel's investigation into the Gaza Freedom Flotilla incident

Released June 14

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Released June 15

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary on House of Representatives action on legislation to provide tax incentives for small-business job creation and to increase the availability of credit for small businesses

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President has signed S. 3473

Advance text of the President's national address on the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico

Released June 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner, Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Stuart Levey, Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change Carol M. Browner, and Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Incident Commander Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG

Fact sheet: Claims and Escrow

Advance text of the President's remarks on meeting with BP p.l.c. leadership

Released June 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Vice President Joe Biden and Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Administration Kicks Off "Recovery Summer" With Groundbreakings and Events Across the Country

Statement by the Press Secretary on Rep. Joseph L. Barton's apology to BP p.l.c. representatives during a congressional hearing

Released June 18

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Released June 20

Statement by the Press Secretary on the situation in the Gaza Strip

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia

Released June 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Launches Next Phase in Fatherhood Efforts With the President's Fatherhood and Mentoring Initiative

Statement by the Press Secretary on Congress's Iran sanctions conference report agreement

Released June 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: On Anniversary of Olmstead, President Obama Highlights Administration's Actions To Assist Americans with Disabilities

Fact sheet: The Affordable Care Act's New *Patient's Bill of Rights*

Text of a letter to Sens. Patrick J. Leahy and Jefferson B. Sessions III from former Solicitors General expressing their support of Solicitor General Elena Kagan's nomination to the Supreme Court

Announcement: White House Appoints 2010–2011 Class of White House Fellows

Released June 23

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes and Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Russia and Central Asian Affairs Michael McFaul on the visit of President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia (dated June 22; released June 23)

Statement by the Press Secretary: First Lady Launches President's Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition

Text: Excerpts of a joint op-ed piece by Treasury Secretary Timothy F. Geithner and National Economic Council Director Lawrence H. Summers titled "Our Agenda for the G–20"

Text of a letter to Sens. Patrick J. Leahy and Jefferson B. Sessions III from law clerks expressing their support of Solicitor General Elena Kagan's nomination to the Supreme Court

Released June 24

Statement by the Press Secretary: Republican Obstruction of Jobless Benefits and State Aid

Statement by the Press Secretary on the new Australian Prime Minister Julia E. Gillard

Statement by the Press Secretary on U.S. Humanitarian Assistance and the Situation in Yemen

Statement by the Press Secretary on Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change Carol M. Browner's meeting with BP p.l.c. executives

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to West Virginia

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Puerto Rico

Fact sheet: U.S.-Russia Relations: "Reset" Fact Sheet

Text of a joint statement by the coordinators of the U.S.-Russia Presidential Commission

Released June 25

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3962

Fact sheet: The United States Government's Haiti Earthquake Response

Fact sheet: National Strategy for Trusted Identities in Cyberspace

Fact sheet: A New Approach to Advancing Development

Fact sheet: The G–8 Muskoka Summit: Saving Lives Through New G–8 Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Initiative

Fact sheet: The G–8 Muskoka Summit: A Historic Commitment to Accountability

Fact sheet: The G–8 Muskoka Summit: Following Through on Food Security

Fact sheet: An Improved Approach to Agriculture and Food Security: Haiti

Fact sheet: An Improved Approach to Agriculture and Food Security: Rwanda

Fact sheet: An Improved Approach to Agriculture and Food Security: Bangladesh

Released June 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economics Michael Froman, National Security Council Senior Director for Asian Affairs Jeff Bader, and National Security Council Director for Asian Affairs Daniel Russel

Statement by the Press Secretary on the U.S.-Ghana World Cup match

Text: G–8 Muskoka Declaration: Recovery and New Beginnings

Text: G–8 Muskoka: Non-proliferation and Iran

Text: G–8 Leaders Statement on Countering Terrorism

Text: G–8 Summit: Joint Statement on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict by Dmitry Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, and Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic

Released June 27

Text: The U.S.-Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership

Text: G–20 Toronto Summit: U.S. Financial Reform and the G–20 Leaders' Agenda

Text: G–20 Toronto Summit: Acting on Our Global Energy and Climate Change Challenges

Text: G–20 Toronto Summit: A Global Response Through the Multilateral Development Banks To Promote Sustainable Development

Text: G–20 Toronto Summit: Progress Since Pittsburgh

Text: The G–20 Summit in Toronto: Global Leadership To Combat Corruption

Text: The G–20 Toronto Summit Declaration

Advance text of the President's opening remarks at a news conference in Toronto, Canada

Released June 28

Statement by the Press Secretary on Protecting the Flathead River Basin

Statement by the Press Secretary on the death of former Lithuanian President Algirdas Brazauskas

Fact sheet: The National Space Policy

Fact sheet: Doubling the Amount of Commercial Spectrum To Unleash the Innovative Potential of Wireless Broadband

Excerpts of Supreme Court Associate Justice-designate Elena Kagan's opening statement before the Senate Judiciary Committee

Released June 29

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama, Vice President Biden To Attend the Memorial Service for U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Statement by the Press Secretary: Administration Officials Continue Travel Across the Country for "Recovery Summer" Events, Project Site Visits

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that on June 28 the President signed H.R. 3951

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Texas

Released June 30

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S.J. Res. 33

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesman Mike Hammer on the 60th anniversary of the U.S.-Pakistan Fulbright Program

Excerpts of the President's opening remarks at a town hall meeting in Racine, WI

Advance text of the President's opening remarks at a town hall meeting in Racine, WI

Appendix D—Presidential Documents Published in the *Federal Register*

This appendix lists Presidential documents released by the Office of the Press Secretary and published in the Federal Register. The texts of the documents are printed in the Federal Register (F.R.) at the citations listed below. The documents are also printed in title 3 of the Code of Federal Regulations and in the Compilation of Presidential Documents.

PROCLAMATIONS

Proc. No.	*Date 2010*	*Subject*	*75 F.R. Page*
8470	Jan. 4	National Mentoring Month, 2010	1265
8471	Jan. 4	National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, 2010	1267
8472	Jan. 8	National Influenza Vaccination Week, 2010	2051
8473	Jan. 15	Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday, 2010	3841
8474	Jan. 15	Religious Freedom Day, 2010	3843
8475	Jan. 20	National Angel Island Day, 2010	3981
8476	Feb. 1	National African American History Month, 2010	6083
8477	Feb. 1	American Heart Month, 2010	6085
8478	Feb. 24	American Red Cross Month, 2010	9325
8479	Mar. 1	Irish-American Heritage Month, 2010	10159
8480	Mar. 1	Read Across America Day, 2010	10161
8481	Mar. 2	Women's History Month, 2010	10631
8482	Mar. 5	National Consumer Protection Week, 2010	10991
8483	Mar. 5	Save Your Vision Week, 2010	10993
8484	Mar. 15	National Poison Prevention Week, 2010	13215
8485	Mar. 24	Greek Independence Day: A National Day of Celebration of Greek and American Democracy, 2010	15601
8486	Mar. 30	Education and Sharing Day, U.S.A., 2010	15989
8487	Mar. 31	Cesar Chavez Day, 2010	17025
8488	Mar. 31	Census Day, 2010	17837
8489	Apr. 1	National Cancer Control Month, 2010	17839
8490	Apr. 1	National Child Abuse Prevention Month, 2010	17841
8491	Apr. 1	National Donate Life Month, 2010	17843
8492	Apr. 1	National Sexual Assault Awareness Month, 2010	17845
8493	Apr. 2	National Financial Literacy Month, 2010	17847
8494	Apr. 8	National D.A.R.E. Day, 2010	18749
8495	Apr. 9	Pan American Day and Pan American Week, 2010	19181
8496	Apr. 9	National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day, 2010	19183
8497	Apr. 12	Honoring the Victims of the Montcoal, West Virginia, Mine Disaster	19867
8498	Apr. 16	National Park Week, 2010	20887

PROCLAMATIONS (Continued)

Proc. No.	Date 2010	Subject	75 F.R. Page
8499	Apr. 16	National Crime Victims' Rights Week, 2010	20889
8500	Apr. 16	National Volunteer Week, 2010	20891
8501	Apr. 16	National Day of Service and Remembrance for Victims and Survivors of Terrorism, 2010	20893
8502	Apr. 20	National Equal Pay Day, 2010	21155
8503	Apr. 21	Earth Day, 2010	21977
8504	Apr. 26	Death of Dorothy Height	22691
8505	Apr. 28	National Foster Care Month, 2010	23557
8506	Apr. 28	Older Americans Month, 2010	23559
8507	Apr. 28	Workers Memorial Day, 2010	23561
8508	Apr. 29	Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, 2010	24363
8509	Apr. 29	National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, 2010	24365
8510	Apr. 29	National Charter Schools Week, 2010	24367
8511	Apr. 29	Law Day, U.S.A., 2010	24369
8512	Apr. 29	Loyalty Day, 2010	24371
8513	Apr. 30	Jewish American Heritage Month, 2010	25099
8514	Apr. 30	National Day of Prayer, 2010	25101
8515	May 6	Military Spouse Appreciation Day, 2010	26055
8516	May 7	National Women's Health Week, 2010	26873
8517	May 7	Mother's Day, 2010	26875
8518	May 7	Peace Officers Memorial Day and Police Week, 2010	26877
8519	May 13	Emergency Medical Services Week, 2010	27919
8520	May 14	National Defense Transportation Day and National Transportation Week, 2010	28181
8521	May 14	World Trade Week, 2010	28183
8522	May 14	Armed Forces Day, 2010	28185
8523	May 20	National Hurricane Preparedness Week, 2010	29389
8524	May 20	National Safe Boating Week, 2010	29391
8525	May 20	Small Business Week, 2010	29393
8526	May 20	National Maritime Day, 2010	29395
8527	May 28	African-American Music Appreciation Month, 2010	32075
8528	May 28	Great Outdoors Month, 2010	32077
8529	May 28	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month, 2010	32079
8530	May 28	National Caribbean-American Heritage Month, 2010	32081
8531	May 28	National Oceans Month, 2010	32083
8532	May 28	Prayer for Peace, Memorial Day, 2010	32085
8533	June 10	90th Anniversary of the Department of Labor Women's Bureau, 2010	34305
8534	June 10	King Kamehameha Day, 2010	34307
8535	June 11	Flag Day and National Flag Week, 2010	34309

PROCLAMATIONS (Continued)

Proc. No.	*Date 2010*	*Subject*	*75 F.R. Page*
8536	June 12	To Implement Certain Provisions of the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement With Respect to Costa Rica, and for Other Purposes	34311
8537	June 18	Father's Day, 2010	35949
8538	June 18	World Refugee Day, 2010	35951
8539	June 29	To Modify Duty-Free Treatment Under the Generalized System of Preferences	38905
8540	June 30	Death of Senator Robert C. Byrd, President Pro Tempore of the Senate	38911

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

E.O. No.	*Date 2010*	*Subject*	*75 F.R. Page*
13528	Jan. 11	Establishment of the Council of Governors	2053
13529	Jan. 16	Ordering the Selected Reserve and Certain Individual Ready Reserve Members of the Armed Forces to Active Duty	3331
13530	Jan. 29	President's Advisory Council on Financial Capability	5481
13531	Feb. 18	National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform	7927
13532	Feb. 26	Promoting Excellence, Innovation, and Sustainability at Historically Black Colleges and Universities	9749
13533	Mar. 1	Providing an Order of Succession Within the Department of Defense	10163
13534	Mar. 11	National Export Initiative	12433
13535	Mar. 24	Ensuring Enforcement and Implementation of Abortion Restrictions in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act	15599
13536	Apr. 12	Blocking Property of Certain Persons Contributing to the Conflict in Somalia	19869
13537	Apr. 14	Interagency Group on Insular Areas	20237
13538	Apr. 19	Establishing the President's Management Advisory Board	20895
13539	Apr. 21	President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology	21973
13540	Apr. 26	Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development	22497

EXECUTIVE ORDERS (Continued)

E.O. No.	Date 2010	Subject	75 F.R. Page
13541	May 7	Temporary Organization to Facilitate a Strategic Partnership With the Republic of Iraq	26879
13542	May 13	Providing an Order of Succession Within the Department of Agriculture	27921
13543	May 21	National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling	29397
13544	June 10	Establishing the National Prevention, Health Promotion, and Public Health Council	33983
13545	June 22	President's Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition	37283

OTHER PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Doc No.	Date 2010	Subject	75 F.R. Page
	Jan. 20	Memorandum: Addressing Tax Delinquency by Government Contractors	3979
	Jan. 20	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Terrorists Who Threaten to Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process	3845
	Jan. 29	Memorandum: Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future	5485
	Feb. 2	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation in or in Relation to Cote D'Ivoire	5675
	Feb. 3	Memorandum: A Comprehensive Federal Strategy on Carbon Capture and Storage	6087
10–04	Feb. 3	Presidential Determination: Certifications Pursuant to Section 104 of the United States-India Nuclear Cooperation Approval and Nonproliferation Enhancement Act Regarding the Safeguards Agreement Between India and the International Atomic Energy Agency	7337
	Feb. 9	Memorandum: Establishing a Task Force on Childhood Obesity	7197
	Feb. 23	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency Relating to Cuba and of the Emergency Authority Relating to the Regulation of the Anchorage and Movement of Vessels	8793
	Feb. 26	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Zimbabwe	10157

OTHER PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS (Continued)

Doc No.	*Date 2010*	*Subject*	*75 F.R. Page*
	Mar. 10	Memorandum: Finding and Recapturing Improper Payments	12119
	Mar. 10	Memorandum: Delegation of Certain Functions Under Section 204(c) of the United States-India Nuclear Cooperation Approval and Nonproliferation Enhancement Act (Public Law 110–369)	13427
	Mar. 10	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran	12117
	Apr. 6	Memorandum: Combating Noncompliance With Recovery Act Reporting Requirements	18045
	Apr. 7	Memorandum: Delegation of a Reporting Authority	19533
10–05	Apr. 7	Presidential Determination: Waiver of and Certification of Statutory Provisions Regarding the Palestine Liberation Organization Office	19537
10–06	Apr. 7	Presidential Determination: Waiver of Restriction on Providing Funds to the Palestinian Authority	19535
	Apr. 15	Memorandum: Respecting the Rights of Hospital Patients To Receive Visitors and To Designate Surrogate Decision Makers for Medical Emergencies	20511
	Apr. 16	Memorandum: A 21st Century Strategy for America's Great Outdoors	20767
	Apr. 20	Memorandum: Delegation of Certain Functions Under Section 1265 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010	22203
	Apr. 26	Memorandum: Establishing an Interagency Task Force on Federal Contracting Opportunities for Small Businesses	22499
	Apr. 27	Memorandum: Delegation of Certain Functions Under Section 104(g) of the United States-India Peaceful Atomic Energy Cooperation Act of 2006, as Amended by Public Law 110–369	23563
	May 3	Memorandum: Task Force on Space Industry Workforce and Economic Development	24781
	May 3	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Actions of the Government of Syria	24779
	May 4	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority Relating To Certain Functions Under Section 201 (B) of the United States-india Nuclear Cooperation Approval And Nonproliferation Enhancement Act (Public Law 110–369)	27155

OTHER PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS (Continued)

Doc No.	*Date 2010*	*Subject*	*75 F.R. Page*
10–07	May 4	Presidential Determination: Determination on the Proposed Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America And the Government of Australia Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy	27161
10–08	May 10	Presidential Determination: Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Russian Federation for Cooperation In the Field of Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy	27163
	May 11	Memorandum: Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process	27157
	May 12	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Stabilization of Iraq	27399
	May 13	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Burma	27629
	May 19	Memorandum: Designating the Chairperson of the Defense Production Act Committee	32087
	May 21	Memorandum: Improving Energy Security, American Competitiveness and Job Creation, and Environmental Protection Through a Transformation of Our Nation's Fleet of Cars and Trucks	29399
	June 1	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority To Appoint Commissioned Officers of the Ready Reserve Corps of the Public Health Service	32245
	June 2	Memorandum: Extension of Benefits to Same-Sex Domestic Partners of Federal Employees	32247
10–09	June 2	Presidential Determination: Suspension of Limitations Under the Jerusalem Embassy Act	33489
10–10	June 8	Presidential Determination: Unexpected Urgent Refugee and Migration Needs Related to Somalia and Food Pipeline Breaks for Refugee and Other Displaced Populations of Concern Globally	34617
	June 8	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Actions and Policies of Certain Members of the Government of Belarus and Other Persons That Undermine Democratic Processes or Institutions in Belarus	32841
	June 8	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Western Balkans	32843
	June 10	Memorandum: Disposing of Unneeded Federal Real Estate—Increasing Sales Proceeds, Cutting Operating Costs, and Improving Energy Efficiency	33987

OTHER PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS (Continued)

Doc No.	*Date 2010*	*Subject*	*75 F.R. Page*
	June 14	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to North Korea	34317
	June 17	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Risk of Nuclear Proliferation Created by the Accumulation of Weapons-usable Fissile Material in the Territory of the Russian Federation	34921
	June 18	Memorandum: Enhancing Payment Accuracy Through a "Do Not Pay List"	35953
	June 18	Memorandum: Lobbyists on Agency Boards and Commissions	35955
	June 25	Memorandum: Providing Stability and Security for Medicare Reimbursements	37973
	June 28	Memorandum: Unleashing the Wireless Broadband Revolution	38387
	June 30	Memorandum: Long-Term Gulf Coast Restoration Support Plan	38913

Subject Index

ABC
  ABC News—918
  "World News with Diane Sawyer"—919
Accountability Office, Government—46
Aeronautics and Space Administration, National. *See* Space program
Afghanistan
  Afghan military and security forces—83, 101, 126, 415–417, 626–627, 632, 636, 694, 729, 821, 823, 855, 860, 868, 878, 889
  Agricultural production, improvement efforts—415, 627, 695
  Bagram Air Base—415
  Central Intelligence Agency personnel, casualties—1–2, 176–177
  Civilian casualties—627, 632–633, 636
  Counternarcotics and drug interdiction efforts—867
  Democracy efforts—83, 415, 626–627, 630, 632, 636–637, 694, 729, 821, 860, 867, 878, 889
  Detention facilities, transfer of responsibility to Afghan forces—627, 636
  Economic growth and development—415, 627, 630–632, 636
  Energy production, improvement efforts—415
  Former regime—101, 417, 626–627, 632–634, 694, 728–729, 821, 823, 855, 860, 889, 912
  Government corruption, efforts to eliminate—83, 415, 417, 424, 543, 627, 630, 632, 637
  Insurgency and terrorist attacks—1, 626–628, 630, 632–634, 694–695, 728
  International assistance—83, 417, 637, 694, 762, 823, 855, 867–868, 889
  Judicial reforms—637
  NATO International Security Assistance Force
    Acting commander—953
    Commander—416, 632–633, 635, 729, 850, 854–855, 860–861, 889, 912, 933, 943, 953
  NATO, role—415–417, 424, 627–629, 635–636, 695, 729, 823, 855–856, 867, 889, 892
  Parliamentary elections—627, 637
  Poverty—889
  President—414, 416, 424, 626, 635, 860, 889, 892, 932, 944, 953
  President Obama's visit—414–416, 932–933
  Provincial Reconstruction Teams—906
  Reconciliation efforts—627, 632, 634–636, 868, 889
  Reconstruction and infrastructure development—415, 424, 543, 626–627, 630, 636–637, 868, 878, 889
  Relations with Arab States—626–627, 631, 635, 638
  Relations with Pakistan—417, 626–627, 631, 889
  Strategic Dialogue, U.S.-Afghanistan—635, 638
Afghanistan—Continued
  Strategic Partnership Declaration, U.S.-Afghanistan—638
  Suspected terrorist safe havens—100
  Terrorism—1, 219, 415–417, 635, 638, 855, 867–868, 878, 889, 891, 898, 924, 930, 937, 942, 953
  Terrorist attack at Forward Operating Base Chapman in Khost Province—1–2, 176
  United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan—637
  U.S. Ambassador—416, 632, 933, 943
  U.S. assistance—415
  U.S. military forces
    Casualties—418, 632–633, 636, 693, 745, 821, 860, 922, 927, 933
    Deployment—1, 33, 42, 57, 75, 80, 83, 100, 114, 118, 126, 144, 146, 156–157, 164, 173, 181, 212, 215, 217, 252, 367, 375, 415–418, 428, 442, 449, 503, 506, 509, 516, 519, 522, 543, 604, 619, 626, 628, 630, 632–633, 635, 652, 655, 693–694, 728–729, 774, 803, 821, 823, 850, 854, 856, 860, 878, 889, 891–892, 900, 905–906, 930, 933, 937, 942, 953
  U.S. policy review—164, 173, 182, 219, 428, 630, 635, 694, 723, 854–855, 860–861, 889, 892
  Women, status—338, 544, 627, 632, 637
Africa
  See also Developing countries; *specific country*
  African Development Fund—950
  Agricultural production, improvement efforts—733
  Counterterrorism efforts—423
  Crime and narcotrafficking—733
  Economic development strategies, strengthening efforts—423
  Government officials, corruption issues—733
Agricultural Mortgage Corporation, Federal—921
Agriculture
  Agricultural exports, expansion—363
  Food safety—814, 820, 886
Agriculture, Department of
  Conservation Reserve Program—509
  Food Safety, Under Secretary for—919
  General Counsel—954
  Natural Resources Conservation Service—509
  Pigford class-action lawsuit on discrimination, settlement—196, 216, 327, 742
  Research, Education, and Economics, Under Secretary for—938
  Secretary—216, 362–363, 407, 508, 548–550, 559, 563, 565, 924
AIDS. *See* HIV/AIDS; *specific country or region*
Al Qaida. *See* Terrorism

Alabama
Disaster assistance—941
Governor—721, 738–739, 741, 766, 813–815, 940, 946
President's visit—811, 813, 818–819, 825, 951
Tacky Jack's Tavern & Grill in Orange Beach—951
Theodore Industrial Port in Theodore—813
American. *See other part of subject*
American Indian and Alaska Native Culture and Arts Development, Institute of—917
American Indians and Alaska Natives
Cherokee Nation—466
Cobell class-action lawsuit on Indian trust management, settlement—196, 742
Health care system, improvement efforts—406
Indian Health Care Improvement Act—404, 406
Public health issues—406
Tribal nations, relations with Federal Government—406, 466
American Latino, Commission To Study the Potential Creation of a National Museum of the—606
Amtrak—917
Appeals, Special Panel on—918
Appropriations. *See* Budget, Federal
Arctic Research Commission, U.S.—954
Argentina, President—936
Arizona
Disaster assistance—919, 930
Governor—949, 953
Illegal immigration enforcement legislation—534, 558–559, 572–573, 607, 672, 674–675, 708, 712, 730–731
Wildfires, containment efforts—953
Arkansas
Flash flooding, damage and recovery efforts—807, 951
Governor—942, 951
Storms, tornadoes, and floods, damage and recovery efforts—942
Armed Forces, U.S.
See also Defense and national security; Defense, Department of; *specific military branch*
Children of deployed servicemembers, mentoring programs—48
"Don't ask, don't tell" policy, repeal—84, 164, 172, 182, 514–515, 518, 520, 524, 711, 736, 853, 893
Expansion—821, 907
Funding—83, 133, 137, 210, 449, 461, 546, 560, 743, 746, 803
GI bill legislation—248, 418, 821
Military families—83, 416, 418, 604–605, 743, 746, 821, 948
Military family benefits, expansion—418, 905
Military technologies, development and funding—248, 704, 821
Armed Forces, U.S.—Continued
National Guard—604, 659, 712, 721, 731, 739, 741, 747, 773, 814, 820, 825
Reorganization—742
Reserve members, activation to assist in Haitian earthquake relief efforts—31
Reserve Officers Training Corps—941
Servicemembers
Casualties—418, 535, 604, 743–746, 820, 916
Citizenship—533, 535
Deployment—48, 696, 743, 746, 823–825, 843, 907
Electronic medical records, development—250
Female servicemembers—693
Hispanic and Mexican American servicemembers—607
Meetings with President—920, 948
Muslim servicemembers—696
Pay increase—418, 905
Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), treatment efforts—418, 604, 821, 906
Service and dedication—416–419, 533, 590, 604, 693–694, 697, 743, 745–746, 782, 820–822, 855, 860, 905–906
Traumatic brain injuries, treatment efforts—418, 604, 821
Armenia
Armenian Remembrance Day—537
President—936
Relations with Turkey—537
Arms and munitions
See also specific country
Nuclear weapons and material
2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference—742
Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty—323, 466, 603
Global Initiative To Combat Nuclear Terrorism—869
Global Nuclear Security Summit—424, 465, 468, 472, 481–487, 490–491, 515, 603, 758, 762, 856, 934, 936
Nonproliferation efforts—83, 164, 173, 182, 323–324, 412, 424, 449, 465–468, 471–472, 474, 481–483, 486, 488, 491, 603, 615–616, 677, 681, 695, 701, 742–743, 749, 762, 801–802, 856
Nuclear Posture Review—465–466, 468, 472, 481, 486
Security—83, 324, 412, 424, 465–468, 472, 474, 481–487, 490–492, 515, 650, 695, 701, 743, 762
Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with Russia, expansion—323, 412–413, 424, 465, 467, 471–472, 474–476, 481–482, 486, 488, 491, 495, 515, 615, 650, 807, 856, 861, 872, 920, 931–932, 944

Arms and munitions—Continued
Nuclear weapons and material—Continued
Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons—323–324, 412, 465–468, 471–472, 474, 486–488, 490, 596, 615, 742–743, 800–802, 856
U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile, reduction—83, 323, 412, 465–467, 471, 474, 481, 483, 486, 488, 650, 801, 807
Weapons-grade plutonium stocks, reduction—486, 856
Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, Global Partnership Against the Spread of—486
Weapons of mass destruction—743, 774
Army, Department of the
Assistant Secretaries
Civil Works—508
Installations and Environment—918
Military Academy, U.S.—692, 946
Arts
See also Smithsonian Institution
Ford's Theatre—776
"In Performance at the White House" series
"A Celebration of Music From the Civil Rights Movement"—194
"Paul McCartney: The Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song"—759
"Let Freedom Ring" concert—42
"Nuclear Tipping Point," White House screening—934
"The Pacific," White House screening—929
Arts and the Humanities, National Foundation on the—918
Arts and the Humanities, President's Committee on the—290, 922
Arts, National Endowment for the—290
Ash Wednesday—209
Asia
Asian Development Bank—931
Asian Nations, Association of Southeast (ASEAN)—891
President Obama's visit—949
Trade with U.S.—62, 147–148, 170, 250
Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders
Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month—697
Efforts to increase participation in Federal programs—699
Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)—891, 894
Atomic Energy Agency, International (IAEA)—192, 324, 379, 474, 484–486, 615, 800–801
Attorney General. *See* Justice, Department of
Australia
Afghanistan, role—954
Economic relationship with U.S.—362
Australia—Continued
Nuclear energy, cooperation with U.S.—608
Prime Minister—930, 949, 954
Relations with U.S.—362, 949, 954
Aviation
Advanced airport security systems and technologies, development and funding—9, 11
Air travel security measures, expansion—3–4, 8–9, 11, 82, 534
Airport improvement projects—9, 203, 213
Airport security detection capabilities, review—1–4, 8–9, 11, 915
Awards. *See* Decorations, medals, and awards
Azerbaijan, U.S. Ambassador—947

Balkans, Western. *See* Europe
Bangladesh
Bangladesh Independence Day—413
Relations with U.S.—413
Battle Monuments Commission, American—952
Belarus, U.S. national emergency, continuation—795
Bermuda, Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, Bermuda-U.S. Treaty on—899
Bioethical Issues, Presidential Commission for the Study of—935
Blind or Severely Disabled, Committee for Purchase From People Who Are—954
Bosnia and Herzegovina, U.S. Ambassador—945
Boundary and Water Commission (United States and Mexico), International—918
BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, National Commission on the—691–692, 722–723, 727, 730, 746–747, 756, 767–768, 773, 812, 826, 833, 951
Brazil
Energy
Cooperation with El Salvador—335
Cooperation with U.S.—335
Nuclear energy, cooperation with Iran—945
President—916
United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, Brazilian personnel, casualties—916
Broadcasting Board of Governors—407
Broadcasting Bureau, International—921
Budget, Federal
See also specific Federal agency or organization
Accountability and transparency—119, 560, 702
Amendments—196, 406–407, 463, 639, 840
Appropriations
Aeronautics and Space Administration, National—196, 840
Agriculture, Department of—406, 840
Commerce, Department of—840
Defense, Department of—114, 196, 407, 840
District of Columbia—840
Education, Department of—119, 196, 244

Budget, Federal—Continued
Appropriations—Continued
Energy, Department of—196
Health and Human Services, Department of—196, 407
Homeland Security, Department of—196, 407, 840, 851
Housing and Urban Development, Department of—840
Justice, Department of—851
Labor, Department of—840
Museum and Library Services, Institute of—840
Northern Border Regional Commission—840
Small Business Administration—840
Southeast Crescent Regional Commission—840
State, Department of—407, 840
Transportation, Department of—840
Treasury, Department of the—196, 407, 840
Veterans Affairs, Department of—196
Congressional spending restraint—81–82, 102, 107, 119–120, 133, 146, 154, 157–158, 163, 187, 197, 210, 252, 344, 460, 479, 498, 546–547, 560, 601, 702, 755, 785, 803, 810, 887, 892, 901, 905, 909
Deficit—25, 36, 57, 59, 70, 80–81, 88, 102, 106, 114, 117–120, 132, 136–137, 144, 146, 156–157, 164, 167–169, 173, 175, 181, 183, 186, 188, 196–197, 201, 209–213, 215, 217, 223, 225, 247, 252, 255–256, 264, 276, 281, 284–285, 287, 289, 301, 319, 332, 345–346, 349, 354–355, 359, 371–372, 382, 388, 393, 399, 401, 405–406, 409, 413, 437, 439–440, 442–443, 446, 458, 460, 501, 505–507, 516, 518, 521, 546–547, 553–554, 560, 568, 601, 641, 645, 647, 652, 655, 706, 710, 753–755, 786, 792, 803, 806, 808, 810, 836, 846, 886–887, 892–893, 901, 909
Deficit reduction commission
Congressional establishment—70, 81, 102, 118, 120, 133, 136–137, 145–146, 158, 186–187, 197, 210, 215
Presidential establishment—136–137, 187, 197, 209, 215, 224
Entitlement spending, reform—285, 287, 289
Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, National Commission on—209–211, 215, 252, 446, 479, 506, 518, 546–547, 601, 647, 655, 755, 810, 863, 887, 892, 909, 924, 926, 939
Fiscal year 2010 budget—46, 106, 114, 196, 406, 421, 463, 639, 702
Fiscal year 2011 budget—46, 53, 64, 71, 81, 102, 106, 118, 120, 141, 157, 196, 210, 252, 344, 406–407, 433, 446, 463, 498, 502, 546, 639, 655, 658, 702, 755, 785, 833, 840, 851
Budget, Federal—Continued
Government programs, spending reductions—25, 36, 59, 80–81, 88, 118–120, 133, 154, 157, 197, 210, 252, 344–345, 414, 460, 479, 498, 518, 546, 560, 571, 601, 702, 755, 785, 803, 810, 887, 892, 905, 909
National debt—36, 75, 80–81, 88, 102, 106, 114, 116, 118–119, 137, 146, 157, 186, 188, 196, 209–210, 215, 225, 238, 252, 255–257, 318, 329–330, 345, 369, 405, 460–461, 546, 586, 601, 647, 652, 754, 803, 863, 885, 887, 893, 909
Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2009—197, 210, 215, 223, 252, 446, 460, 479, 546, 601, 755, 887, 892, 927
Bulgaria
Ambassador to U.S.—935
Prime Minister—935
Burkina Faso, U.S. Ambassador—947
Burma
Democracy efforts—839
Human rights issues—839
U.S. national emergency, continuation—656
Business and industry
See also Commerce, international; Employment and unemployment; *specific State or company*
Airline industry—231
Automobile industry
Chrysler, bankruptcy—56, 221, 536, 706
Decline—221, 232, 522, 535–536, 706, 715, 717, 817
General Motors Corp., bankruptcy—56, 221, 536, 667, 706
Improvement—56, 221, 249, 353, 357, 457, 536, 667, 751, 763, 817
Strengthening efforts—98, 221, 352, 442–443, 503, 535, 641, 652, 666–667, 689, 706, 909
Banks and financial institutions
Auto dealer-lenders, consumer protection efforts—638
Bank deposits, Federal insurance—50–51, 753
Financial Crisis Responsibility Fee—19–20, 29, 39, 50–51, 59, 76, 102, 221, 249, 443, 504, 528, 556, 755, 810, 877
Insolvency—118
Loans to small businesses, increase—153, 237, 580, 643, 667, 704–705, 806, 809, 834
Proprietary trading, prohibition—528, 875, 877
Business Council, The—597, 941
Business leaders, meetings with President—919, 921, 929, 950
Commercial property values, decline—179
Community lenders—19, 29, 77, 86, 94, 99, 102, 130, 152–153, 169–170, 179–180, 193, 638, 660, 686

Business and industry—Continued
Corporate executives, compensation packages—19–20, 28–29, 39, 50–51, 76, 151, 249, 390, 512, 530, 568, 570, 572, 602, 661, 687, 715, 755, 788
Corporate responsibility—19, 29, 88, 453–454, 579, 592, 669
Corporate volunteer and mentoring programs—48
Credit Card Accountability Responsibility and Disclosure Act of 2009—24, 58, 88, 101, 144, 164, 172, 182, 218, 245, 353, 358, 444, 520, 653, 687, 707, 711
Credit cards, regulations and consumer protections—245, 875, 877
Credit freeze situation—19, 50–51, 58, 66, 77, 93, 99, 122, 130, 151–152, 169, 179, 190, 236, 248, 314, 373, 390, 440, 522, 546, 556, 612, 643, 684, 703, 710, 803, 806, 896, 904, 908
Domestic investment, promotion efforts—14, 77, 86, 117, 165, 174, 253
Entrepreneurship
International partnerships—542–545, 873
Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship—542, 544, 627
Promotion efforts—247, 551, 703, 873
Facility and equipment purchases, tax incentives—86, 173, 249, 322, 375, 383, 452, 549, 580–581, 611, 763, 806
Global competitiveness—13, 62, 78, 87, 171, 180, 183, 215, 223, 239, 247–248, 254, 360–361, 414, 431, 556–558, 584, 619–620, 656, 677, 711, 722, 752, 827, 873, 885, 910
Home loan industry—235, 237–238, 241, 358, 568, 875, 877, 904–905
Illegal immigrant labor, reduction efforts—534, 607, 672, 674, 699, 709, 712, 731
Intellectual property law, strengthening efforts—62, 66, 363, 671, 677
Manufacturing industry
Decline—60, 315, 553, 555
Improvement—178, 201, 598, 611, 642, 667
Strengthening efforts—14, 155, 556, 666–667, 756
Organized labor
Labor leaders, meeting with President—916
Legislation to expedite formation of unions—557
Unions—557
Preventive health and wellness, employer-based incentives—124
Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002—453–454

Business and industry—Continued
Small businesses
Economic impact—77, 80, 94, 98–99, 130, 132–133, 152, 167, 169, 178–180, 183, 189–190, 193, 215, 240–241, 255–256, 260, 302, 318, 329, 333, 353, 369–370, 373, 394, 398, 404, 440, 522, 527, 556, 566, 642, 652, 659, 684, 686, 699, 703, 705, 716, 773, 805, 827, 904, 907, 911
Federal assistance for international marketing and development—148
Hiring incentives—86, 98–99, 102, 105, 112, 119, 122, 130, 140, 153, 165, 173, 178, 180, 186–187, 194, 204, 210, 229, 249, 306, 322, 351, 375, 382–383, 452, 900
Lending fund—130, 170, 179–180, 187, 193, 229, 612, 643, 684, 705, 755, 763, 806, 834, 900, 908
Promotion efforts—15, 20, 24–25, 39–40, 51–53, 56–58, 62, 66, 79–80, 88, 93, 98–99, 102–103, 110, 117, 122–123, 130, 135, 144, 150, 165, 175, 178–180, 186, 193, 201–202, 213, 237, 249, 252–253, 255–256, 261, 289–290, 293, 299, 301, 306, 314–315, 319, 322, 324, 331–332, 349, 351, 354, 362, 371, 375, 383, 387, 392–393, 404, 410, 436, 438, 443, 452, 454, 479, 502, 504–505, 516, 520, 552, 567, 580, 600, 611–614, 643–644, 646, 648, 654, 660, 667–668, 691, 703–707, 742, 752–753, 755, 763, 793, 803, 806, 809–810, 831, 834, 837, 846, 849, 896
Small-business owners, meeting with President—951
Unemployed workers, incentives to hire—611
Wage discrimination—337, 557
Business Roundtable—246, 248–249, 251–252

Cabinet
See also specific Federal department or executive branch agency
Members, meetings with President—777, 849, 920
California
Democratic Party events—514, 519, 521, 705, 709, 947
Disaster assistance—929, 943
Energy, alternative and renewable sources and technologies—158, 514, 710
Fort Ross State Historic Park—865
Governor—243, 711, 714–715, 717, 924, 947
Housing market, decline—515, 710
Job creation and growth—710
Job losses—515, 710
President's visits—514, 519, 521, 705, 709, 714, 937, 947
Recession, effects—515–519, 522, 710, 715, 718
Solyndra, Inc., in Fremont—714, 947
Unemployment rate—711
Cameroon, U.S. Ambassador—954

Canada
2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver—211–212, 232, 306, 921
Group of Eight (G–8) summit in Muskoka—875, 878, 884, 952, 954
Group of Twenty (G–20) summit in Toronto—835, 856, 875–877, 883–887, 897–898, 952, 954–955
Highly enriched uranium stocks, partial disposal—485
President Obama's visit—856, 875–879, 881–884, 893, 954–955
Prime Minister—884, 916, 936, 948, 952, 954
Capitol, U.S., Architect of the—925
CBS, "CBS Evening News with Katie Couric"—922
Central African Republic
Lord's Resistance Army attacks—700
Peace efforts—700
U.S. Ambassador—951
Central America. *See specific country*
Central Intelligence Agency—1, 12, 176
Cesar Chavez Day—933
Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board, U.S.—931
Child Labor, World Day Against—808
Children and youth
See also Education
Childhood obesity, prevention efforts—52, 124, 185–186, 263
Fathers, influence—47, 842–844
Mentoring programs—47–49
My Summit 2010—954–955
Chile
Earthquake, damage and recovery efforts—307, 927
Highly enriched uranium stocks, disposal—485
President—307, 916, 920, 927–928, 936
Relations with U.S.—307, 920
U.S. Ambassador—954
China
Energy
Alternative and renewable sources and technologies—13, 158
Cooperation with U.S.—701
Expo 2010 Shanghai—955
High-speed rail lines, development and expansion—645
Human Rights Dialogue, U.S.-China—882
Human rights issues—701
Imports of certain passenger vehicle and light truck tires, additional duty on—147
Poverty and economic instability—223
President—62, 487, 489, 556, 700–701, 881, 885, 890–891, 934, 936
Relations with U.S.—489, 701, 882, 934
Security cooperation with U.S.—701
China—Continued
Shanghai, mayor—5
State Councilor—700
Strategic and Economic Dialogue, U.S.-China—489, 700, 882
Trade and economic practices—364, 489, 556, 842, 863, 885, 888, 911
Trade with U.S.—147, 170, 556
U.S. export licenses—802
Vice Premier—700
Christmas—11
Cinco de Mayo—605–606
Civil rights
African American leaders, meeting with President—923
Civil Rights Act of 1964—327
Civil rights movement—32–35, 41–43, 194–195, 327, 336, 389, 395, 574–575, 620–621, 735, 782, 841
Equal Pay Act of 1963—804
Freedom of religion—734
Freedom of speech—397, 595, 696
Freedom of the press—591, 595, 663
Hate crimes prevention legislation—24, 84, 852
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, equality—35, 162, 336, 759, 851–853
Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009—24, 58, 88, 164, 182, 327, 337, 353, 358, 441, 444, 518, 707, 711, 804
Minorities
Anti-Semitism—735
Racial profiling—559, 572, 607, 672, 674
Racial equality—33, 327, 336, 575, 735
Same-sex domestic partnerships, employee family benefits—95
Voting Rights Act of 1965—327
Wage equality—61, 84, 88, 172, 327, 337, 353, 358, 518, 707, 711, 804
Women's rights and gender equality—336–338, 432–433, 441, 544, 575, 735, 804
Climate change. *See* Environment
CNN, "Larry King Live" program—949
Colombia
Free trade agreement with U.S.—250, 363
President-elect—954
Trade with U.S.—79
U.S. Ambassador—943
Colorado
Democratic Party events—211, 216
Governor—211, 217
Lieutenant Governor—211
President's visit—211, 216, 924
Commerce, Department of
Industry and Security, Bureau of—932
International Trade Administration—363

Commerce, Department of—Continued
Market Access and Compliance, Assistant Secretary for—927
Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National—508, 579, 592, 778, 920
Patent and Trademark Office, U.S.—21, 250
Secretary—250, 360, 362, 463, 542, 698, 842, 864–865, 925
Standards and Technology, National Institute of Neutron Research, Center for—486
Under Secretaries
Export Administration—932
International Trade—932
Commerce, international
See also specific country or region
Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement—364
Currency rates—147, 489
Doha Development Agenda. *See* Developing countries
Financial regulations, modernization efforts—752, 835–836, 877, 885–886, 897, 946
Free and fair trade—60, 62, 113–114, 250, 361, 363–364, 424, 556, 668, 678, 701, 752, 863, 888, 911
Global financial markets
Stabilization efforts—83, 364, 375, 424, 482, 489, 671, 695, 701, 752, 835, 842, 856, 863, 875–876, 878, 883, 885, 887, 897–898
Unrest—364, 424, 616, 749, 752, 835, 875, 877, 883, 885
Group of Eight (G–8) nations—424, 869, 875, 878, 884, 948, 952, 954
Group of Twenty (G–20) nations—83, 362, 364, 412, 424, 472, 489, 543, 616–617, 671, 681, 687, 701, 752, 758, 761, 835–836, 842, 856, 863, 875–877, 883–884, 886–888, 891, 897–898, 938, 948, 952, 954–955
U.S. businesses in foreign nations, Federal Government assistance—362–363
U.S. exports
Expansion—62, 79, 148, 170, 202, 250, 360–364, 510, 556, 600, 668, 671, 677–678, 716, 752, 885
Export control reforms—250, 364, 600
Trade financing, expansion—250, 362
Trade imbalances—147, 170, 250, 361, 364, 863, 888
U.S. Export Promotion Cabinet—362
U.S. National Export Initiative—79, 250, 362–363, 600, 752, 857, 865, 885
Commission. *See other part of subject*
Communications
See also specific news organization, State, or country
Internet neutrality—125
News media, Presidential interviews—614, 918–919, 922–923, 930, 933, 946, 949–950
Communications Commission, Federal—125, 374
Community Service, Corporation for National and—47–48, 309, 923, 954
Congo, Democratic Republic of the
Civil war and ethnic conflict—338
Lord's Resistance Army attacks—700
Peace efforts—700
U.S. Ambassador—950
Women's rights—338
Congo, Republic of the, U.S. Ambassador—945
Congress
Bipartisanship—64, 70, 76, 82, 89, 96, 100–103, 107, 110–114, 116, 118, 120, 131–133, 135, 145, 147, 149, 155, 158, 165–169, 174, 180, 184, 186–190, 193, 195, 197, 200, 210, 214–215, 223–226, 233, 240–241, 245–246, 252, 255–257, 259, 271, 274, 281, 292, 302, 306, 316, 318, 320, 324, 330, 348–349, 351, 365, 375, 378, 381, 384, 390, 398, 413, 445, 475, 494, 501, 511, 518, 521, 523, 547, 559, 570, 572–573, 579, 607, 610, 623, 644, 669, 671, 675, 688, 699, 705, 708, 711–713, 722, 730–731, 757, 773, 803, 806, 808, 827, 841, 847, 955
Congressional Black Caucus—929
Congressional Hispanic Caucus—606, 929, 955
Congressional picnic—796
Earmark reform—102, 107, 109, 137, 145, 157, 165, 174, 184, 560, 702
Ethics reforms—69, 102, 647, 874
Filibusters, increase—144, 149
House of Representatives
Budget Committee—115
Democratic caucus—945
Education and Labor Committee—915
Energy and Commerce Committee—915
Financial Services Committee—684
House Democratic Caucus—23, 391
House Republican Conference—100, 131, 135, 189
Majority leader—398, 422, 834
Minority leader—278, 294–295, 300, 302, 377, 391–392, 404, 436, 517, 590, 902
Oversight and Government Reform Committee—46
Republican caucus—165, 167, 169, 174, 184, 356, 708, 711
Rules Committee—915
Speaker—23, 75, 290, 297–298, 302, 377, 382, 391–392, 394, 398, 401, 420, 422, 651–655, 697, 709, 760, 834, 915–916, 921
Ways and Means Committee—915
Lobbyist gift ban and campaign finance regulations—69–70, 81, 184, 874
Members, meetings with President—186–187, 316, 318, 320, 324, 331, 347, 365, 371, 413, 494, 525, 802, 915–917, 928–929, 931, 942–943, 945–947, 950–951, 955

Congress—Continued
New Democrat Coalition—928
Senate
Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee—390–391, 400
Democratic caucus—945
Environment and Public Works Committee—524
Judiciary Committee—525
Majority leader—16, 144, 220–224, 226, 228, 230–231, 234–239, 302, 377, 382, 391–392, 394, 401, 422, 525, 686, 776, 916, 921
Minority leader—195, 302, 359, 392, 517–518, 521, 525
Presidential nominations, confirmation process—154, 186, 188, 195, 775, 841
Republican caucus—708, 711–713, 730–731, 947
Senate Democratic Policy Committee—144
Connecticut
Disaster assistance—939
U.S. Senator, retirement—7, 915
Corporation. *See other part of subject*
Costa Rica
President—923, 942
Relations with U.S.—923
Cote d'Ivoire
U.S. Ambassador—942
U.S. national emergency, continuation—143
Crime. *See* Law enforcement and crime
Croatia
Croatian Statehood Day—876
North Atlantic Treaty Organization, accession—876
President-elect—923
Prime Minister—935
Relations with U.S.—876
Cuba
Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996—28
Democracy efforts—28, 406
Diplomatic relations with U.S.—406
Guantanamo Bay, U.S. Naval Base
Closure of detention facilities—3, 127–128
Detention of alleged terrorists—127, 823
Human rights issues—406
Ladies in White organization—406
Political prisoners, condition—406
U.S. national emergency, continuation—246
Cyprus
Ambassador to the U.S.—339
Relations with Greece—340
Czech Republic
President—467, 476, 935
President Obama's visit—444, 465, 467, 476, 603, 932, 935
Czech Republic—Continued
Prime Minister—935
Relations with U.S.—467
U.S. Ambassador—955

Darfur. *See* Sudan
Deaths
Biden, Catherine E. "Jean" Finnegan—916
Byrd, Sen. Robert C.—895, 897
Escalante, Jaime—434
Finn, John W.—736
Haig, Alexander M., Jr.—241
Height, Dorothy I.—525, 574, 940
Hernandez Gomez, Carlos—42
Hooks, Benjamin L.—502
Horne, Lena—623
Kaczynska, Maria, First Lady of Poland—480, 483, 593, 935–937
Kaczynski, Lech, President of Poland—480, 483, 513, 593, 935–937
Mankiller, Wilma P.—466
Miranda Marin, William—772
Murtha, Rep. John P., Jr.—185
Udall, Stewart L.—397
Wooden, John R.—775
Yar'Adua, Umaru, President of Nigeria—608
Decorations, medals, and awards
Arts, National Medal of the—290
Congressional Medal of Honor—418, 776
Ford's Theatre Lincoln Medal—776–777
Grammy on the Hill Award—936
Humanities Medal, National—290
Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song—759–760
Nobel Prize—589
Outstanding American by Choice award—535
Small Business Persons of the Year, State—703
Teachers of the Year, National and State—576–578
TOP COPS Awards—657
Defense and national security
See also Armed Forces, U.S.; Defense, Department of; Terrorism
Biological terrorism, medical countermeasures—83
Border security—9, 84, 384, 534, 558, 572, 579, 607, 672, 674–675, 677, 679–680, 682–683, 698, 708, 712–713, 730–731, 851
Cyber attacks—774
Intelligence—3–4, 8–9, 12, 82, 177, 695, 774–775, 915
Missile defense—465, 467, 470–471
National security officials and advisers, meeting with President—915
Port and shipping security—9, 534

Defense and national security—Continued
Potential terrorist attacks, preparedness efforts—774–775
U.S. National Security Strategy—737, 761
Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010, National—563
Defense, Department of
See also Armed Forces, U.S.; Defense and national security; *specific military branch*
Africa Command, U.S.—823
Assistant Secretaries
Health Affairs—938
Networks and Information Integration—933
Budgetary discipline—25, 157, 742
Central Command, U.S.—854–855, 860, 951, 953
Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency—5
Defense contracts
Bidding process, transparency—428
Contracting policies, reform—101, 144, 157, 428, 546, 742, 892
Defense Intelligence Agency—774
Deputy Chief Management Officer—929
Deputy Secretary—533, 916
Funding—742
Health and administrative records, information technology—21, 250
Installations and Environment, Deputy Under Secretary for—508
Joint Chiefs of Staff—337, 413, 533, 723, 853, 916
Joint Chiefs of Staff and combatant commanders, meeting with President—916
National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency—774
Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)—926
Secretary—157, 364, 412–413, 428, 490, 723, 742, 850, 853, 860, 882, 892, 915–916, 919–920, 923–924, 927, 930, 933–934, 938–939, 942–943, 946, 953
Warrior Games—535
Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform Act of 2009—560
Delaware
Disaster assistance—934
President's visit—916
Delta Regional Authority—937–938
Democratic Party
See also specific State
Democratic Change Commission—184
Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee—651
Democratic National Committee—163, 172, 181, 440–441, 447, 502–503, 514, 521–522, 930, 937, 940
Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee—947
Deposit Insurance Corporation, Federal—29, 248, 528, 530
Developing countries
See also specific country or region
Doha Development Agenda—79, 251, 363, 424, 888
Entrepreneurship, promotion efforts—544
Food aid
International programs—375, 695, 886
U.S. programs—173
Health and medical care, promotion efforts—173, 338, 695
Poverty—749
U.S. assistance—126
Development, U.S. Agency for International—16–17, 407, 916, 927, 944
Disability, National Council on—954
Disabled American Veterans—927
Disaster assistance
See also Natural disasters; *specific State, country, or executive branch agency*
Alabama—941
Arizona—919, 930
California—929, 943
Connecticut—939
Delaware—934
District of Columbia—928, 931
Haiti earthquake
Federal assistance—23
Private sector aid—30–31, 73, 133, 142, 341–342, 919
Iowa—926
Kansas—929
Kentucky—944
Maine—932
Maryland—924, 942
Massachusetts—933, 941
Minnesota—937
Mississippi—940, 945
Nebraska—926, 938
New Hampshire—933, 944
New Jersey—922
New York—937
North Carolina—921
North Dakota—927, 930, 938, 940
Oklahoma—920, 925, 928, 946
Pennsylvania—937
Puerto Rico—954
Rhode Island—933
South Dakota—929, 945
Southeast floods—603
Tennessee—942
Texas—956
Virginia—923, 939
West Virginia—927, 933, 939, 954
Diseases
See also HIV/AIDS
Cancer research, prevention, and treatment—134

Diseases—Continued
Global influenza outbreak—63, 172, 519
Heart disease—227
Malaria, prevention and reduction efforts—766
Polio, eradication efforts—543
Potential pandemics, preparedness efforts—695
District of Columbia
Democratic Party events—163, 172, 181, 940
Disaster assistance—928, 931
Emancipation Day, anniversary—511
Holocaust Memorial Museum, U.S.—74
Judicial Nomination Commission—927
Law Enforcement Officers Memorial, National—662
So Others Might Eat (SOME) organization—917
Vermont Avenue Baptist Church—32
Voting representation and autonomy, strengthening efforts—511
Diwali—699
Doha Development Agenda. *See* Developing countries
Dominican Republic
Dominican Republic National Day—305
Haitian relief and recovery efforts, role—917
President—917
Relations with U.S.—305
Drug abuse and trafficking
See also specific country or region
Addiction treatment and reduction efforts—680
Education and prevention efforts—92–93, 680
Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act—748
Foreign narcotics traffickers—679, 748, 774
Interdiction efforts—69, 672, 679–680, 851

Earth Day—492, 531–532
Easter—462–465, 934
Economic Co-operation and Development, Organisation for—360
Economic Report of the President, 2010—923
Economy, international. *See* Commerce, international
Economy, national
See also Budget, Federal; Employment and unemployment; *specific State*
American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009—6, 13, 39, 52–53, 56, 58, 64–65, 69, 71, 77, 86, 90–91, 98, 101, 104–105, 109, 112, 115–116, 119, 130–131, 136–137, 139, 141, 145, 150, 157, 170, 199, 201–204, 209, 213, 218, 221–223, 228, 237, 241, 243, 248–249, 251, 304, 313, 352, 357, 383, 421, 442–443, 452, 455, 458, 460, 478, 492, 494, 503–504, 506, 520, 522–523, 549, 552, 559–560, 562, 565, 577, 580–581, 611, 641, 643–644, 647–648, 652, 657, 667, 690, 704, 706, 717, 752–753, 756, 764, 793, 806, 810, 837–839, 875, 903, 907–910, 952
Economy, national—Continued
Consumer debt—247
Consumer financial protection agency—71, 88, 373, 390–391, 400, 424, 602, 875, 877
Credit markets, stabilization efforts—19–20, 55, 57, 77–78, 86, 97–98, 119, 150, 169, 248, 452, 556, 567, 703, 896, 904
Dollar, value—616
Economic concerns—13, 76, 85, 118, 131, 151, 165, 202, 212, 217, 246–247, 320, 328, 353, 358, 360–361, 388, 452, 513, 553, 564, 566, 572, 574, 598–599, 602, 611, 619, 641, 660, 666, 710, 751, 763, 804–805, 810, 923
Economic recovery, oversight and transparency—28, 76, 91–92, 137, 202, 223
Financial regulations, modernization efforts—19–20, 25, 29, 50–51, 59, 69, 71, 78, 120, 147, 151, 166, 175, 183, 189–190, 236, 248, 251, 253, 360, 373, 390–391, 400, 424, 447, 454, 494–495, 507, 510–513, 517–518, 520–521, 524, 527–531, 536, 542, 548, 552, 554, 564, 568–572, 582, 585, 601–602, 610, 638, 655, 660–661, 686–688, 707, 752, 754, 803, 875, 877, 885–886, 896–897, 902, 905, 913, 931, 937, 946
Household incomes, decline—221
Improvement—13, 24, 77, 86, 97–99, 101, 117, 119, 123, 130–131, 144, 150, 153, 164, 172–173, 190, 194, 201, 213, 222, 228, 237, 248, 357, 360, 375, 383, 392, 440, 443, 479, 494, 504, 516, 520, 522–523, 527, 536, 548, 551, 556, 564, 566–567, 570, 580, 598, 611, 616, 642, 652, 661, 667, 687, 715, 718, 751, 763, 765, 793, 803, 806, 838, 840, 849, 885, 896–897, 900, 908–909
Market volatility—19, 50, 97, 190, 209, 247, 390, 511–512, 522, 612, 908
Poverty, efforts to combat—162
Recession, effects—14–15, 19–20, 24, 28–29, 33–35, 38, 40, 42, 48, 50–57, 63, 66, 70–71, 75–78, 80–81, 85, 94, 96–99, 101–102, 104, 106, 115–116, 118, 123, 129–131, 139, 144, 150–152, 157, 164, 172–173, 175, 178–179, 181–183, 190, 196, 201–202, 204, 209, 212–213, 215, 217–218, 221–222, 224–225, 228, 234–238, 241, 243, 247–249, 251–252, 254–255, 309, 312, 314–315, 322, 344, 350–352, 360, 362, 364, 373, 382–384, 386, 388, 390–392, 424, 433, 435, 442, 451–453, 460, 462, 478–479, 494, 501–503, 506–507, 509–510, 512, 515–520, 522, 527–531, 535–536, 542, 546, 548, 550–556, 563–564, 566–570, 572, 580, 584, 586, 598–599, 601–602, 606, 610–612, 616, 619, 641–643, 652–653, 655, 658, 660–661, 665–668, 686–687, 699, 703–706, 708, 710, 715, 735, 742, 751–752, 754, 763–764, 793, 804–806, 809–810, 822, 825, 827, 834, 837–838, 840, 843, 845, 849, 863, 875, 877, 886, 893, 896–897, 900–903, 907–908, 910

Economy, national—Continued
Strengthening efforts—13–15, 19, 34–35, 40, 50, 53, 57, 70–72, 75–78, 80, 86, 88, 99, 117, 119, 131, 164–165, 173–174, 178, 180–181, 197, 201–202, 204, 213, 215, 218, 222–223, 230, 235–236, 238, 243, 252, 313–315, 322, 352–353, 357–358, 360, 366, 375, 382–384, 392, 399, 401, 405, 435, 445, 451–452, 460, 478, 494, 504, 507–510, 512, 515–516, 518, 520–524, 527–528, 531–532, 536, 546, 548, 550–553, 555–557, 562, 564, 566–567, 579–580, 598–599, 601, 606, 611, 616, 641, 643, 652, 655, 660–661, 666–667, 669, 677, 687, 689, 695, 699, 703, 706, 710–711, 718, 735, 751–752, 754–755, 763–765, 782, 803, 805, 809–810, 817, 825, 827, 834, 836, 838–840, 849, 873, 885, 896–897, 900, 908–909, 917
Travel and tourism, promotion efforts—230, 239, 362
Education
See also specific State
American Graduation Initiative—125, 170, 304
Charter schools—44, 311
Class size, reduction efforts—810
Communities In Schools organization—311
Early childhood education programs—92, 141
Early college high schools—311
"Educate to Innovate" campaign—6
Foreign exchange programs—397, 543–544, 672, 680, 701, 871
Global competitiveness—5–6, 15, 25, 43, 79, 87, 119, 132, 141, 183, 203, 214, 218, 223, 233, 243–244, 248, 304, 309, 353, 358, 360, 366, 414, 421, 504, 517, 524, 548, 553, 556–557, 561–562, 564, 577, 599, 619–620, 648, 687, 694, 715, 752, 755, 910
High school dropout rate and prevention programs—309–311, 606
Low-income students—619
Minority students—304, 309–310, 414, 606, 619
No Child Left Behind Act—141, 244, 366
Parental involvement—35–36, 92–93, 311, 562, 578, 585, 620, 780
Postsecondary education
Affordability—40, 57, 60, 71, 79, 87, 125, 166, 175, 213, 221–223, 225, 245, 304, 358, 413–414, 421–422, 439, 443, 479, 504, 520, 548, 551, 553, 561, 564, 567, 654, 669, 699, 832, 911
Career training and continuing education—65, 312–313, 414, 421, 649, 912
College debt, payment and forgiveness options—79, 87, 125, 132, 141, 171, 218, 245, 414, 422, 439, 444, 517
College dropout rate—422
Community colleges—57, 65, 79, 119, 132, 166, 245, 250, 304, 313, 414, 421, 443, 553, 561, 567, 599, 649, 669, 712, 755, 912
Education—Continued
Postsecondary education—Continued
Historically Black Colleges and Universities—414, 422, 618, 621
Land-grant colleges—248, 618
Minority-serving institutions—422
Pell grants—35, 60, 79, 125, 141, 171–172, 245, 304, 414, 421, 439, 443, 649, 715
Scholarship and financial aid forms, simplification—35, 422
Student loans, elimination of subsidies to private providers—58, 60, 79, 119, 125, 142, 171, 245, 250, 304, 413, 420–421, 439, 443, 504, 517, 553, 567, 599, 648, 712, 755, 910
Tax credits, expansion—35, 76, 79, 98, 202, 245, 422, 479, 504, 516, 552, 567, 752
Technical colleges—313
Tuition and student loan assistance, public service in exchange for—71, 142, 171, 422, 444, 517
Public-private cooperation—311
Reform legislation—6, 35, 79, 214, 218, 244, 249, 304, 315, 327, 353, 358, 360, 366, 405, 420–422, 449, 516, 557, 606, 711, 755
School improvement and renovation—172, 237, 304, 383, 405, 452, 522, 562, 611, 910
Science and math programs—4–6, 79, 119, 170, 223, 244, 304, 311, 338, 366, 599, 755, 896
Standards and school accountability—6, 35, 44, 54, 57, 79, 92, 119, 126, 131, 141, 170, 233, 244, 304, 310–311, 366, 449, 520–521, 553, 557, 562, 577, 599, 648, 669, 699, 755, 780
Teachers—4–7, 44, 93, 141, 170, 233, 244, 310, 366, 434, 519, 557, 560, 562, 576–578, 648, 810
Technology and innovation, expansion efforts—233, 304, 556
Education, Department of
Education Sciences, National Board for—925, 948
Funding—6, 132, 141, 244, 304, 310, 520, 562, 707, 711, 883
Historically Black Colleges and Universities, President's Board of Advisers on—303–304, 926, 938
Historically Black Colleges and Universities, White House Initiative on—303–304
Indian Education, National Advisory Council on—955
Postsecondary Education, Assistant Secretary for—925
Promise Neighborhoods—54
Race to the Top Fund—6, 44, 54, 79, 126, 141, 166, 170, 175, 203, 244, 249, 304, 366, 504, 562, 599, 648, 755, 779
Secretary—4, 6–7, 35, 43–44, 126, 244, 308, 310–311, 366, 420–421, 449, 562, 577, 698, 780, 842, 917
Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act—24, 101, 164, 172, 182, 358, 444, 711

Egypt
Middle East peace process, role—797, 800
President—939
El Salvador
Crime and narcotrafficking—335
Economic growth and development—335
Energy
Cooperation with Brazil—335
Cooperation with U.S.—335
President—335
Relations with U.S.—335
Trade with U.S.—335
Election Assistance Commission, U.S.—932
Elections
See also specific State or country
Campaign finance laws—54, 69–70, 81, 146, 167, 184, 578, 582–583, 622, 688, 874
Emergency Management Agency, Federal. *See* Homeland Security, Department of
Employment and unemployment
See also Economy, national; *specific State*
College graduates, employment outlook—250, 619
Construction industry, unemployment rate—314
Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment Act—452, 643, 684, 704, 755, 763, 806
Job creation and growth—13–15, 24, 40, 50, 52–53, 57–58, 70–71, 76–79, 86, 90, 98–99, 102, 105, 117–119, 122, 128, 130, 132, 139–140, 144–145, 148, 153, 158–159, 165, 168, 170, 173, 178–180, 182, 186–187, 191, 193–194, 197, 199, 201–204, 209, 218, 222–223, 228, 231–232, 235, 237, 243, 246, 249–251, 255, 312–315, 321–323, 327, 351, 353, 358, 360–362, 375, 382–383, 392, 399, 405, 409, 424, 430, 432–433, 435, 437, 440, 443, 445, 451–453, 462, 479, 500–502, 504, 507, 509–510, 516, 520, 523, 527, 531–532, 536, 546, 548–549, 551–553, 556, 564–567, 572, 580–581, 598, 600, 606, 610–612, 639, 642–644, 652–653, 656, 660, 666–667, 669–671, 677, 684, 687–690, 703–706, 710, 712, 715–718, 722, 742, 751–752, 755–756, 763–765, 793, 803, 805–806, 809–811, 827, 834, 837–838, 840, 849–850, 857, 865, 880, 885–886, 893, 896–897, 900, 903, 908–911
Job losses—13–14, 19, 24, 28, 40, 50, 52, 56–57, 60, 71, 77, 85–86, 97–99, 101–102, 104, 117–118, 129, 131, 144, 164–165, 173–174, 178, 181, 201, 212, 217, 221–222, 228, 236–237, 241, 243, 247, 260, 321, 353, 358, 360–361, 373, 383–384, 391–392, 395, 442, 451–452, 479, 502–503, 512, 515, 517, 519, 522, 527, 535–536, 542, 546, 552, 555, 566–567, 574, 580, 598, 610–611, 641–643, 652, 666, 686, 703, 706, 710, 715, 717–718, 751, 767, 793, 803, 805–806, 809–810, 822, 837–838, 840, 843, 845, 849, 885, 896, 900, 902, 907
Job training assistance—65, 764, 832
Employment and unemployment—Continued
Job training programs—64–65, 203, 414, 659, 817, 844
Outsourcing to foreign countries—77, 86, 102, 165, 174, 202, 253, 553, 555, 752
Unemployment insurance—52–53, 56, 76, 98, 101, 105, 112, 130, 196, 202, 213, 222, 236–237, 241, 248, 315, 322–323, 351, 460, 479, 502, 507, 552, 554, 567, 659, 667, 706, 715, 742, 755, 763, 803, 810, 837, 840, 896, 900
Unemployment rate—33, 53, 75–76, 93, 97, 104, 122, 130–131, 137, 173, 178–179, 182, 186, 228, 606, 611, 619, 711, 718, 793, 908, 923
Workplace Flexibility Forum—432, 434
Workplace flexibility, improvement efforts—432–434
Energy
See also Environment; *specific State or country*
Alternative and renewable sources and technologies—159, 520, 565, 690, 756–757
Federal Government use—124, 430–431, 455, 461, 565
Promotion efforts—13, 15, 25, 36, 58, 68, 77–79, 87, 99, 119, 124, 128, 132, 139, 145, 155–156, 158–159, 170, 172–174, 183, 191, 198–199, 204, 214, 218, 223, 237, 249, 251, 312–313, 315, 321, 323, 353, 358, 360, 366, 383, 429–431, 444, 449, 452, 455–457, 504, 516, 518, 520, 522, 531–532, 549, 551–553, 564–565, 567, 600, 610–612, 639, 653, 660, 666, 669, 671, 677–678, 687, 692, 694, 706, 708, 711–713, 716–718, 722, 729–730, 752, 756, 764, 782, 803, 805, 827, 839, 841, 850, 865, 869, 873, 886, 893, 903, 908, 911
U.S. production—13–15, 40, 71, 78, 91, 107, 128–130, 132, 139, 145, 155, 158–159, 165–166, 170, 175, 183, 198–199, 203, 214, 232, 243, 251, 313–314, 322–323, 430, 432, 446, 452–453, 457, 492, 504, 518, 523, 531, 548–551, 564–565, 567, 580–581, 610, 612, 639, 653, 656, 666, 669, 671, 690, 694, 708, 712, 715–718, 722, 752, 756, 764, 803, 809, 827, 839, 903
Battery technology for hybrid automobiles—13, 108, 132, 171, 198, 203, 214, 218, 228, 242, 251, 313, 322, 430, 452, 455, 457, 523, 549, 564, 581, 653, 669, 690, 706, 717, 756, 839
Biofuels and ethanol—78, 159, 199, 231, 335, 358, 430–431, 455, 553, 563–567, 708, 712, 717, 729, 803
BP p.l.c.—579, 592, 659, 669, 691–692, 720–721, 723–726, 728, 732, 738–740, 744, 747, 766–768, 770–771, 773, 777–779, 811–815, 818, 820, 825–826, 828, 943, 945, 947
Carbon Capture and Storage Task Force—159

Energy—Continued
Carbon dioxide emissions, reduction—128–129, 191, 199, 322, 678, 689–690, 870, 909
Coal and clean coal technologies—78, 107–108, 128, 139, 155, 159, 189, 191, 199, 233, 430
Developing countries, energy sources—128, 139, 456, 544, 671
Domestic sources—14, 68, 78, 91, 108, 159, 189, 191, 199, 233, 243, 251, 430–431, 434, 446, 549, 580, 669, 690, 692, 721, 727, 729, 756, 827
Energy efficiency and weatherization
Homes and buildings—24, 58, 77, 119, 139, 153, 165, 173, 187, 198, 251, 313–314, 321–323, 383, 455, 492, 501, 581, 610, 671, 678, 708, 712, 756, 827, 870, 909
Regional differences—449
Tax incentives—13, 24, 58, 79, 145, 159, 165, 173, 187, 313–314, 322, 383, 479, 501, 610, 612, 692, 742, 756, 809, 909
Energy experts, meeting with President—950
Energy legislation—14, 70, 139, 189, 191, 200, 432, 518, 523–524, 532, 549, 573, 639, 690, 713, 717, 722, 757, 805, 955
Foreign sources—13, 24, 40, 158–159, 198, 231, 251, 353, 405, 430–431, 456, 549, 553, 564, 567, 639, 688–690, 692, 694, 706, 716–718, 729, 756, 827
Fuel efficiency standards, strengthening efforts—199, 231–232, 430, 456, 518, 678, 688–690, 708, 717, 756, 827
Gasoline, oil, and natural gas costs—91, 231, 431, 456, 549, 564, 645, 689, 716
Greenhouse gas emissions, regulation—139, 170, 199, 231–232, 251, 518, 671, 689
Hybrid automobiles, tax credits for purchase—231, 717
Infrastructure and grid improvements—171, 199, 222–223, 313, 430, 457, 549, 564, 581, 671, 678, 690, 717, 803, 870, 910
National energy policy—13–14, 107–108, 158–159, 198, 200, 231–232, 429–430, 432, 446, 449, 461, 564, 690, 708, 716–717, 756, 804, 850, 929, 950
Nuclear energy—68, 78, 107, 128, 139, 155, 159, 170, 189, 191, 199–200, 203, 233, 251, 313, 324, 430–431, 455, 483, 486, 742–743, 756
Offshore oil and gas drilling—430–431, 434, 455–456, 669, 691–692, 708, 712, 716, 721–722, 726–727, 729–730, 747–748, 756, 768–769, 771, 773, 802, 826–827
Oil and gas industry
Federal regulations and oversight—691–692, 708, 721–722, 726–727, 730, 732, 747, 773, 826–827, 833, 901, 951
Subsidies, elimination—756, 886
Energy—Continued
President's Biofuels Interagency Working Group—565
Solar and wind energy—13, 58, 78, 87, 97, 99, 132, 139–140, 155, 171, 191, 199, 214, 223, 228, 232, 237, 242, 251, 313, 322, 358, 429–431, 455, 492, 548–549, 551, 553, 564, 566–567, 580, 612, 653, 669, 708, 712, 715, 717–718, 729, 803, 827, 839, 919
Wave energy and offshore power generation—429
Energy, Department of
Advanced Technology Vehicles Manufacturing Loan Program—717
Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs, Assistant Secretary for—920
Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program—53
Energy Regulatory Commission, Federal—928
Hybrid automobile technology, competitive grant program—717
Nuclear Security Administration, National—947, 951
Secretary—2, 4, 198–199, 429–430, 565, 716, 720, 724, 739, 744, 825, 869, 943, 947
Engineering, National Academy of—691
England. *See* United Kingdom
Environment
See also Energy
Air quality, improvement efforts—353, 492, 753
Carbon pollution—140, 159, 199, 232, 251, 645, 689–690, 756
Clean Air Act—492, 531, 902
Clean Water Act—492, 531, 902
Climate change—13, 78–79, 83, 107, 128–129, 132, 139, 158–159, 164, 173, 183, 199–200, 231–232, 251, 314, 424, 431–432, 455, 489, 499, 509, 518, 523, 532, 549, 564, 584, 616, 639, 671, 677–678, 688–690, 694–695, 701, 716, 722, 749, 756–757, 762, 805, 883, 886
Community waste water management programs, Federal assistance—559–560
Conservation
America's Great Outdoors Initiative—508–509
Gulf Coast shorelines, protection efforts—579, 592–593
International cooperation—677–678
Environmentally friendly technologies—430, 456
Lead poisoning, reduction efforts—61
Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate—424
Oil Pollution Act of 1990—723, 725, 802
Oil spills
See also Gulf of Mexico
Cleanup and prevention efforts—669, 691–692, 820, 826

Energy—Continued
Oil spills—Continued
Corporate responsibility—691, 712, 720–721, 723, 728–729, 732, 739–740, 747, 766–771, 773, 778–779, 812, 818, 820, 825–826, 828–829, 841, 902
Federal response, improvement efforts—691, 723, 727, 729, 732, 803, 812, 818, 825
Pollution, prevention and cleanup efforts—492
United Nations Climate Change Conference—424, 671
Water quality, improvement efforts—492, 753
Environmental Cooperation, Commission for, Joint Public Advisory Committee—945
Environmental Protection Agency
Administrator—337, 508, 565, 576, 579, 592, 689, 744, 768, 923
Environmental Information, Assistant Administrator for—940
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, U.S.—932
Equal Pay Enforcement Task Force, National—804
Estonia, President—935
Europe
See also specific country
European airspace, closure due to volcanic ash cloud—513, 937
European Union
European Council—954
Free trade agreement with South Korea—114
Relations with U.S.—185, 423
Financial markets
Stabilization efforts—612, 616, 942–943, 946
Unrest—612, 616, 752, 896, 943
Greece, economic assistance—941
Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe—868
Relations with Russia—616
Security cooperation with U.S.—467
Trade with U.S.—170
Western Balkans
European integration efforts—340
NATO presence and peacekeeping efforts—340
U.S. national emergency, continuation—795
World War II, 65th anniversary of conclusion—614, 617, 857, 947
Export Council, President's—362, 929
Export-Import Bank of the U.S.—360–362, 677, 944

Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, President's Advisory Council on—929
Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act of 2009—24, 101, 144, 164, 172, 182, 353, 358, 444, 653, 707, 711
Farm Credit Administration—932
Fatherhood and Mentoring Initiative, President's—844
Father's Day—842, 952
FBI. *See* Justice, Department of
FDIC. *See* Deposit Insurance Corporation, Federal
Federal. *See other part of subject*
FEMA. *See* Homeland Security, Department of
Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition, President's Council on—953
Florida
Cape Canaveral Air Station—937
Democratic Party events—502, 937
Economic growth and development—501
Governor—589, 721, 738–739, 741, 814, 817–819, 940, 946, 951
Job creation and growth—500–501, 504
Job losses—500
Naval Air Station Pensacola—819
Pensacola Beach—951
President's visits—77, 85, 182, 497, 500, 502, 817, 819, 825, 920, 937, 951
Tampa
MacDill Air Force Base—920
University of Tampa—920
Foreign policy, U.S.
See also specific country or region
Child labor, reduction efforts—808
Civil and human rights, promotion efforts—696, 869
Democratization—696
Diplomatic efforts, expansion—1, 164, 172, 182, 449, 543, 627, 695, 735, 761
Foreign aid funding—560
Foreign Ambassadors, credentialing ceremony—925, 933
Government corruption, efforts to eliminate—886
Humanitarian assistance programs—696
International human rights activists, meeting with President—924
Mexico City Policy, rescission—338
Peace efforts, expansion—695
Poverty, efforts to combat—696, 749
Torture, prohibition—882
Trafficking in persons, efforts to combat—680
Women's rights—338
FOX News—930
France
Afghanistan, French military forces
Casualties—425
Deployment—424
North Atlantic Treaty Organization, military command participation—423
President—423, 931, 933, 943
Relations with U.S.—423–425

Gabon, U.S. Ambassador—947
General Services Administration, Administrator—154, 188, 429–430, 432, 434
Georgia
  Governor—312
  Infrastructure, improvement efforts—313
  President's visit—312, 315, 927
  Savannah
    Chatham Steel Corporation—315, 927
    Meddin Studios—315, 927
    Mrs. Wilkes' Dining Room—927
    Savannah Technical College—312–313, 315, 927
  Unemployment rate—312
Georgia, Republic of
  Conflict with Russia—856
  President—934, 936
Germany
  Chancellor—612, 926, 931, 936, 939, 943, 946, 952
  Energy, alternative and renewable sources and technologies—13
Girls and Women in Sports Day, National—160
Government organization and employees
  See also Budget, Federal; *specific agency or organization*
  Accountability and transparency, strengthening efforts—21–22, 35, 59, 69, 81, 108, 119–120, 122, 137–138, 145, 184, 352, 357, 374, 571, 578
  Document classification, policy review—137, 374
  Efficiency and modernization, improvement efforts—20–22, 250
  Federal buildings, operating cost inefficiencies, elimination efforts—154, 810
  Federal Government contracting policies, reform—45–46, 344–345, 352, 357, 479, 546, 637
  Improper payments in Federal programs, reduction efforts—571
  Payment recapture audits, expansion—571
  Public diplomacy and strategic communications, interagency strategy—374
  Role and disposition of lobbyists, limits—35, 58, 69, 81, 102, 109, 112, 122, 137, 146, 165, 174, 184, 219
  Same-sex domestic partnerships, employee family benefits—759, 852
Government Printing Office, Public Printer of the U.S.—937
Governors Association, National—241–242
Governors, Council of—922
Great Britain. *See* United Kingdom
Greece
  Afghanistan, Greek military forces, deployment—340
  Ambassador to the U.S.—339
  Counterterrorism efforts—340
  European economic assistance—941
Greece—Continued
  Financial markets
    Stabilization efforts—616, 887, 941–942
    Unrest—616
  Independence Day—339, 929
  Prime Minister—339–340, 926, 929, 941
  Relations with Cyprus—340
  Relations with Turkey—340
  Relations with U.S.—339–340
  Security cooperation with U.S.—340
  U.S. Ambassador—949
  Visa policy, U.S.—340
  Western Balkans, NATO peacekeeping efforts, role—340
Guam, Port of—463
Guantanamo Bay, U.S. Naval Base. *See* Cuba
Gulf of Mexico
  Deepwater Horizon oil spill
    Economic effects and recovery efforts—580, 590, 598, 639–640, 658–660, 691, 698, 704, 708, 712, 716, 720–723, 726, 732, 738–741, 744, 747–748, 760, 766–771, 773–774, 778–779, 802–804, 811–816, 818–820, 822, 825–829, 850, 902, 943, 945–946, 950–952, 955
    Environmental effects and cleanup efforts—576, 579–580, 590, 592–593, 598, 606, 639–640, 658–660, 669, 679, 690–691, 697, 708, 712, 716, 720–726, 728, 732, 737–741, 744, 746–748, 751, 756, 760, 766, 768–770, 772–773, 776–779, 782, 796, 802–804, 811–820, 822, 825, 828–829, 850, 882, 894, 900, 941, 943, 945–952, 955
    Explosion and rescue efforts—576, 579, 591–592, 598, 691–692, 708, 720, 723, 725, 739–740, 747–748, 776, 825–826, 901, 938–941, 950
    Health effects and medical response—778, 814, 820
    International assistance—725

Haiti
  Clinton Bush Haiti Fund—30–31, 73
  Earthquake
    American and foreign citizens, casualties—16–17, 23, 27, 341, 917
    Damage and recovery efforts—16–18, 23, 26–27, 30–33, 36–37, 42, 73, 83, 85, 133, 142, 161, 173, 182, 220, 335, 341–342, 407, 423, 503, 669, 671–672, 681, 916–917, 919
  Haitian Flag Day—669
  International assistance—16–18, 27, 30, 142, 161, 341–342, 669, 916
  International Donors' Conference Towards a New Future for Haiti—342
  President—26–27, 30–31, 341, 917, 928
  Relations with U.S.—17, 669
  United Nations Special Envoy—31

Haiti—Continued
United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti—17, 916
U.S. Ambassador—26, 341, 916
U.S. assistance—16–18, 23, 26–27, 30–31, 37, 83, 142–143, 161, 164, 173, 182, 341–342, 407, 669, 916
Hawaii, President's visit—915
Health and Human Services, Department of
Bioethical Issues, Presidential Commission for the Study of—943
Childhood Obesity, Task Force on—185, 263
Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight, Office of—613, 832, 848
Fatherhood, Marriage, and Families Innovation Fund—844
Health Resources and Services Administration—830
Medicare and Medicaid Services, Centers for—937
National Institutes of Health—134, 945
Secretary—262–263, 271, 273–275, 278, 288, 300, 316, 318, 328, 337, 380, 394, 398, 401, 407, 419, 613, 783, 785, 787, 790, 794, 832, 845, 848, 852, 928, 938
State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)—24, 59, 144, 164, 172, 182, 218, 353, 358, 458, 460, 606, 707, 711
Surgeon General—334
Health and medical care
See also Diseases; HIV/AIDS; Science and technology
Abortion—68, 526
Affordability—221
Bioethics. *See* Science and technology
Community health centers—224, 420
Cost control reforms—15, 25–26, 35, 57–59, 66–68, 70–71, 79–80, 88, 96, 103, 108, 110–112, 115, 121–122, 124, 132, 135–136, 138, 145–146, 149, 151, 162, 166–169, 175–176, 179, 183, 187–190, 192–193, 210, 215, 218–219, 223–227, 236–237, 239–241, 243, 251–252, 254–257, 259–261, 263–264, 270–271, 273–275, 277, 279–281, 283, 287–289, 292, 297, 299, 301–303, 306, 315–321, 324–325, 327–333, 345–350, 353–355, 358–360, 366–367, 369–373, 376, 382–383, 386–389, 391–394, 396, 398–406, 408–409, 420, 435–437, 449, 458–461, 505, 516–517, 520, 546, 567, 574, 586, 600, 620, 646, 669, 687, 707, 752–755, 783–785, 792, 830–831, 846, 848, 893, 903, 910, 931
Dental care, insurance coverage—227
Health and medical care—Continued
Employer-based health insurance coverage—15, 26, 68, 123, 132, 167–168, 175, 179, 183, 190, 193, 225, 240, 252, 255–257, 260, 293, 301–302, 317–319, 329–331, 347–348, 354, 359, 370–371, 383, 387, 392–395, 398, 401, 403–404, 409, 436–437, 439, 458, 505, 519–520, 600, 606, 643, 645–646, 786, 794
End-of-life care—386, 392
Federal Government health care programs, improper payments—345–346
Generic drug production
Approval process, improvement efforts—787
Duration of patent restrictions—66, 787
Health Care Fraud Prevention and Enforcement Action Team (HEAT)—785
Health insurance
Claims, independent appeals process—324
Company representatives, meeting with President—928
Coverage and access to providers—15, 25–26, 35, 52, 57–59, 67, 80, 88, 103, 110, 121, 132, 135–136, 166–168, 175, 183, 188–189, 192, 215, 219, 225–226, 240, 252, 255, 257, 259–261, 267–270, 274–275, 278–281, 288–290, 292–295, 297, 299–302, 306, 316–320, 324, 329–332, 338, 347–348, 350, 353–354, 358, 369–372, 386, 388, 391–395, 398, 400–401, 404, 408–410, 413, 420, 435–439, 449, 458–459, 505–506, 517, 520, 553, 568, 600, 606, 613–614, 645–646, 654, 668, 753–754, 786, 793–794, 831–832, 846–848, 910
Exchange—67, 88, 103, 110, 123, 135–136, 168, 226, 240, 252, 257, 260–261, 263, 267–270, 274–276, 278–280, 289, 294–295, 299, 301, 306, 316–317, 319, 324, 331–332, 349, 354–355, 359, 371, 387, 393, 399, 401, 404–405, 410, 438–439, 459, 554, 568, 600, 643, 646, 793–794, 832, 846–847
High-risk pools—268, 275, 278–279
Illegal immigrants, coverage—386
Protection of coverage—25, 52, 56–57, 76, 98, 101, 105, 112, 202, 213, 237, 241, 243, 315, 322–323, 458, 460, 479, 502, 507, 552, 554, 567, 667, 706, 715, 742, 755, 764, 793, 810, 837
Reforms—259, 267, 269–270, 273–276, 279, 281, 297, 299–301, 316–321, 324, 331–332, 338, 348, 350, 354, 358, 370–371, 386–388, 393, 398, 406, 409, 413–414, 420, 439, 445, 459, 505, 523, 548, 564, 567, 613, 645, 653, 655–656, 669, 752, 754, 785–786, 808, 831–832, 845–846, 848
Health savings accounts—293, 317
Home health care agencies and programs—790

Health and medical care—Continued
Hospitals
Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement—286
Patient visitor policy—518, 852
Reimbursement for treatment of uninsured patients—280, 320, 754, 786
Renovation and improvement funding—135
Independent medical advisory committee—372
Information technology—67, 121, 237, 249, 444, 646, 706, 716, 756, 791, 832, 839
Lead poisoning, reduction efforts—61
Medical fraud and negligence, efforts to combat and prevent—262–263, 274, 302, 316, 319–320, 332, 346, 349–350, 354–355, 372, 387, 405, 409, 420, 459–460, 785, 808, 831, 846
Medical liability reform—103, 112, 193, 262–263, 288, 300, 316, 320
Medical research, Federal Government funding, increase—134, 237
Medicare Advantage Plans, elimination of overpayments—68, 115, 229, 282–286, 317, 319, 332, 349, 354, 371–372, 387, 459–460, 788, 792
Medicare and Medicaid—63, 68, 70, 80, 88, 115–116, 118, 133, 136–137, 156, 197, 210, 225–227, 229–230, 248, 252, 256–257, 262, 264, 270, 276, 281–284, 287, 294–295, 301–302, 316–319, 330, 332, 345–347, 349–350, 354–355, 371–372, 389, 392, 394–395, 399–400, 404–405, 410–411, 420, 438, 458–461, 505, 546, 560, 600, 613, 646, 655, 667, 706, 753, 784–792, 808–810, 831, 846, 874, 893, 901, 909
Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC)—136, 302
Nurses and nurse practitioners
Education and training programs—319, 332, 832
Remuneration—833
Shortage—833
Nutrition—186
Obesity, prevention and reduction efforts—52, 80, 124
Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act—402–405, 407–411, 413, 420, 422, 435–440, 443–445, 450, 460–461, 479, 504–506, 523, 546, 553–554, 567–568, 574, 590, 600–601, 606, 612–613, 643, 645–646, 653–654, 704, 706–707, 711–712, 754, 763, 783–787, 789–793, 806, 810, 831–832, 845–849, 875, 953
Physicians
Continuing education and training programs—319, 332
Malpractice insurance—262, 288
Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement—96, 121, 294, 317, 459, 706, 784, 789–790, 808–809, 874
Primary care physicians, shortages—784, 789
Prescription drugs, purchasing efficiency—332, 787
Health and medical care—Continued
Preventive care and public health programs—15, 25, 80, 168, 224, 226, 262–263, 324, 331, 348, 354, 370, 372, 387, 400, 404, 410, 438, 646, 785–786, 789
Seniors
Independent and assisted living options, increase—790–791
Prescription drug benefits—15, 25, 70, 114, 118, 132, 146, 156, 197, 215, 252, 283–285, 319, 324, 332, 346, 354–355, 369, 371–372, 387–388, 393, 400, 404, 410, 420, 438, 460, 505–506, 553, 613–614, 654–655, 668, 754, 784–785, 787–788, 831, 846
September 11, 2001, first-responders, health care and medical compensation—152
Small businesses, tax credits to purchase insurance coverage—260, 289–290, 294, 301, 306, 319, 324, 332, 349, 354, 371, 383, 387, 392–393, 399–400, 403–405, 409–410, 413, 420, 437, 439, 459, 505–506, 520, 553, 600, 612–613, 643, 645, 654, 668, 704, 754, 763, 786, 806, 831, 846
Young adults
Insurance coverage as dependents, age limit extension—15, 103, 270, 324, 331, 348, 354, 358, 371, 387, 392, 400, 404, 410, 438, 554, 600, 613, 645, 655, 831, 846
Low-cost insurance coverage—103, 110
Medical debt—329
Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010—413–414, 439, 443, 449, 520, 553, 567, 599, 648, 653–654, 712, 755, 875, 910
Historic Preservation, Advisory Council on—945
HIV/AIDS
See also specific country or region
Domestic prevention and treatment strategy—876
Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, President's—83
HIV Testing Day, National—876
Hmong New Year—699
Holocaust Remembrance Day—482
Homeland Security, Department of
See also Defense and national security; Terrorism
Aviation screening and security systems, international cooperation efforts—9, 11
Citizenship and Immigration Services, U.S.—533, 535
Coast Guard, U.S.—591–592, 659, 815, 941
Customs and Border Protection, U.S.—932, 942
Emergency Management Agency, Federal—23, 441, 603, 943
Immigration and citizenship application processing, improvement efforts—698
Management, Under Secretary for—932
Operations Center, National—916
Secret Service, U.S.—940

Homeland Security, Department of—Continued
Secretary—2, 8–9, 337, 380, 384, 441, 463, 533–534, 576, 579, 592, 739, 747, 850
Transportation Security Administration—3, 928, 945
Undocumented workers, reduction efforts—558, 572
Honduras
President—919, 939
Removal and expulsion of President Zelaya—335, 671–672
Housing
First-time home purchase, tax credit—76, 79, 98, 202, 213, 223, 238, 479, 504, 516, 552, 567, 654, 840
Foreclosure rates—52, 76, 85, 218, 221–222, 238, 529, 566, 711, 715, 905
Fraud Enforcement and Recovery Act of 2009—24, 164, 172, 218, 358, 444, 520, 707, 711
Helping Families Save Their Homes Act of 2009—101, 238, 248
Housing market
Decline—19, 40, 79, 94, 123, 129, 150, 190, 218, 221–222, 235–236, 238, 247, 314, 515, 519, 522, 529, 556, 686, 715, 810, 905, 907
Improvement—238
Stabilization efforts—223
Mortgage refinancing regulations—79, 123, 905
Private sector foreclosure avoidance programs—20, 238
Housing and Urban Development, Department of
Choice Neighborhoods Initiative—54
HOPE for Homeowners program—223
Housing Administration, Federal—223
Secretary—420, 923
Housing Finance Agency, Federal—932
Humanities, National Endowment for the—290
Hungary
Hungarian Revolution, anniversary—367
Prime Minister—935
Relations with U.S.—367
Hurricanes. *See* Disaster assistance; Natural disasters; *specific Federal agency or State*

Iceland
Eyjafjallajokull volcano, eruption—513, 937
U.S. Ambassador—938
Illinois
Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood—745, 948
Election, gubernatorial—113
Governor—565, 567, 921
Hines VA Hospital in Chicago—948
President's visits—565–566, 574, 580, 745, 764, 939, 947–948
Immigration and naturalization
See also Defense and national security; *specific country or region*
American "melting pot"—534, 558, 670, 698
Citizenship—534, 559, 579, 607, 672, 675, 699, 709, 713
Illegal immigration—384, 534, 558–559, 572–573, 579, 607, 672, 674, 679, 682, 699, 712, 731
Reform—35, 84, 162, 365, 381, 384, 521, 524, 533–534, 558–559, 572–574, 579, 607, 670–671, 674–675, 680, 682–683, 698, 708, 712–713, 731, 929, 937, 955
Visa policy, U.S.—340
Visa Waiver Program—340
Independence Day—777
India
Ambassador to U.S.—761
Business Conference, U.S.-India—883
Constitution, 60th anniversary of adoption—74
Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.—762
Energy cooperation with U.S.—761
Foreign Secretary—761
Fulbright-Nehru exchange program with U.S.—762
Minister of External Affairs—760–762, 883
Nuclear energy cooperation with U.S.—761
Plane crash in Mangalore—948
President Obama's visit—762
Prime Minister—74, 481, 761–762, 883, 935, 948
Relations with U.S.—74, 760–762, 883–884
Republic Day—73–74
Strategic Dialogue, U.S.-India—760–761, 948
Trade with U.S.—363, 761
Train attack in West Bengal—948
U.S. Ambassador—761
Indian Education, National Advisory Council on—944
Indian Gaming Commission, National—940
Indiana, U.S. Senator, retirement—198
Indonesia
Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, ratification—603
Economic growth and development—883
Education reform—883
President—603, 882, 930, 949
Relations with U.S.—362, 882–883, 949
U.S. Ambassador—955
Intelligence. *See* Defense and national security; *specific Federal agency*
Intelligence Advisory Board, President's—9, 12, 943
Intelligence, Director of National—9, 11, 688, 774

Interior, Department of the
Minerals Management Service—659, 721, 726–727, 730, 747, 826, 951
Secretary—420, 429–430, 508, 576, 579, 592, 659, 691, 721, 726–727, 730, 732, 744, 747, 826, 922
International. *See other part of subject*
Investigation, Federal Bureau of. *See* Justice, Department of
Iowa
Disaster assistance—926
Floods, damage and recovery efforts—407
Governor—407, 548–549, 562
Iowa City
Prairie Lights Books—409, 931
University of Iowa—407
Job creation and growth—549, 551–552, 580
Mount Pleasant
Jerry's Family Restaurant—553, 561, 939
MogoOrganic farm—551, 939
Ottumwa Job Corps Center—552
President's visits—407–408, 548, 550–551, 553, 563, 566, 568, 572–573, 580, 931, 939
Recession, effects—548, 551, 553
Siemens Energy, Inc., in Fort Madison—548–550, 552, 556, 580, 939
Solar and wind energy—549, 551
Iran
Diplomatic relations with U.S.—308, 396–397, 426, 801
Human rights issues—185, 397, 440, 595, 802
International and U.S. sanctions—192, 672
International diplomatic efforts—83, 412, 424, 426, 468, 472, 474, 801
Internet access and censorship—397
Islamic Revolution, anniversary—185
Nuclear energy, proposed cooperation with Brazil and Turkey—945
Nuclear weapons development—191–192, 396, 424, 426, 468, 474, 487–488, 490, 615, 672, 743, 800–801, 898, 900, 944, 946–947
Presidential election, 2009—185, 397, 802
Student exchanges with U.S.—397
Terrorism, sponsorship—802
U.N. Security Council sanctions—424, 426, 468, 474, 487–488, 490, 615, 672, 796, 799–802, 856, 878, 893, 944
U.S. national emergency, continuation—351
Iraq
Civilian casualties—326
Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.—326
Democracy efforts—83, 326, 694, 824, 849, 945
Economic growth and development—694
Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC)—326
Insurgency and terrorist attacks—939
Iraq—Continued
Iraqi military and security forces—325–326, 694, 824
Kurdistan Regional Government, President—919
Parliamentary elections—325–326
Provincial Reconstruction Teams—906
Reconstruction efforts—821
Status of forces agreement with U.S.—824
Terrorist attacks—325–326
United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq—326
U.S. Ambassador—924, 954
U.S. military forces
Casualties—325, 535, 604, 693, 745, 922, 927
Deployment—1, 33, 42, 57, 75, 80, 83, 114, 118, 144, 146, 156–157, 164, 173, 181–182, 212, 215, 217, 252, 325–326, 358, 367, 417–418, 442, 449, 460, 503, 506, 509, 515, 519, 522, 533, 535, 604, 619, 652, 655, 694, 774, 821, 824, 849, 892, 905–906
Graduated withdrawal from urban centers—543
U.S. national emergency, continuation—640
Vice President—917, 920
Ireland
Afghanistan, Irish police officers, deployment—375
Ambassador to the U.S.—380
Prime Minister—375, 377, 379, 922
Relations with U.S.—375, 377–378, 380–381
U.S. Ambassador—380, 751
Ireland, Northern. *See* United Kingdom
Islamic Conference, Organisation of the—543, 923
Israel
See also Middle East; Palestinian Authority and Palestinians
Gaza Freedom Flotilla incident—797, 799, 948–949
Gaza, economic and military blockade—797, 799–800
Minister of Defense—939
President—513
Prime Minister—90, 513, 931, 941, 948
Relations with U.S.—90, 513, 735
State of Israel, 62d anniversary of establishment—513
Terrorist attacks—799
West Bank settlements—797
Italy, President—947

Japan
Defense relationship with U.S.—45
Economic growth and development—893
Energy, alternative and renewable sources and technologies—13, 893
President Obama's visit—893
Prime Minister—891, 893, 936, 947, 949
Relations with U.S.—45, 891, 893–894, 947, 949

Japan—Continued
Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the U.S. and Japan, 50th anniversary—45
U.S. military forces, realignment—463
Jewish American Heritage Month—734
Jordan
King—920, 936
Relations with U.S.—920
Judges Association, Federal—946
Judiciary
Federal court nominations and confirmations—154, 918, 922, 925, 927, 929–932, 937–938, 940, 946, 948, 950, 952
Supreme Court
Associate Justice—164, 172, 182, 337, 444, 525, 606, 622
Associate Justice-designate—621, 890, 943, 955
Associate Justice, retirement—477, 495, 525–526, 573, 621–622, 935
Juneteenth—841
Justice, Department of
Attorney General—3, 327, 597, 657, 785, 842, 844
Bureau of Investigation, Federal—12
Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program—52, 657
Deputy Attorney General—946
Drug Enforcement Administration—919
Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Grant Program—52, 658
Fathering Reentry Court—844
Parole Commission, U.S.—920
U.S. attorneys—918, 921, 925, 927, 929, 931–932, 936–937, 940, 946, 948, 950

Kansas, disaster assistance—929
Kazakhstan, President—481, 935
Kennedy Center. *See* Smithsonian Institution
Kentucky
Disaster assistance—944
Dotiki Mine accident—582
Floods, damage and recovery efforts—941
Governor—941
Korea Society—758
Kosovo
KFOR international security force, international assistance—824
NATO, role—824
U.S. military forces, deployment—824
Kyrgyzstan
Civil war and ethnic conflict—873
Counternarcotics and drug interdiction efforts—874
Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.—874
Democracy efforts—873
Economic growth and development—874
Kyrgyzstan—Continued
Ethnic conflict and civil unrest—856, 864
International assistance—856, 864, 874
International diplomatic efforts—864

Labor, Department of
Chief Financial Officer—927
Child labor laws and protections, improvement efforts—808
Coal mine safety
Enhanced regulations—496, 539
Improvement efforts—495–496, 539, 582
Coal Mine Safety and Health Administrator—495–496
Inspector General—947
Mine Safety and Health Administration—496
Mine Safety and Health, Assistant Secretary for—477, 495–496, 937
Secretary—337, 362, 432, 477, 495–496, 808, 845, 924, 937–938
Summer Youth Employment Program—53
Women's Bureau—804
Workplace safety rules and regulations, enforcement—557
Labor-Management Relations, National Council on Federal—925, 943
Labor Relations Board, National—557, 932
Latvia, President—935
Law enforcement and crime
2009 crime rate, decline—658
Domestic violence—337
Ex-felons, transitional services and job training programs—64, 93
Fraternal Order of Police—661
Illegal arms trade, reduction efforts—672, 676, 679
Law enforcement officers, memorial service—661
National Association of Police Organizations, TOP COPS Awards—657
Neighborhood watch and anticrime programs—658
Recidivism rate, reduction efforts—64
Second Chance Act of 2007—64, 93
State and community law enforcement agencies, Federal support—657–658
Lebanon
Prime Minister—923, 944, 946
U.S. Ambassador—949
Legal Services Corporation—954
Legion, American—927
Legislation, enacted
Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010—604–605
Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act of 2009—663

Legislation, enacted—Continued
Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010—419–422
Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment Act—382
Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act of 2009—699
Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act—400–402, 406
Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2009—197
Temporary Extension Act of 2010—315
Travel Promotion Act of 2009—928
Legislation, proposed
"Affordable Health Care for America Act"—874
"American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009"—78, 532, 639, 690, 722, 757, 827, 955
"American Jobs and Closing Loopholes Act"—742
"American Workers, State, and Business Relief Act of 2010"—351
"America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009"—121, 135, 168, 259, 262–263, 267, 270, 283, 289, 297, 300, 302, 306, 320
"Democracy Is Strengthened by Casting Light On Spending in Elections Act"—874
"Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act of 2009"—95, 759
"Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010"—399–400
"Health Insurance Industry Fair Competition Act"—254
"Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment Act"—375
"Home Star Energy Retrofit Act of 2010"—610, 612, 809
"Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act of 2009"—346, 571
"Jobs for Main Street Act of 2010"—77, 99, 246, 249, 255, 306
"Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2009"—121, 135, 168, 223–224, 226, 259, 261–263, 267–268, 270, 273–275, 283, 289, 297, 300, 302, 316, 319–320, 332, 392–396, 398–399, 930–931
"Paycheck Fairness Act"—805
"Reduce Unnecessary Spending Act of 2010"—702
"Restoring American Financial Stability Act of 2010"—528, 554, 569–570, 572, 602, 610, 660–661, 686, 707, 713, 836, 913
"Small Business Lending Fund Act of 2010"—834
"Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2009"—88, 117, 120, 133, 142, 146, 157, 163, 187
"Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009"—171
"Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2009"—78, 390, 446, 495, 527, 542, 572, 686, 707, 713, 836
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month—851
Liberia
2011 legislative and Presidential elections—733
Counternarcotics efforts, cooperation with U.S.—733
Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.—733
Democracy efforts—733
Economic growth and development—733
Government corruption, efforts to eliminate—733
Judiciary reforms—733
Liberian refugees in the U.S., status—384
President—733, 946
Relations with U.S.—733
Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song—759–760
Lithuania
Lithuanian National Day—200
Prime Minister—935
Relations with U.S.—200
Louisiana
Coast Guard Station Venice—941
Governor—592, 721, 724, 738–741, 766, 768, 811, 814, 940–941, 946
Oil spill, damage and recovery efforts—769
Plaquemines Parish fishermen, meeting with President—941
President's visits—591, 593, 716, 721, 724, 737–738, 766, 769, 772, 778, 941, 948–949
State and local officials, meeting with President—941
Lunar New Year—923

Maine
Disaster assistance—932
Governor—243, 435
President's visit—435, 444, 450, 934
Malaria. *See* Diseases
Malaysia, Prime Minister—936
Management and Budget, Office of, Director—106, 252, 785
March of Dimes—923
Marine Corps, U.S. *See* Navy, Department of the
Marine Mammal Commission—917
Marriage, Defense of Marriage Act—852
Marshals Service, U.S.—918, 921, 925, 928, 931, 936, 940, 950, 952
Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday—36, 41–42
Maryland
Chesapeake Machine Company in Baltimore—97–99, 920
Disaster assistance—924, 942
Governor—97, 198, 377, 380, 429, 783
James J. Rowley Training Center in Beltsville—940

Maryland—Continued
K. Neal International Trucks, Inc., in Hyattsville—762–764, 949
Lanham
IBEW Local 26 headquarters job training center—198, 923
Oasis Mechanical Contractors, Inc.—178
Lieutenant Governor—198, 762
National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda—927
President's visits—97, 100, 152, 178, 198, 429, 744, 762, 783, 920, 922–923, 927, 932–933, 940–941, 948–950
U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis—593
Massachusetts—917
Attorney general—917
Democratic Party events—37, 440, 447
Disaster assistance—933, 941
Education, standards and school accountability—244
Energy, alternative and renewable sources and technologies—442
Floods, damage and recovery efforts—441, 447, 934
Governor—37, 441–442, 446–447, 934
Lieutenant Governor—440
President's visits—37, 440, 447, 917, 934
Mayors, U.S. Conference of—52
Medals. *See* Decorations, medals, and awards
Medical liability reform. *See* Health and medical care
Medicare and Medicaid. *See* Health and medical care
Memorial Day—743–746, 948
Mentoring Council, Federal—47–48
Mentoring Month, National—47
Mexico
Ambassador to U.S.—605
Border with U.S., infrastructure and security—670–672, 674–675, 677, 679, 682–683, 731
Counternarcotics efforts, cooperation with U.S.—607, 670, 672, 676, 682–683, 931
Crime and narcotrafficking—607, 672, 676–677, 679–680, 682, 731
Economic growth and development—670
Energy
Alternative and renewable sources and technologies—671, 678
Cooperation with U.S.—671, 678
Greenhouse gas emissions, reduction—671
Highly enriched uranium stocks, disposal—485
Illegal immigrants to U.S.—675, 682–683
Job creation and growth—671
Merida Initiative—676, 680
President—607, 670–671, 676, 684, 916, 931, 945
Regulatory cooperation and harmonization with U.S.—677
Mexico—Continued
Relations with U.S.—607, 670–672, 674, 676–677, 682–683, 685, 931
Secretary of Government—605
Security cooperation with U.S.—677, 679–682
Student exchanges with U.S.—672
Teenager, shooting death along U.S.-Mexican border—950
Tourism and commercial travel links with U.S.—671, 674, 677
Trade with U.S.—607, 671, 674, 677–678, 682–683
Transportation, cooperation with U.S.—677
Michigan
Democratic Party event—950
Governor—242–243, 583, 703, 705, 779
Job creation and growth—581
Kalamazoo Central High School in Kalamazoo—599, 779–780, 782, 950
President's visits—583, 590, 599, 779, 940, 949
University of Michigan in Ann Arbor—583, 586, 940
Middle East
See also Palestinian Authority and Palestinians; *specific country*
Peace and democracy efforts—49, 90, 423–424, 449, 491, 513, 543, 735, 797–800, 898, 920, 941, 944–945, 949
Terrorism—49
Terrorists who threaten to disrupt the peace process, U.S. national emergency, continuation—49
U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace—797, 920
Military Academy, U.S. *See* Army, Department of the
Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response (MINER) Act of 2006—477, 496
Mine Safety and Health Review Commission, Federal—496
Minnesota
Disaster assistance—937
Job creation and growth—581
Mississippi
Disaster assistance—940, 945
Governor—243, 721, 741, 811–812, 814, 939–940, 942, 946, 951
Gulfport
Chimneys Restaurant—951
Community members, meeting with President—812, 951
President's visit—811–812, 818–819, 825, 951
Storms, tornadoes, and floods, damage and recovery efforts—939, 942

Missouri
Democratic Party events—351, 356
Governor—351, 356, 563, 565
Monroe City
LaRue Insurance Agency, Inc.—939
Peggy Sue's Cafe—939
POET Biorefining in Macon—563–565, 939
President's visits—344, 351, 356, 563, 566, 580, 929, 939
Schachtsiek family farm in Palmyra—939
St. Charles High School in St. Charles—344
Monetary Fund, International—612, 941
Museum and Library Services Board, National—918, 929, 938

National. *See other part of subject*
National security. *See* Defense and national security
NATO. *See* North Atlantic Treaty Organization
Natural disasters
See also Disaster assistance; *specific State or country*
Arizona, wildfires—953
Arkansas, flash flooding—807, 951
Chile, earthquake—307, 927
Chile, earthquake-related tsunami warnings
American Samoa—307, 927
Guam—307, 927
Hawaii—307, 927
Haiti, earthquake—16–18, 23, 26, 30–33, 36–37, 42, 73, 83, 142, 161, 341–342, 669, 916–917, 919
Hurricane Katrina—813
Kentucky and Tennessee, floods—941
Mississippi, tornadoes—939
Northeastern States, floods—934
Ohio, storms and tornadoes—950
Oklahoma, storms and tornadoes—943
Potential natural disasters, preparedness efforts—695, 947
Southeastern States, storms, tornadoes, and floods—603, 942
Navy, Department of the
Chief of Naval Operations—429
Marine Corps, U.S.—463, 952
National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, MD—927
Naval Academy, U.S.—593
Secretary—429, 431, 594, 826, 952
Submarines, lifting of ban on female crewmembers—337
NBC, "Today" program—933, 950
Nebraska, disaster assistance—926, 938
Netherlands, Prime Minister—936
Nevada
Democratic Party event—924
Governor—226
Nevada—Continued
Las Vegas
Chamber of Commerce—234
Convention and Visitors Authority—234
Housing market, decline—235, 238
Unemployment rate—235
President's visit—220, 234, 924
Tourism industry, decline—230, 235, 239
New Hampshire
ARC Energy, LLC, in Nashua—130, 148, 921
Disaster assistance—933, 944
Governor—129
President's visit—129, 148, 152, 155, 182, 921
New Jersey, disaster assistance—922, 931
New Mexico, Governor—508
New York
Buffalo
Imperial Textile, Inc.—643
Industrial Support Inc.—641–644, 944
Continental Connection Flight 3407, crash in Clarence on February 12, 2009—944
Democratic Party event—651
Disaster assistance—937
Duff's Famous Wings in Cheektowaga—641, 944
Economic concerns—641
New York City
Attempted terrorist attack in Times Square—591, 597, 614, 626, 649, 658, 695–696, 941–942
Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art—526
Mayor—591, 941
Real Time Crime Center—649, 658, 944
President's visits—526, 536, 641, 649, 651, 654, 658, 660–661, 692, 938, 944, 946
Recession, effects—641, 654
U.S. Military Academy at West Point—692, 946
Nigeria
Acting President—935
African peacekeeping efforts, role—608
President—608
Relations with U.S.—608
U.S. Ambassador—955
North Atlantic Treaty Organization—200, 367, 415–417, 423–424, 616, 635, 823–824, 867–868, 876, 933
North Carolina
Celgard, LLC, in Charlotte—451–453, 457, 934
Disaster assistance—921
Energy, alternative and renewable sources and technologies—158, 452
Governor—451–452
Lieutenant Governor—451
President's visits—451, 934, 939
North Dakota
Disaster assistance—927, 930, 938, 940
U.S. Senator, retirement—4, 915

North Korea
International and U.S. sanctions—83, 472, 488, 490
Nuclear weapons development—474, 488–489, 615, 758, 945, 947
Six-party talks—489, 891
State sponsor of terrorism status, revocation—160
U.N. Security Council sanctions—615, 856, 879, 887, 945
U.S. national emergency, continuation—817
Nowruz—396
Nuclear energy. *See* Energy; *specific country*
Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference—596
Nuclear weapons. *See* Arms and munitions; *specific country*
Nurses Association, American—830–831

Office. *See other part of subject*
Ohio
Economic growth and development—837–838
Elyria
EMC Precision Machining—55–56, 60, 64, 919
Lorain County Community College—55, 58, 919
Riddell sporting goods, main office and factory—919
Smitty's Place bar and restaurant—55, 919
Energy, alternative and renewable sources and technologies—58
Governor—55–56, 367, 665, 667–668, 837, 950
Highway system, modernization efforts—838
Infrastructure, improvement efforts—666
Job creation and growth—666, 837–838
President's visits—55, 59, 64, 152, 154, 182, 367, 665, 837, 919, 930, 945, 952
Recession, effects—837
Storms and tornadoes, damage and recovery efforts—950
Tax relief—667, 837
Unemployment rate—666
V&M STAR Ohio in Youngstown—665–666, 945
Oklahoma
Disaster assistance—920, 925, 928, 946
Governor—943
Storms and tornadoes, damage and recovery efforts—943
Olympic Games. *See* Sports; *specific country*
Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009—508
Organization of American States—681
Overseas Private Investment Corporation—926, 929

Pakistan
Counterterrorism efforts—417, 428, 627, 631, 860
Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.—543, 729, 855, 878
Economic growth and development—543
Federally Administered Tribal Areas, suspected terrorist safe havens—1, 126, 626, 631, 728, 889
Government corruption, efforts to eliminate—543
Insurgency and terrorist attacks—695, 728
Nuclear weapons and material, security improvement efforts—490
Pakistan National Day—399
Poverty—126
President—627, 631
Prime Minister—481, 490, 935
Relations with Afghanistan—417, 626–627, 631, 889
Relations with India—631
Relations with U.S.—399
Terrorism—1, 219, 631, 878, 891, 898, 924, 930, 937, 942, 953
Palau, U.S. Ambassador—945
Palestinian Authority and Palestinians
See also Israel; Middle East
Economic growth and development—797, 799
Gaza, conflict and humanitarian crisis—797, 799–800, 948–949
Hamas political-paramilitary organization—90, 797
International assistance—799, 948–949
Palestine Investment Conference—949
President—90, 796, 944, 947
Prime Minister—796
Security forces, improvement efforts—797–798
U.S. assistance—797, 799–800
Panama
Free trade agreement with U.S.—250, 363
Trade with U.S.—79
Passover—462, 464, 933
PBS
"A Celebration of Music From the Civil Rights Movement: In Performance at the White House"—194
"Paul McCartney: The Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song In Performance at the White House"—759
Peace Corps, U.S.—680
Pennsylvania
Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh—751
Disaster assistance—937
Governor—241, 243, 328
President's visits—152, 182, 328, 751, 928, 949
U.S. Representative, death—185
Personnel Management, U.S. Office of, Director—432–433

Peru
Economic growth and development—749
Free trade agreement with U.S.—749
President—749, 944
Relations with U.S.—749
Security cooperation with U.S.—749
U.S. Ambassador—938
Philippines
2009 election violence in Maguindanao Province—595
Philippine Independence Day—807
President—950, 954
Relations with U.S.—807, 950
Poland
Acting President—513, 937
Ambassador to the U.S.—483
Auschwitz concentration camp, 65th anniversary of liberation—74–75, 482, 919
Polish Constitution Day—593
President—74, 480, 483, 513, 593, 935–937
President Obama's visit—936
Prime Minister—74, 480, 935
Relations with U.S.—480, 483, 593
U.S. Ambassador—74
Portugal
Day of Portugal, Camoes, and the Portuguese Communities—804
Relations with U.S.—804
Postal Service, U.S.—124, 920
Prayer Breakfast, National—160
Presidency, U.S.
Former President Abraham Lincoln—776–777
Former President George H.W. Bush, meeting with President Obama—920
Former President William J. Clinton, meeting with President Obama—947
Former Presidents George W. Bush and William J. Clinton, Haitian relief efforts and fundraising campaign—27, 30, 916–917
Line-item veto, proposed—106
Presidential Scholars, Commission on—934
President. *See other part of subject*
Promise Alliance, America's—308–309, 311
Puerto Rico, disaster assistance—954

Ramadan—464
Recovery Independent Advisory Panel—928
Red Cross, American—917
Religious Freedom, U.S. Commission on International—951
Religious leaders, African American, meeting with President—934
Reserve System, Federal—19, 29, 97, 248, 373, 896, 940, 955
Retirement
401(k), 403(b), and IRA accounts—71, 95
Early withdrawal penalty waiver for medical emergencies—95
Personal retirement accounts—71
Retirement Thrift Investment Board, Federal—917
Rhode Island
Central Falls High School, firing of teachers and staff members—310
Disaster assistance—933
Flooding—441
Floods, damage and recovery efforts—441
Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center in Providence—311
Romania, President—935
Roosevelt Campobello International Park Commission—948
Russia
Adoption of children by U.S. families—617, 870
Afghanistan, role—867–868
Ambassador to U.S.—864
Bilateral Presidential Commission, U.S.-Russia—615, 856, 865, 868–872
Business Summit, U.S.-Russia—864
Child adoption policy—617, 870
Counternarcotics and drug interdiction efforts—874
Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.—468, 472, 614, 856, 869, 874
Democracy efforts—857, 871
Economic growth and development—615, 857, 865, 873
Economic reforms—862, 864
Elbe River meeting of Soviet and American troops, 65th anniversary—539, 857
Energy
Alternative and renewable sources and technologies—865
Cooperation with U.S.—623, 856, 865, 869–870, 873
Georgia conflict—856
Government corruption, efforts to eliminate—866
Human rights issues—865
Katyn massacre, 70th anniversary—480
Military equipment transit into Afghanistan, agreement with U.S.—412, 856, 867
Minister of Economic Development—864–865
Minister of Energy—870
Minister of Foreign Affairs—472
NATO-Russia Council—868
Nuclear energy—486
Nuclear weapons and material, risk of proliferation—834
Nuclear weapons stockpile, reduction—323, 412, 465, 467, 471, 474, 481, 650, 807

Russia—Continued
President—412, 465, 467, 476, 486, 491–492, 539, 614–617, 855, 864–867, 869–873, 920, 932–933, 935, 944, 951, 953
Relations with NATO—616
Relations with U.S.—412, 467–468, 470–472, 474, 476, 539, 614, 616, 807, 856–857, 864–866, 868–872, 885, 920
Rossiya TV—614
Russia Day—807
Science and technology
Cooperation with U.S.—872–873
Research and development—857, 865
Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with U.S., expansion—83, 323, 412–413, 424, 444, 465, 467, 471–472, 474–476, 481–482, 486, 488, 491, 515, 615, 650, 807, 856, 861, 920, 931–932, 944
Strategic Offensive Arms, Treaty Between the U.S. and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of—872
Terrorist attacks in Moscow—419, 468, 472, 614, 933
Trade with U.S.—472, 856, 861–862, 865, 885
U.S. Ambassador—614, 864
Victory Day, 65th anniversary—614, 617, 857
Weapons-grade plutonium stocks, reduction—486, 856
World Trade Organization, membership bid—857, 861–862, 865, 871–872, 885
Zheleznogorsk plutonium reactor, closure—486, 492
Rwanda
1994 genocide, 16th anniversary—466
Relations with U.S.—466

Saint Patrick's Day—375, 377, 379
Saudi Arabia
Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.—898
King—898, 931, 952, 955
Relations with U.S.—898, 931
Science and technology
See also Health and medical care
Broadband Plan, National—374
Broadband technology—53, 213, 218, 249, 374, 452, 457, 552, 600, 716, 752, 756, 839, 908, 910
Foreign exchange programs for internships and professional development—544
Global competitiveness—140, 199, 232, 239, 242, 431, 677, 715–716, 896
Global Technology and Innovation Fund—544
International cooperation—543–544, 865, 873
Science and technology—Continued
Research and development—15, 25, 78, 119, 132, 203, 248–249, 455, 500, 516, 520–522, 524, 600, 615, 618, 694, 706, 711, 716, 752–753, 757, 764, 809, 827, 840, 873, 895, 908, 911
Robotics—498, 896
Stem cell research—164, 172, 520, 706
Science and Technology, President's Council of Advisers on—930
Science Foundation, National—5, 949
Securities and Exchange Commission, U.S.—512, 530, 572
Security Agency, National—12
Sentencing Commission, U.S.—940
Serbia
Relations with U.S.—198
Serbian National Day—198
Sierra Leone, U.S. Ambassador—952
Slavery (historical) in U.S.—303, 511, 743, 841
Slovakia
Prime Minister—935
U.S. Ambassador—918
Slovenia, Prime Minister—935
Small Business Administration
Administrator—129, 178–179, 362, 432, 435, 641, 648, 703–705
Commercial real estate mortgages, refinancing regulations—179–180
Credit and working capital loans—179, 315, 556, 704, 742, 806, 809
Disaster loan program—704, 740, 747, 773, 778
Education and technical training programs for small-business owners—648
Loan guarantee facility—53, 66, 93, 122, 130, 169, 179–180, 704, 715
Loan limits, increase—806
Small-business loans, increase—144
Small Business Week—703
Smithsonian Institution, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts—926
Social Security Administration—21, 120
Social Security and retirement
Retirement accounts—19, 519
Social Security program—133, 137, 210, 229–230, 248, 301, 389, 395, 461, 546, 560, 753, 784, 791, 893, 901, 909
Social Security reform—63, 115–116, 230
Social Security trust fund—230, 560
Somalia
Blocking property of certain persons contributing to the conflict, U.S. national emergency—493–494
Commercial vessel hostage, rescue—519
Piracy incidents, increase—493–494
Suspected terrorist safe havens—126
U.N. Security Council sanctions—493

South Africa
2010 World Cup—765, 878, 953
Former President—923
Nuclear weapons and material, nonproliferation efforts—481, 615
President—481
South Carolina, job creation and growth—581
South Dakota, disaster assistance—929, 945
South Korea
Defense relationship with U.S.—758, 879
Free trade agreement with U.S.—114, 250, 363, 880, 885, 888
Korean war, 60th anniversary—879
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade—880
Navy patrol ship *Cheonan*, sinking—758, 879, 887, 890, 893, 933, 945, 947
President—5, 244, 484, 486, 758, 879, 887, 933, 945
President Obama's visit—244, 880, 885
Relations with U.S.—758, 879–880, 945
South Korean military forces, operational control (OPCON) transfer—879
Trade with U.S.—79, 170, 880
Space program
Aeronautics and Space Administration, National—5–6, 117, 205–206, 208, 497–502, 505, 896
Earth-based research—499, 896
Funding—206, 498–501
Heavy-lift rocket, development—499
International cooperation—498, 500, 895
Moon exploration—500
National space policy—895
Orion crew vehicle—499
Private sector involvement—499–500, 896
Scientific research projects aboard the shuttle—205–206, 208
Shuttle—204–205, 498–500, 938
Space exploration—205–206, 209, 498–501, 896
Space Station, International—204–205, 208, 499
Spain
King—924, 943
Prime Minister—160, 943, 952
Sports
Baseball—540–541, 589, 934, 952
Basketball—72, 367, 407, 605, 664–665, 718, 857, 919–920, 934–935, 952
Football—593–594, 751, 922
Golf—916
Hockey—306, 751
Little League—922
NCAA championship teams—333, 664, 718
Olympic Games—211–212, 232, 306, 921, 938
Paralympic Games—938
Sports—Continued
Soccer—765–766, 878, 947, 953
Women's athletics—160
State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). *See* Health and Human Service, Department of
State Justice Institute—918
State, Department of
Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom—951
Ambassadors. *See specific country*
Enhanced visa screening for people with connections to terrorists and terrorist groups—3, 8–9, 11
Funding—906
Global Women's Issues, Office of—338
International Joint Commission—920
Secretary—30, 160–162, 337–338, 362, 375, 402, 412–413, 472, 542, 589, 627, 637, 700, 760–761, 860, 883, 915, 919, 921, 923–924, 926, 929, 932, 935–936, 940, 942–943, 945, 949, 951–953
U.S. Ambassadors, promotion of U.S. export opportunities—363
U.S. Embassies, senior visitors business liaison—362
Sudan
Darfur, conflict and human rights crisis—127
International aid organizations, expulsion—127
International diplomatic efforts—127
Lord's Resistance Army attacks—700
Peace efforts—127, 700
U.S. assistance—127
U.S. Special Envoy—127, 937
Sunshine Week—374
Supreme Court. *See* Judiciary
Sustainable Communities, Partnership for—54
Syria
U.S. Ambassador—923
U.S. national emergency, continuation—596

Taxation
Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT)—105, 646–647
Capital gains tax, reduction—77, 86, 102, 117, 122, 130, 180, 193, 684, 704, 803, 834, 911
Child and dependent care expenses, tax credit—79, 433
Child tax credit—76, 202, 213, 479
Earned-income tax credit—116
Research and experimentation tax credit—249, 600, 757
Retirement investment accounts, tax credit—79
Tax Code, reform—70, 81, 102, 210, 248, 253, 301, 319, 332, 351, 460, 479, 546, 601, 647, 711, 742, 755, 911
Tax cuts, budgetary effects—106, 114, 118, 120, 146, 156, 197, 215, 252, 460, 506, 655, 753–754
Tax delinquency, reduction efforts—45–46

Taxation—Continued
Tax relief—15, 24, 39–40, 52–53, 56, 70, 76–77, 80–81, 98–99, 101–102, 105, 116, 118, 120, 122–123, 130, 144, 150, 180, 182, 201–202, 210, 213, 218, 222, 236–237, 243, 252, 301, 319, 322, 351, 401, 443, 452, 478–479, 503–504, 516, 520, 522, 552, 567, 580, 643–644, 654, 667–668, 684, 704–707, 711, 715–716, 742, 752–753, 763, 803, 806, 809, 837, 840, 901, 907–908
Tennessee
Disaster assistance—942
Floods, damage and recovery efforts—603, 941–942
Governor—941
Terrorism
See also Defense and national security; *specific country or region*
Al Qaida terrorist group—1–4, 8, 10, 82–83, 100, 126, 164, 173, 182, 325, 416–417, 419, 481, 483, 626–627, 634–636, 695, 728, 774–775, 821, 823, 825, 850, 854–855, 860, 868–869, 891, 912
Christmas Day 2009 airline bombing attempt—1–4, 8–9, 11–13, 82, 626, 695, 775
Counterterrorism Center, National—12
Counterterrorism efforts—1–4, 8–13, 82, 126, 164, 176–177, 182, 417, 597, 614, 626–627, 649, 695, 762, 774–775, 823–824, 856, 869, 915
Global threat—1–2, 4, 10–11, 126, 177, 181, 212, 416, 465, 472, 503, 513, 584, 597, 614, 616, 626, 694–695, 728, 774, 822, 855–856, 869
Guantanamo Bay detainees—3, 127
September 11, 2001, attacks—1, 8, 10–11, 82, 152, 176, 417, 419, 533, 604, 693–694, 728, 775, 860, 891
Terrorist watch lists, procedural review—1–4, 8–9, 11–12, 915
Terrorists, interrogation procedures—164, 173, 182, 882
Texas
Disaster assistance—956
Governor—940
IRS building in Austin, plane crash—924
Tibet, Dalai Lama—924
Timor-Leste, U.S. Ambassador—951
Trade. *See* Business and industry; Commerce, international
Trade agreements or negotiations. *See* Commerce, international; *specific country or region*
Trade Representative, Office of the U.S.
Chief Agricultural Negotiator—932
Deputy U.S. Trade Representative—Geneva Office—932
U.S. Trade Representative—360, 362–363, 420, 542, 861, 864, 880, 924
Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)—250, 363
Transportation
Air traffic control system, modernization efforts—231
High-speed rail lines, development and expansion—77, 86, 90–92, 97, 203, 213, 249, 600, 644, 707, 711, 752, 756, 839
Highway system, modernization efforts—24, 53–54, 56, 58, 65, 86, 91, 145, 173, 187, 203, 213, 218, 237, 248, 313, 353, 357, 383, 452, 552, 560, 612, 644, 707, 711, 716, 838, 908, 910
Mass transit and rail infrastructure, improvement efforts—54, 58, 99, 119, 145, 203, 213, 218, 222, 237, 243, 248, 313, 455, 644–645, 707, 711
Transportation Safety Board, National—918
Transportation, Department of
Federal Aviation Administration—248
Infrastructure innovation and finance fund—91, 132
Maritime Administration, funding—463
Secretary—97, 338, 540, 689, 837, 839, 927
Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER)—54
Treasury, Department of the
Assistant Secretaries
Intelligence and Analysis—933
Tax Policy—932
Build America Bonds—383
Domestic Finance, Under Secretary for—932
Financial institutions, assessment and regulation—222
Internal Revenue Service—45–46
Secretary—19, 66, 153, 362, 364, 540, 601, 700, 863, 888, 915, 917, 920, 923, 928, 938, 942–943, 946, 950, 952
Supplier Support Program—536
Troubled Asset Relief Program—19–20, 28–29, 39, 50–51, 76–77, 86, 98, 102, 130, 153, 157, 170, 179–181, 221, 247, 249, 442, 503–504, 528, 530, 536, 556, 641, 652, 666, 751, 755, 763, 810
Turkey
Nuclear energy, cooperation with Iran—945
President—927
Prime Minister—545, 936, 945, 949, 955
Relations with Armenia—537
Relations with Greece—340
Turner Network Television (TNT)—946

Uganda
Civil war and ethnic conflict—700
Economic growth and development—700
Lord's Resistance Army—699–700
Peace and reconciliation efforts—700

Ukraine
Charter on Strategic Partnership, U.S.-Ukraine—482
Chernobyl nuclear power plant, containment efforts—483
Economic growth and development—482
Highly enriched uranium stocks
Disposal—482, 485, 487
U.S. disposal assistance—482
Nuclear energy—483
President—482, 923–924, 936
Relations with U.S.—482, 923
Strategic Partnership Commission, U.S.-Ukraine—482
Trade with U.S.—482
United Arab Emirates, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi—936
United Farm Workers of America—933
United Kingdom
Afghanistan, British military forces, deployment—629, 878
Northern Ireland
Deputy First Minister—378, 380
Devolution efforts—375
First Minister—378, 380
Independent International Commission on Decommissioning—380
Peace efforts—375, 378, 380
Prime Minister—375, 625, 629, 878, 889, 926, 931, 944, 951, 953, 955
Relations with U.S.—625, 629, 878, 944
U.S. Ambassador—945
United Nations
Afghanistan, U.N. Assistance Mission—637
Convention against Torture—882
General Assembly—681
Haiti
Role—18, 27, 30
Special Envoy—31
U.N. Stabilization Mission—17, 916
International Day in Support of Victims of Torture—882
Iraq, U.N. Assistance Mission for—326
Nonproliferation and Nuclear Disarmament, Security Council Summit on—323
Reform—485
Secretary-General—758, 916
Security Council—192, 483, 672, 681, 758, 797, 799–801, 823–824, 856, 868–869, 878–879, 887, 893
Sudan, role—127
U.S. Permanent Representative—337–338
United We Serve initiative—73
Uruguay, President-elect—925
U.S. *See other part of subject*
USAID. *See* Development, U.S. Agency for International

Valles Caldera Trust—947
Venezuela, U.S. Ambassador—955
Vermont, Governor—241–243, 245
Veterans
Access to health and medical care—604, 743, 746
Benefits—24, 83, 237, 546, 604, 653, 743, 746, 822, 905
Health and administrative records, information technology—21, 250
Veterans Affairs, Department of
Caregivers of wounded veterans, assistance programs—605
Child care programs—604
Education and job training assistance—245
Funding—101, 164, 172, 210, 418, 604, 653, 822, 906
Homelessness, assistance and mitigation efforts—604
Medical care system
Expansion—604
Funding—101, 604, 905
Secretary—21, 604, 698, 718, 842, 916
Women veterans, health care programs—604
Veterans Day—743
Veterans of Foreign Wars—952
Vice President. *See* White House Office
Vietnam Education Foundation—926
Virginia
Disaster assistance—923, 939
Former Governor—172, 175, 447, 522
George Mason University in Fairfax—385
Governor—380
Graham Road Elementary School in Falls Church—43, 917
Hampton University in Hampton—618, 943
Northern Virginia Community College in Alexandria—419, 421
Opower in Arlington—321–322, 928
President's visits—43, 176, 321, 385, 419, 618, 917, 922, 928, 930, 933, 943, 953
Voluntarism—47, 49, 309, 681, 782–783

Washington, DC. *See* District of Columbia
Weapons of mass destruction. *See* Arms and munitions
West Virginia
Disaster assistance—927, 933, 939, 954
Governor—107, 241, 243, 245, 464, 496, 538, 934
President's visit—538, 939
Upper Big Branch mine accident—464, 477–478, 480, 495–496, 538–539, 582, 934–935, 939
U.S. Senator, death—895, 897
White House Correspondents' Association—588

White House Fellowships, President's Commission on—918
White House Mentorship Program—47
White House Office
  Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, White House Initiative on—698
  Assistants to the President
    Chief Information Officer—22
    Chief of Staff—590, 927
    Chief of Staff, Deputy—947
    Chief Performance Officer—22, 45
    Chief Technology Officer—22, 433
    Energy and Climate Change—198, 429–430, 579, 592, 689, 744, 948
    Homeland Security and Counterterrorism—1–2, 8, 10, 12, 744, 915, 924, 941–942
    Manufacturing Policy, Senior Counselor—155
    National Security Adviser—916, 939
    National Security Adviser, Deputy—882, 927
    Political Affairs—23, 503
    Press Secretary—333
    Social Secretary—305
    Special Projects—938
    Violence Against Women, Adviser on—338
  Auto Communities and Workers, Director of Recovery for—817
  Automotive Communities and Workers, White House Council on—667
  Domestic Policy Council—432
  Economic Advisers, Council of—337, 432–433, 494
  Economic Council, National—882, 942
  Economic Recovery Advisory Board, President's—50, 510, 919
  Environmental Quality, Council on—429, 508
  Export Initiative, National—362
  Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, Office of—160, 162
  Health Reform, Office of—318, 401
  Intergovernmental Affairs, Office of—52
  Middle Class Task Force—60–61, 70, 79, 926
  National Drug Control Policy, Office of—672, 676, 928
  Personal Aide to the President—94, 178, 719
White House Office—Continued
  President's SAVE Award—120
  Science and Technology Policy, Office of—497, 931
  Vice President—4, 18, 45, 52, 64, 70–72, 75, 79, 86–87, 89, 91, 93, 159–160, 201–202, 326, 377, 380, 398, 504, 538, 581, 588, 762, 764–765, 837, 849, 915–928, 930–931, 933–934, 936–940, 942, 945–947, 949, 951–953
  Visitor logs, public release—59, 81, 122, 137, 165, 174, 184, 374
  Women and Girls, White House Council on—337, 432, 805
White House, Committee for the Preservation of the—921
Wisconsin
  Governor—703, 705, 899, 908
  O&H Danish Bakery in Racine—956
  President's visit—899, 956
  Unemployment rate—900
Women's Day, International—336
Worker, Homeownership, and Business Assistance Act of 2009—24, 76
World Bank—886
World Health Organization—944
World Press Freedom Day—595
World Trade Organization—857, 861–862, 865, 871–872, 885

Yemen
  Counterterrorism efforts—3–4
  Guantanamo Bay detainees, suspension of transfers to the Yemeni Government—3
  Poverty and economic instability—1, 126
  Security cooperation with U.S.—1, 3–4, 10
  Suspected terrorist safe havens—3, 8, 126
  Terrorist attacks—1
  U.S. Ambassador—943
  U.S. Embassy in Sanaa, 2008 terrorist attack—1
YouTube—121

Zambia, U.S. Ambassador—947
Zimbabwe, U.S. national emergency, continuation—308

Name Index

Abbas, Mahmoud—90, 796, 944, 947
Abd Al-Mahdi, Adil—917
Abdelaziz, Laila—89
Abdulmutallab, Umar Farouk—1–3, 8–9
Acevedo, Thomas R.—944
Achtenberg, Roberta—851
Adams, William "Will.i.am" James, Jr.—448
Adams, Yolanda Y.—194
Adelson, Vanessa—745
Affleck, Ben—505
Agnew, David—52
Ailes, Roger—590
Akaka, Daniel K.—604–605
Albert, Marv—946
Albright, Madeleine K.—336–337, 955
Aldridge, Anthanette H.—574
Aldrin, Edwin E. "Buzz," Jr.—497, 500
Alemayehou, Mimi E.—929, 950, 963, 970
Alexander, Lamar—257–261, 264, 268, 300
Ali, Lonnie—935
Alizai, Haji Agha Jan—748
Allen, Anita L.—935
Allen, Benjamin J.—407
Allen, Kara Kennedy—381
Allen, Thad W.—591–592, 659, 720–721, 723–725, 737–741, 744, 747, 766–768, 770–771, 811–813, 815–816, 818–819, 825, 941, 948–949, 951
Almonte, Robert R.—931, 963
Al-Mutawa, Naif—543
Amaya, Jose Miguel—934
Ambrosia, Gregory—697
Amos, James F.—952
Anderson, Connie—367, 402–403
Andrew, Anne S.—942
Andrews, Robert E.—263, 265, 328
Angelou, Maya—48
Aoun, Joseph E.—37
Aoun, Zeina—37
Aquino, Benigno S., III—950, 954
Arenas, Javier E.—334
Arguello, Luis, Sr.—360
Arras, John D.—943
Arreaga-Rodas, Luis E.—938, 966
Asali, Ziad—949
Asante, Osei O.—594
Atkinson, Barbara—935
Atyam, Angelina—700
Atyam, Charlotte—700
Aung San Suu Kyi—839
Auriemma, Geno—664–665, 935
Ausley, Loranne—503
Axelrod, David M.—175, 589
Ayers, Mark H.—198
Ayers, Stephen T.—925, 961

Babbitt, Bruce E.—508
Babich, Julie—318
Baca, Joe—514
Bachelet Jeria, Michelle—307, 916, 927
Bacow, Lawrence S.—926
Baez, Joan C.—194–195
Baggott, Matt—380
Bagley, Dale—563
Bagley, Elizabeth Frawley—956
Baia, Ashley—403
Baier, Bret—930
Bailey, Chauncey—595
Bailey, Derek J.—944
Bajnai, Gordon—935
Baker, Howard H., Jr.—110, 136, 393
Baker, James A., III—491
Baldacci, John E.—243, 435
Baldwin, Tammy S.—759, 851
Balkenende, Jan Peter—936
Ball, Deborah L.—925, 961
Balzer, JoAnn L.—917, 958
Ban Ki-moon—758, 916
Bando, Haji—748
Banks, Eleanor M.—41
Banks, Helena—330, 388
Banks, Leslie Esdaile—328–331, 333, 355, 359, 388
Barak, Ehud—939
Barber, Dan—953
Barbour, Haley R.—243, 721, 741, 811–812, 814, 820, 825, 939–940, 942, 946, 951
Barbour, Marsha—811, 812, 951
Barnes, Melody C.—432
Barrasso, John A.—277, 292–293, 300, 317
Barrera, Roberto—927
Barrett, Thomas M.—899
Barrow, John—312
Barton, Joe L.—295, 300, 902
Barzani, Masoud—919
Basescu, Traian—935
Bass, Karen—514
Bass-Bookey, Pamela—921
Bastian, Bruce—926
Battaglia, Anthony J.—946, 968
Baucus, Max S.—145, 263–264, 271, 295, 422, 657, 915
Baumstark, John W.—360
Bayh, Evan—154, 156, 158, 198
Baylor, Arthur D.—936, 964
Bean, Dennis—178–179
Becerra, Xavier—23, 282–285, 391, 606
Beck, Glenn—587

Becker, Craig—932, 958, 965
Beckham, David—765
Beebe, Michael D.—942, 951
Behnken, Robert L.—208
Beinecke, Frances G.—951
Bell, Colleen—926
Bell, William V.—719
Bement, Arden L., Jr.—5
Benjamin, Regina M.—334, 944
Benjaminson, Eric D.—947, 969
Bennet, Caroline—215
Bennet, Michael F.—148–149, 151, 154, 211, 216
Bennett, Missy—812
Bennett, Robert F.—765
Berkley, Shelley—220, 228, 234
Bernanke, Ben S.—97, 896, 955
Berrien, Jacqueline A.—932, 965
Berry, M. John—432–433, 851
Bersin, Alan D.—932, 942, 965
Berwick, Donald M.—937, 965
Beshear, Steven L.—941
Betterbed, Elizabeth—693
Bey, Yusuf, IV—595
Beyrle, John R.—614, 864
Biden, Catherine E. "Jean" Finnegan—916
Biden, Finnegan—377
Biden, Jill T.—4, 83, 194, 419, 421, 577, 604, 945
Biden, Joseph R., Jr.—4, 18, 45, 52, 64, 70–72, 75, 79, 86–87, 89–93, 95, 159–160, 194, 201–202, 241, 243, 275, 277, 279, 281–282, 326, 377, 380, 398, 400, 419, 443, 504, 538, 581, 588, 762, 764–765, 837, 849, 851–852, 915–928, 930–931, 933–934, 936–940, 942, 945–947, 949, 951–953
Billington, James H.—759
Bilyeu, Dana K.—917, 958
bin Laden, Usama—143
Birnbaum, S. Elizabeth—727, 730
Bishop, Sanford D., Jr.—312
Biundo, Nino—581
Blackburn, Elizabeth H.—48
Blackburn, Marsha—279–281
Blackwood, Ann S.—944
Bladel, Michael R.—936, 964
Blair, Dennis C.—9, 688, 774
Blanchard, Anita—830
Bloom, Ron—155
Bloomberg, Michael R.—526, 591, 649, 941
Bloomfield, Sara J.—74
Boarman, William J.—937, 965
Boasberg, James E.—952, 971
Boccieri, John A.—395, 665, 667
Boehme, Simon—779
Boehner, John A.—100–103, 120, 188–189, 256, 258, 263–264, 271, 273, 278–279, 282, 286–289, 294–295, 300, 302, 377, 391–392, 404, 436, 517, 590, 902
Boerger, Justine—899
Boesch, Donald—951
Bolden, Charles F., Jr.—5, 497, 499, 501
Bonacci, Liz—37
Bondy, Rupert—811, 818
Boness, Daryl J.—917, 958, 960
Bonner, Josiah R., Jr.—813
Bonosaro, Carol A.—925
Booker, Cory A.—508
Borisov, Boyko—935
Borras, Rafael—932, 965
Boswell, Leonard L.—407, 577
Boustany, Charles W.—271
Bowers, Bishop Billy—194
Bowles, Erskine B.—209–211, 215, 546–547, 647, 924
Boxer, Barbara—152, 514, 519, 521, 705, 709, 947
Boxer, Stewart—522, 706, 709
Brady, William E.—113
Braley, Bruce—407
Braly, Angela F.—600
Branch, Taylor—41
Bredar, James K.—938, 965
Bredesen, Philip N., Jr.—941
Brees, Drew—922, 953
Brehm, Edward W.—950, 970
Brennan, John O.—1–2, 8, 10, 12, 744, 915, 924, 941–942
Brewer, Janice K.—922, 949, 953
Brilev, Sergey—614
Brish, Arkady—468
Broin, Jeff—563, 565
Bromwich, Michael R.—827, 951
Brooks, T. Garth—936
Brossard, Christopher R.—161
Brown, Anthony G.—198, 762
Brown, Byron W.—641
Brown, Corrine—819
Brown, Edmund G. "Jerry," Jr.—514
Brown, Gordon—375, 626, 926, 931
Brown, Jordan—63
Brown, Scott P.—38–40, 443, 445, 589, 917, 937, 951
Brown, Shannon—73
Brown, Sherrod C.—55–57, 154, 367, 837
Brown, Wesley A.—594
Brownback, Samuel D.—64, 93
Browner, Carol M.—159, 198, 429–430, 579, 592, 689, 744, 948
Bruni-Sarkozy, Carla—423, 933
Brunner, Jennifer—665
Bruschi, Tedy—953
Bryant, Kobe—73
Bryk, Anthony S.—948, 969
Bryza, Matthew J.—947, 969
Buckley, Raymond—181

Buffett, Warren E.—106, 230, 460, 512, 529, 647
Bunch, Lonnie—921
Burnett, Steve—563, 565
Burns, Ursula M.—362, 929
Burr, Richard M.—256, 288, 316, 605
Burris, Benjamin G.—227
Bush, George H.W.—30, 692, 747, 920
Bush, George W.—27, 30–31, 73, 624, 916–917
Buss, Jeanie—72
Butler, Louis B., Jr.—957
Butterfield, Robin A.—944
Byrd, Robert C.—477, 895, 897

Calderon Hinojosa, Felipe de Jesus—607, 670–671, 684, 916, 931, 945
Calipari, John—919
Camardelle, Chris J.—769
Camardelle, David—739–740, 769–771
Cameron, David—625, 629, 878, 889, 944, 951, 953–954
Cameron, Samantha—626
Camile, Ronnie—142
Camp, Beatrice—956
Camp, David L.—264–276, 278
Campbell, George—526
Camunez, Michael C.—927, 962
Canfield, Natoma—330–331, 333, 355, 368–369, 371–372, 389, 401, 403–404
Canterbury, Chuck—661
Cantor, Eric—100–101, 273, 275–276, 289
Caparazzo, Frank—644
Capito, Shelley Moore—718
Caplin, Michael A.—934
Capps, Lois—691
Capuano, Michael E.—440, 447
Cardin, Benjamin L.—783
Carl, Loren—921
Carl, Parker L.—960
Carnahan, Jean—351
Carnahan, Robin—563
Carney, Susan L.—946, 968
Caro, Robert—292
Carr, Kevin A.—936, 964
Carson, Andre—542
Carson, Johnnie—950, 970
Carter, James E., Jr.—194, 304
Carter, Michael—582
Carter, Phillip, III—942, 968
Cartwright, James E.—533
Cartwright, Zach—94
Casey, Robert P., Jr.—328
Cashman, Brian—540
Casper, Denise J.—940, 967
Castellani, John J.—246
Castor, Katherine A.—85
Castro, Jake—662
Castro, Jami—662
Cazayoux, Donald J., Jr.—936, 964
Chaffetz, Jason E.—108, 112
Chang, Edmond E-Min—938, 965
Charles, Randal D.—344
Charles, Tina—664
Chatigny, Robert N.—925, 961
Checketts, David W.—765
Chen, Edward M.—957
Chen, Edwin—588
Cheney, Richard B.—925
Chinchilla, Laura—923, 942
Chopra, Aneesh—22, 433
Christman, Richard—954, 971
Chu, Judy—514
Chu, Steven—2, 4, 159, 198–199, 429–430, 565, 716, 721, 724, 739, 744, 825, 869, 943, 947
Church, Roy A.—55
Clapper, James R., Jr.—774, 970
Clark, Robert G.—921
Clark, Trapper R.—703–704
Clarkson, Charles A.—926
Clay, William L., Jr.—5
Clinton, Hillary Rodham—30, 160–162, 337–338, 362, 375, 402, 412–413, 472, 542, 589, 627, 637, 700, 760–761, 860, 883, 915, 919, 921, 923–926, 929, 932, 935–936, 940, 942–943, 945, 949, 951–953
Clinton, William J.—27, 30–31, 73, 110, 156, 210, 333, 355, 402, 506, 753, 915–917, 930, 947
Close, Chuck—922
Clyburn, James E.—23, 266, 268–269, 303, 391, 398, 422
Coakley, Martha M.—37, 917
Coburn, Thomas A.—256, 261–263, 280, 283–284, 288, 297, 300, 302, 316
Cogburn, Max O., Jr.—948, 969
Cohon, Jared L.—751
Colbert, Stephen T.—205
Cole, James M.—946, 969
Cole, Natalie—194
Coleman, Mary Sue—583
Coleman, Michael B.—837–838
Coleman, Sharon J.—925, 960
Collins, Chris—719
Collins, Michael—380
Collins, Susan M.—759
Coney, Lester—926
Conkling, Philip—948
Connelly, Maura—949, 970
Conrad, G. Kent—81, 120, 136, 145, 157, 187, 210, 285–286
Conte, Ousmane—748
Conyers, John, Jr.—303
Cook, Robert B.—944
Cook, Suzan D. Johnson—951, 971
Cooper, James H.S.—287

Cooper, Roy—719
Coppola, John—918, 958
Cornyn, John—512, 517, 521
Coronado, Irasema—945
Corr, William—109
Cortes, Javier—606
Corvington, Patrick A.—309
Costello, Elvis—759
Cote, David M.—926
Couric, Katie—922
Courtney, Joe—664
Cowen, Brian—375, 377, 379, 922
Cowen, Mary—378, 380
Crandall, Russell C.—928
Crane, Barbara—318
Creamer, Timothy J.—205
Crist, Charles J., Jr.—589, 721, 738–739, 741, 814, 817–820, 825, 940, 946, 951
Crump, Beverly—661
Culver, Chester J.—407, 548–549, 562
Culver, Mari—407
Cummings, Elijah E.—97, 303
Cummings, Rick—178–179
Cuomo, Andrew M.—526
Cutter, Stephanie—938

Daalder, Ivo H.—947
Dai Bingguo—700
Dakin, Jennifer—453
Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso—924
Daley, Richard M.—52, 380
Dalton, Walter—451
D'Andrea, Theresa—438–439
Darcy, Jo-Ellen—508
Darling, Martha A.—934
Daschle, Thomas A.—110, 135, 393
Daulaire, Nils—944
Daum, Martin—689
Davidson, Jordan—719
Davila, Edward J.—946, 968
Davis, Cody—478
Davis, Gerald—911–912
Davis, J. Graham "Gray," Jr.—514
Davis, Susan A.—47, 533
Davis, Sylvia—926
Davis, Tommy—478
Dawes, Dominique—953
DeGioia, John J.—42
DeGuilio, Jon E.—918, 957
Delahanty, Thomas E., II—929, 962
Delahunt, William D.—441, 447
Delatour, Elisabeth Debrosse—341
De Leon, Ben—47
Dell, Michael S.—7
DeMint, James W.—445, 506, 752
Demol, Fabienne—360
Dennen, Brett—709
DeParle, Nancy-Ann—318, 401
Deutch, Theodore E.—506, 819
Devadas, Anand—805
Devadas, Prachee J.—805–806
Devaney, Earl E.—202
Diamond, Peter A.—940, 967
Dickert, John—899–900, 956
DiNapoli, Thomas P.—526
Dingell, John D., Jr.—288, 296–298, 402, 689
Dining, Tim—129, 133
Dobbs, C. Ricky—594
Dodd, Christopher J.—7, 50, 145, 273, 295, 301, 373, 390, 400, 422, 663–664, 686, 875, 897, 913, 915, 917, 931, 942, 946
Dole, Robert J.—110, 136, 393
Dollen, Michael F.—819
Donaldson, Milford W.—945
Donaldson, William H.—50, 510
Donilon, Thomas E.—882, 927
Donohue, Thomas J.—308
Donovan, Landon—765
Donovan, Shaun L.S.—420, 923
Dorgan, Byron L.—4, 915, 950
Dorgan, Darrell—952
Dougan, William—925
Dougherty, J. Thomas—947, 969
Douglas, James H.—241–243, 245, 922
Doyle, James E.—703, 705, 899, 908
Doyle, Jessica—899
Driehaus, Steve—837
Drusina, Edward—918
DuBois, Joshua—160
Dudley, Robert W.—811, 818
Duffy, Laura E.—925, 961
Duffy, Pam—942
Dugan, Regina E.—5
DuMont, Edward C.—937, 964
Dunakin, Angela—662
Dunakin, Anthony—662
Dunakin, Patrick—662
Dunakin, Sienna—662
Duncan, Arne—4, 6–7, 35, 43–44, 126, 244, 308–311, 366, 420–421, 449, 562, 577, 698, 780, 842, 917
Dungy, Anthony K.—85
Dunkley, Anthony—689
Dunne, Charles G.—940, 967
Duong, David—926
Durbin, Richard J.—146, 287–289, 300, 422, 921
Dyer, John H. "Buddy," Jr.—85
Dylan, Bob—194–195, 290

Eagles, Catherine C.—962
Eastwood, Clint—290
Edelman, Todd E.—932, 963

Edwards, Carl—953
Edwards, Donna F.—783
Eggleston, John—563
Eichenlaub, Jo-Ann—62
Eikenberry, Karl W.—416, 632, 933, 943
Eisen, Norman L.—955, 972
Ekstrom, Randy—819
ElBaradei, Mohamed—192
Elliott, Jo Eleanor—831
Ellison, Keith—542
Ellsworth, Brad—45–46
Emanuel, Rahm I.—590, 734, 927
Emanuel, Zach—734
Emerson, John B.—521
Entwistle, James F.—950, 970
Enzi, Michael B.—103, 256, 261, 276–277, 280, 316
Erdogan, Recep Tayyip—545, 936, 945, 949, 955
Ericks, Mark L.—950, 970
Escalante, Jaime—434
Escovedo, Sheila—605
Estrada, John L.—952
Evers, Tony—899

Faivre-Davis, Sara L.—921
Farahany, Nita A.—935
Farid, Andeisha—544
Farley, Jenni—590
Farmar, Jordan—73
Fattah, Chaka—328
Faughnan, Joseph P., Sr.—950, 970
Fayyad, Salam—796
Feierstein, Gerald M.—943, 968
Feierstein, Mark—944, 968
Fein, David B.—921, 960
Feinberg, Kenneth R.—829, 850
Feinerman, Gary S.—925, 961
Feingold, Russell D.—69, 107
Feinstein, Lee A.—74, 919
Feldblum, Chai R.—932, 965
Felix, Allyson—953
Fenton, James—581
Fenty, Adrian M.—842
Fergin, Judith R.—951, 971
Fernandes, Jacquelyn A.—664
Fernandez, Jose W.—919
Fernandez de Kirchner, Cristina—936
Fernandez Reyna, Leonel—917
Ferrer, Wifredo A.—925, 961
Ferriero, David S.—718
Fico, Robert—935
Filler, Michael B.—925
Filner, Bob—605
Findley, Robbie—765–766
Finley, Stephanie A.—918, 957
Finn, John W.—736
Finnegan, Joan—692
Finnegan, Patrick—692
Fischer, Jan—935
Fisher, Derek—73
Fisher, Lee—837
Fitzgerald, Michael L.—407
Fitzsimmons, John—125
Fleet, Edmund C.—842
Fleissig, Audrey Goldstein—918, 957
Fleming, Audrey—852
Flores, Hector—95
Foley, James B.—923
Fong, Ivan K.—956
Foote, Elizabeth Erny—921, 960
Foote, Evelyn—952
Ford, Robert S.—923, 960
Forestal, Kerry J.—921, 960
Fortuno, Luis G.—922
Foster, John D.—925, 961
Fowler, James T.—952, 971
Fowler, Jeffrey L.—593
Foxx, Anthony—451
Frank, Barney—50, 447, 684, 834, 875, 897, 913, 931, 946
Freeman, Morgan P., Jr.—194
Friedrich, Dabney L.—940, 967
Fudge, Ann M.—926
Fudge, Marcia L.—367
Fugate, W. Craig—23, 603, 943
Fulgham, Alonzo—949
Fultz, Valerie—59
Funes Cartagena, Carlos Mauricio—335

Gaer, Felice D.—951
Gage, John—925
Gallagher, David—409, 437, 439
Gallagher, Lauren—409, 411, 437, 439
Gamoran, Adam—925, 961
Garcia, Joe—503
Garcia, Terry D.—951
Garcia Perez, Alan—749, 944
Gardiner, William F.—762
Gardler, Meghan E.—664
Garfinkle, Frances L.—783–785, 794
Garver, Geoffrey—945
Garza, Alexander G.—935
Gaskins, Gary M.—925, 961
Gasol, Pau—73
Gaspard, Dudley A. "Butch," Jr.—769–770, 773
Gaspard, Patrick H.—23, 503
Gates, Becky—916
Gates, Robert M.—157, 364, 413, 428, 490, 723, 742, 850, 853, 860, 882, 892, 915–916, 919–920, 923–924, 927, 930, 933–934, 938–939, 942–943, 946, 953
Gates, William H., III—803
Gehl, Katherine M.—926, 961

Geithner, Timothy F.—19, 66, 153, 364, 540, 601, 700, 842, 863, 888, 915, 917, 920, 923, 928, 938, 942, 943, 946, 950, 952
Genachowski, Julius M.—74, 125, 374, 919
Germond, Alice Travis—181
Giannoulias, Alexi—339, 565, 921
Gibbons, Jim—226
Gibbs, Robert L.—333
Gibney, John A., Jr.—937, 964
Gibson, Katie—848–849
Gilani, Syed Yousuf Raza—481, 490, 935
Gillard, Julia—954
Gillibrand, Kirsten E.—151–152
Girardi, Joseph E.—540–541
Gjuraj, Robert—548–549
Glanton, Willie—41
Glenn, John H., Jr.—499
Goertz, Roland A.—318
Goldberg, Robert—955
Golden, Thelma—921
Goldman, Jill—926
Goldring, Fred—922
Goldsmith, Mark A.—922, 960
Goldstein, Jeffrey A.—932, 965
Gomez Mont Urueta, Fernando Francisco—605
Gonzales, Kenneth J.—927, 962
Goodwin, R. Booth, II—918, 957
Gordon, Barton J.—4
Gordon, Philip H.—924
Gordon, Steve—93
Gordy, Tyler—693
Goren, Nicola O.—47
Gottlieb, Howard—926
Grace, William M.—55, 60, 65–66
Grady, Christine—935
Graham, Charles E.—198
Graham, D. Robert—691–692, 746–747, 768–769
Graham, Lindsey O.—155–156, 365, 384, 534, 573, 579, 708, 730, 929
Graham, William F.—939
Granholm, Jennifer M.—242–243, 583, 703, 705, 779
Grassley, Charles E.—256, 285–286, 317, 529
Gratacos Munet, Osvaldo Luis—944
Gration, J. Scott—127, 937
Graves, James E., Jr.—950, 971
Gray, Patricia—502
Grayson, Alan—85
Greene, Kalana L.—664
Gregg, Judd A.—81, 120, 136–137, 145, 187, 210, 938
Gregoire, Christine O.—922
Greider, Carol W.—48
Gresser, Ruth—178–179
Gretzky, Wayne—649
Griffon, Mark A.—931, 963
Grissom, Barry R.—940, 967
Grohl, David E.—759
Grove, Andrew S.—253
Grove, Steve—121–129
Gul, Abdullah—927
Gunderson, Steven—918
Gupta, Kedar—133
Gurria, Angel—360
Gutierrez, Kris D.—948, 969
Gutman, Howard W.—947

Haag, Melinda L.—931, 963
Hafen, Andy A.—220
Hagen, Elisabeth A.—919, 959
Hagenbeck, Franklin L.—692
Hagenbeck, Judy—692
Hagler, Jon—563
Haig, Alexander M., Jr.—241
Hale, Cynthia L.—465
Hale, David J.—918, 957
Hall, Beverly L.—948, 969
Hall, Katelyn—923
Hamburg, Margaret A.—944
Hamilton, David F.—154
Hammack, Katherine G.—918, 958
Hammonds, Evelynn M.—926
Han Zheng—5
Hanadi Nasser Bin Khaled Al Thani, Sheikha—544
Hancock, Herbie—759
Haney, Terry—805
Hannemann, Mufi—52
Hanson, Stephen—318
Harding, Robert A.—928, 962, 964
Hariri, Sa'ad al-Din al- —923, 944, 946
Harkin, Thomas R.—145, 276–279, 293, 301–302, 407, 422, 577
Harman, Jane L.—72, 514
Harper, Stephen—884, 916, 936, 948, 952, 954
Harrington, Anne M.—951, 971
Harrington, Padraig—382
Harris, Emmylou—759
Harris, Kamala D.—714
Harrison, Kevin C.—936, 964
Hartley, Jane D.—954, 971
Harvey, Joseph—41
Harvey, Kerry B.—918, 957
Harvey, Mabel—41
Harvey, William R.—303–304, 618, 926, 943
Hashimi, Tariq al- —920
Hasman, Jody—55
Hatch, Orrin G.—645, 942
Hatfield, Jonathan A.—923, 960
Hatoyama, Yukio—936, 947
Hauser, Stephen L.—935
Hayden, Carla D.—918, 958
Hayek, Matthew J.—407

Hayes, Denis—531
Hayward, Anthony B.—811, 818
Heaney, Seamus—380
Height, Dorothy I.—41, 337, 525, 574, 620–621, 940
Helfenberger, Joe—559
Henry, C. Bradford—922, 943
Hensarling, T. Jeb—114
Herlinsky, Victor J., Jr.—926
Hernandez, Randi Belisomo—42
Hernandez Gomez, Carlos—42
Hickenlooper, John W.—52, 211–213, 217
Hicks, Thomas—932, 964
Hickton, David J.—946, 969
Hieftje, John—583
Higgins, Brian—641
Hill, Christopher R.—924
Hill, Clarence—927
Hill, Edwin D.—198
Hill, Faith—759
Hill, Grant H.—953
Hill, James—456
Hines, Darrell L.—899
Hinojosa, Ruben—422
Hire, Kathryn P.—207
Hirschhorn, Eric L.—932, 966
Hite, William P.—198
Hochberg, Fred P.—360, 362, 851
Hockersmith, Kaki—926
Hodes, Paul W.—129, 133, 138
Hodes, Peggo Horstmann—133
Hodges, G. Tommy—689
Hoffman, Joshua—923
Hoffman, Sharon—926
Hogan, Beverly Wade—926
Hogan, Joseph M.—234
Hohman, David E.—944
Holder, Eric H., Jr.—3, 327, 597, 657, 661, 785, 842, 844
Holdren, John P.—497
Hollander, Ellen L.—938, 966
Holliday, Charles O. "Chad," Jr.—803
Holmes, Paul K., III—940, 967
Holt, Gerald S.—921, 960
Holway, David—925
Honda, Mike—181
Hooks, Benjamin L.—502
Hooks, Frances—502
Hopewell, Bobby J.—779
Horn, Jeffrey—220, 222
Horne, Lena—623
Horsford, Steven—220
Howard, Tara—561
Hoye, Christopher T.—918, 957
Hoyer, Steny H.—23, 262–263, 296, 377, 391, 398, 422, 834, 921
Hu Jintao—62, 487, 489, 556, 700–701, 881, 885, 890–891, 934, 936
Hudson, Jennifer—194
Huerta, Dolores C.—933
Hughes, Chris—544
Hunter, Roszell—959
Hunter, Warren—122
Hussain, Rashad—543, 923

Ibrahim, Mohamed "Mo"—544
Ihlenfeld, William J., II—948, 969
Ilves, Toomas Hendrik—935
Ingram, Mark, Jr.—334
Iorio, Pam—85
Ireland, Steven J.—548
Ireland, S. Leslie—933, 964
Isakson, Johnny—160
Israel, Steve—651, 653

Jackson, Amy Berman—952, 971
Jackson, Duane—658, 941
Jackson, Lisa P.—159, 337, 508, 565, 576, 579, 592, 689, 744, 768, 923
Jackson, Malcolm D.—940, 967
Jackson, Philip D.—72–73, 952
Jackson, Robert P.—954, 971
Jackson Lee, Sheila—497
Jackson-Dennison, Deborah—944
Jacobsen, Ryan—658
Jacques, Steven L.—968
Jaczko, Gregory B.—198
Jamalzadah, Mozhdah—336, 338
James, Nate—719
Jameson, Florence—224
Jarrett, Valerie B.—337, 432
Jealous, Benjamin T.—574
Jeffrey, James F.—954, 972
Jenkins, Renee—318
Jenrette, Richard H.—921
Jeter, Derek S.—541, 781
Jeu, Joseph—954
Jindal, Piyush "Bobby"—592, 721, 724, 738–741, 766, 768, 811, 814, 820, 825, 940–941, 946
Jobs, Steven P.—48
Johnsen, Dawn E.—958, 964
Johnson, Earvin "Magic," Jr.—72–73
Johnson, Eric—415
Johnson, Hank—312
Johnson, Kristina M.—718
Johnson, Martha N.—154, 188, 429–430, 432, 434
Johnson, Michael P.—334
Johnson, Otis S.—312
Johnson, Sheila—922
Johnson Reagon, Bernice—194–195
Johnson Sirleaf, Ellen—733, 946
Jonas, Joseph A.—589, 759

Jonas, Nicholas J.—589, 759
Jonas, P. Kevin, II—589, 759
Jonathan, Goodluck—935
Jones, Blake—201–202, 204
Jones, Cathy Jo—962
Jones, Darrell D.—745
Jones, Holly—745
Jones, James L., Jr.—916, 924, 928, 939
Jones, Kerri-Ann—944
Jones, Stuart—745
Jordan, I. King—934
Jordan, Michael J.—72
Josipovic, Ivo—923
Joyner, Donna Richardson—953
Joyner, Pamela—922
Judge, Patty J.—407
Junemann, Gregory—925
Junkins, Lowell—921

Kaczynska, Maria—480, 483, 593, 935–937
Kaczynski, Lech—74, 480, 483, 513, 593, 935–937
Kagan, Elena—621, 890, 943, 955, 968
Kagan, Irving—622
Kagan, Marc—622
Kaine, Timothy M.—163, 172, 175, 181, 441, 447, 449, 503, 514, 522, 930
Kakouris, Andreas—339
Kalinske, David—407
Kan, Naoto—891, 893, 949
Kane, Spencer—911–912
Kappes, Stephen R.—176
Kaptur, Marcia C.—55–57
Karder, Michael—65
Karimi, Nazira Azim—632
Karmel, Marianne—447
Karzai, Hamid—414, 416, 424, 626, 635, 860, 889, 892, 932, 944, 953
Kaskarelis, Vassilis—339
Kaufman, Isabella Pelosi—705
Kaur, Gursharan—761, 884
Kautz, Elizabeth B.—52
Kelley, Colleen M.—925
Kellogg, Clark—920
Kelly, Craig A.—919
Kelly, John—47
Kelly, Raymond W.—649
Kennedy, Anthony M.—380
Kennedy, Caroline B.—402
Kennedy, Ethel—381
Kennedy, Michael D.—917, 958
Kennedy, Patrick J.—378, 381, 402
Kennedy, Victoria R.—37, 378, 381, 402, 441, 447
Kent, Roman R.—919
Kerry, John F.—37, 155–156, 413, 639, 690, 708, 730, 931
Kidder, Rolland—952
Kildee, Dale E.—422
Killian, William C.—946, 969
Kilroy, Mary Jo—837
Kim Jong-hoon—880
King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud—898, 931, 952, 955
King Abdullah II—920, 936
King Juan Carlos I—924, 943
King, Betty E.—944
King, Billie Jean—953
King, Larry—949
Kingston, Jack—312
Kippen, Colin—934
Kirk, Paul G., Jr.—441
Kirk, Ronald—360, 363, 420, 542, 861, 864, 880, 924, 954
Kislyak, Sergey I.—864
Kissell, Larry—451
Kissinger, Henry A.—413
Kite, Michael—566
Klass, Richard L.—952
Klaus, Vaclav—467, 476, 935
Kline, John—263, 265
Klitzka, Laura—321, 330, 333, 355, 359, 389, 848–849
Klitzka, Logan—321, 330, 333, 355, 359, 389
Klitzka, Pete—321, 330, 355, 389, 848
Klitzka, Taylor—321, 330, 333, 355, 359, 389
Klobuchar, Amy—160
Knight, Robert M.—720
Ko, Sam—180
Kobayashi, Leslie E.—938, 966
Koch, Steven—928
Koehler, Gregory—220
Koh, Lucy Haeran—918, 957
Komorowski, Bronislaw—513, 937
Kondracke, Marguerite W.—308, 954, 972
Kornbluh, Karen—432
Korrell, Harry J.F., III—954, 972
Kosmas, Suzanne M.—497, 500–501, 503–504
Kosor, Jadranka—935
Koster, Chris—351, 563
Kotov, Oleg—205
Koufax, Sanford "Sandy"—734
Kreis, Jason—765–766
Krishna, Somanahalli Mallaiah—760–762, 883
Krzyzewski, Michael W.—718–720, 934
Kubilius, Andrius—935
Kucherlapati, Raju—935
Kucinich, Dennis J.—367, 372, 377
Kundra, Vivek—22
Kupiecki, Robert—483
Kvien, Kristina A.—925
Kwan, Michelle—953
Kwast, Steven L.—415
Kyl, Jon L.—266–268, 270, 301, 942

LaFleur, Cheryl A.—928, 962
Laguerre, Pierre Eddy—37
Lahiri, Jhumpa—922
LaHood, Raymond H.—97, 338, 540, 689, 837, 839, 927
Lamar, Cynthia Chavez—917, 958
Landesman, Rocco—290
Landrieu, Mitchell J.—767
Landry, Mary E.—744
Lane, Jeffrey A.—920, 959
Lang Lang—759
Langbehn, Janice—852
Langbehn-Pond, Danielle—852
Langbehn-Pond, David—852
Langbehn-Pond, Katie—852
Larranaga, Jim—385
Larson, John B.—391, 664
Lasseigne, Floyd—769, 773
Lauer, Matt—933, 950
Lavizzo-Mourey, Risa—953
Lavrov, Sergey V.—472
Leach, James A.S.—290
Leahy, Patrick J.—153–154, 382, 525, 943
Ledbetter, Lilly—441
Lee, Barbara—181, 303
Lee, Christopher J.—641
Lee, Cindy—779, 781
Lee, Milton C., Jr.—957
Lee Myung-bak—5, 244, 484, 486, 758, 879, 887, 933, 945
LeMieux, George S.—817–819, 938
Leno, Jay—589
Leon-Guerrero, Frank—931, 963
Leonhart, Michele M.—919, 959
Levin, Carl—736
Levin, Fay Hartog—947
Levin, Sander M.—834
Lew, Jacob J. "Jack"—923
Lewis, Edward—926
Lewis, James A.—932, 963
Lewis, John R.—195, 327, 842
Lewis, Reginald—935
Lewis, Yvette—935
Liberi, Dawn—415
Lieberman, Joseph I.—155–156, 639, 664, 690, 708, 730, 736, 759
Likins, Rose M.—938, 966
Lillis, Christopher—318
Limbaugh, Rush—587
Limtiaco, Alicia A.G.—925, 961
Lin, Maya—292, 956
Lincoln, Blanche Lambert—150–151, 155, 875
Lindenmayer, Jim—550
Linick, Steve A.—932, 964
Lion, Margo—290
Lipnic, Victoria A.—932, 966
Litzler, Matt—461
Liu, Goodwin Hon—925, 961
Llorens, Hugo—919
Lobo, Richard M.—921
Lobo Sosa, Porfirio—919, 939
Locke, Gary F.—250, 360, 362, 463, 542, 698, 842, 864–865, 925
Loebsack, David W.—407
Loescher, Peter—548
Loftus, Judy—140
Lohier, Raymond J., Jr.—929, 962
Lomellin, Carmen—925
Long, Bridget T.—925, 961
Long, Tina R.—220
Lopez, Erik—662
Lopez, Jesse—662
Lopez, Madilyn—662
Lopez, Michelle—662
Lopez, P. David—932, 966
Love, Kathy S.—312
Love, Reginald L.—36, 94, 178, 457, 719, 720, 909
Lowery, Jerome—63–64
Lowery, Joseph E.—194
Lozeau, Donnalee—129
Lu, Christopher P.—955
Lubchenco, Jane—508, 579, 778
Lugar, Richard G.—154, 413, 931, 938
Lula da Silva, Luiz Inacio—916
Lundquist, Verne—920
Luntz, Frank I.—116
Lurie, Nicole—944
Lyden, Michael J.—954
Lynch, John H.—129
Lynch, Loretta E.—918, 957
Lynn, William J., III—533, 916

Mabus, Raymond E., Jr.—429, 431, 594, 826, 952
Maddox, Scott—503
Maddox, Walter—334
Madigan, Lisa—565, 569
Magnus-Stinson, Jane E.—918, 957
Main, Joseph A.—477, 495–496, 937
Malhotra, Rekha "DJ Rekha"—698
Maloney, Carolyn B.—526
Manchin, Joseph, III—107, 241, 243, 245, 464, 496, 538, 934
Mandela, Nelson R.—923
Manilow, Lew—921
Mankiller, Wilma P.—466
Marciel, Scot A.—955, 972
Marcus, Felicia—945
Margolies, Marjorie—926
Markey, Betsy—394
Markey, Edward J.—440, 447, 689
Marquez Nugent, Tamara—703, 705
Marsh, Carol "Mickie"—719

Marsh, Pamela C.—936, 964
Marshall, Capricia Penavic—955
Marshall, Michael—937
Marston, Alexander W.—584
Martin, Bradley A.—819
Martin, Jerry E.—931, 963
Martinez, William J.—925, 961
Masingill, Christopher A.—938, 967
Masley, Donna J.—704
Masley, Francis J.—704
Mason, Nurney—842
Mason, Ronald, Jr.—926
Mason, Sally K.—407
Massa, Eric J.J.—590
Massanelli, Clifton T.—921, 960
Matheson, Scott M., Jr.—927, 962
Mattingly, Don—541
Mauborgne, Renee—938
Mavodones, Nicholas M., Jr.—435
Mayorkas, Alejandro N. "Ali"—533
Mazzocco, Herve—231
McCabe, Matthew F.—954, 972
McCain, John S., III—69, 101, 103, 256, 272–273, 283–284, 287–288, 317, 448, 573, 589, 675
McCarthy, Marina C.—934
McCartney, Paul—759
McCaskill, Claire—45–46, 154, 157, 345–346, 348, 350–351, 356
McChrystal, Stanley A.—416, 632–633, 635, 729, 850, 854, 860–861, 889, 933, 943, 953
McClain, Rolando—334
McClellan, Cornell—953
McConnell, A. Mitchell—120, 136, 154, 187, 189, 195, 256–257, 261, 264, 266–267, 270, 272, 276, 283, 285–287, 290, 292, 296–297, 302, 333, 350, 359, 392, 512, 517–518, 521, 525
McConnell, John J., Jr.—962
McCord, Michael J.—926, 961
McCracken, Samuel—955
McCulley, Terence P.—955, 972
McDonnell, Robert F.—380, 922
McDonough, Stephen L.—953
McGee, Timothy—966
McGrath, Elizabeth A.—929, 963
McGuinness, Martin—378, 380
McHugh, John M.—692
McKay, Lamar—811, 818
McKeever, Candace Bond—926
McKinley, Peter M.—943, 968
McKinnie, Eric "Ricky"—194
McLaren, Kaili E.—664
McLeod, Margaret R. "Peggy"—925, 961
McMillen, C. Thomas—172
McNerney, W. James, Jr.—362, 929
McPeak, Merrill A.—952
McPhee, Katharine—336
McPherson, Darryl K.—936, 964
McSwain, Kristin B.—47
Medvedev, Dmitry A.—412, 465, 467, 476, 486, 491–492, 539, 614–617, 855, 864–867, 869–873, 920, 932–933, 935, 944, 951, 953
Medvedeva, Svetlana—855
Meek, Kendrick B.—85, 503–504
Melfi, James J.—665
Mellencamp, John C.—194
Memeger, Zane D.—936, 965
Mendez, Sylvia—337
Menendez, Robert—606
Menino, Thomas M.—37, 380, 441
Merkel, Angela—612, 926, 931, 936, 939, 943, 946, 952
Merkley, Jeff—155
Merten, Alan G.—385
Merten, Kenneth H.—26, 341, 916
Messina, James A.—947
Meyer, Gary—136
Meyer, John—697
Michael, Granger L.—533
Michael, Nelson—935
Michaud, Michael H.—435, 438, 605
Mikulski, Barbara A.—97, 783, 789–790
Miller, Angela M.—662
Miller, Breana—662
Miller, George—5, 271–272, 422, 915
Miller, Jefferson B.—819
Miller, Joslyn—662
Miller, Justine—662
Miller, Neile L.—947, 969
Miller, Paul S.—920, 959, 970
Miller, Robert J.—220
Miller, Ross—220
Miller, Thomas J.—407, 550
Milliken, William—437, 439
Mills, Karen G.—129, 178–179, 432, 435, 641, 648, 703–705
Mineta, David K.—928, 962
Minow, Mary—938, 967
Miranda Marin, William—772
Miranda Torres, Jose Juan—772
Miranda Torres, Luis Alexander—772
Miranda Torres, William Edgardo—772
Mitchell, George J.—797, 920, 949
Miyamoto, Gervin K.—918, 957
Moeller, Philip D.—928, 962
Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan—936
Monks, Robert—926
Montee, Susan—351
Montero, Maru—606
Montgomery, Edward B.—817
Monti, Janet E.—418
Monti, Paul—418
Moon, Patrick S.—945, 968

Moore, Ben—194
Moore, Caroline—338
Moore, Gwendolynne S.—47
Moore, Maya A.—664
Moorehead, Bryan—451
Moreland, Jeffrey R.—917, 958
Morella, Constance—952
Moreno, Rita—292
Morial, Marc H.—574
Morris, Angela—581
Morris, James—581
Morrison, Toni—291
Mosley, Valerie—926
Moure-Eraso, Rafael—931, 963
Mubarak, Mohamed Hosni—939
Mudd, Chalene—61
Muehlhausen, Nancy—776
Mueller, Kimberly J.—962
Mujica, Jose—925
Mullen, Michael G.—160, 337, 413, 723, 853
Mumpuni, Tri—544
Mundaca, Michael F.—932, 966
Munet, Osvaldo Luis Gratacos—968
Munoz, Peter C.—918, 957
Murguia, Mary H.—931, 963
Murkowski, Lisa—805, 938
Murphy, Mary—916
Murphy, Patrick J.—692, 736, 853
Murray, Cherry A.—951
Murray, Christopher W.—945, 968
Murray, Patricia L.—295–297, 299
Murray, Timothy P.—440
Murren, James J.—234
Murtha, Donna—185
Murtha, John M.—185
Murtha, John P., Jr.—185
Murtha, Joyce—185
Murtha, Patrick—185
Mutombo, Dikembe—42, 172
Myerscough, Sue E.—952, 971

Nabiullina, Elvira S.—864–865
Nadler, Jerrold L.—653
Nahale-a, Alapaki—955
Najib bin Abdul Razak, Mohamed—936
Napolitano, Giorgio—947
Napolitano, Janet A.—2, 8–9, 337, 380, 384, 441, 463, 533–534, 576, 579, 592, 606, 739, 747, 850
Napper, Jenna L.—478
Napper, Pam—478
Nashef, Saed—949
Nazarbayev, Nursultan—481, 935
Ndaanee, Jolly—535
Ndaanee, Ledum D.—535
Ndaanee, Veronica—535
Neal, Stephen W.—763–764
Nee, Thomas J.—657–658
Neff, Darlyne—410–411
Nelson, C. William—497, 501, 819
Nelson, David D.—925
Nelson, Susan R.—938, 966
Nesbit, Kelly M.—918, 957
Netanyahu, Benjamin—90, 513, 931, 941, 948
Neville, Dallas S.—931, 964
Newcombe, Don—514
Ng, Konrad—698
Ng, Savita—698
Ng, Suhaila—698
Nguyen, H.T.—925
Nguyen, Vien The—697
Niederriter, Charles J.—201–204
Niehaus, Patricia J.—943
Nieminen, Tauno—380
Niumatalolo, Ken—594–595
Nixon, Jeremiah W. "Jay"—351, 356, 563, 565, 922
Noguchi, Soichi—205, 207
Norman, Jessye—292
Norton, Eleanor Holmes—181, 303, 842
Nunes, Devin—316
Nunn, Samuel A.—413
Nutter, Michael A.—328
Nylander, Richard C.—921

Oatman-Wak Wak, Mary Jane—955
Obama, Malia—5, 32, 55, 126, 233, 256, 311, 319, 331, 338–339, 423, 432, 531, 550, 585, 589, 605, 617, 665, 732, 766, 830, 844–845, 856, 915, 917, 923, 947–948, 952
Obama, Michelle—4, 7, 11, 32, 36–37, 47–48, 52, 74, 80, 83, 87, 95, 98, 124–125, 135, 160, 162, 182, 185–186, 193–194, 198, 209, 242, 263, 287, 292, 307, 336, 338–339, 380, 397, 418, 421, 423, 432–434, 463, 466, 480, 502–503, 509, 513, 525, 555, 574–575, 586, 588–589, 604–605, 607, 620, 623, 626, 664, 670–671, 684–685, 714, 736, 761, 772, 776, 781, 796, 807, 821, 830, 844, 855, 884, 900, 915–917, 922–923, 929, 933, 938–940, 945, 947–948, 950, 955
Obama, Natasha "Sasha"—5, 32, 55, 126, 233, 256, 311, 319, 331, 338–339, 423, 432, 531, 550, 585, 589, 605, 617, 665, 766, 830, 844–845, 856, 915, 917, 923, 947–948, 952
Oceguera, John—220
Ochoa, Eduardo M.—925, 961
Odierno, Raymond T.—924, 949
Odom, Lamar—73
Oglesby, Harold M.—950, 970
Ohno, Apolo A.—306
Olaya, Felicia—466
Olaya, Gina—466
Olson, Wendy J.—929, 963
Orman, Mary—561

Ormsby, Michael C.—927, 962
Orr, Robert M. "Skipp"—931, 963
Orszag, Peter R.—106, 252, 785
Orton, Lance—658, 942
Owen, Michael S.—952
Owens, James W.—597
Owens, Marcelas—401, 403
O'Brien, Barbara—211
O'Connell, Jack T.—514
O'Connor, Sandra Day—337
O'Keefe, Donald M.—950, 970
O'Malley, Martin J.—97, 198, 377, 380, 429, 783, 922
O'Neill, Robert E.—950, 970

Pahor, Borut—935
Paik Sun-yup—758
Palin, Sarah—590
Palmer, Larry L.—955, 972
Pancake, Robert, II—805–806
Panetta, Leon E.—176
Pang, Sheldon—935
Papandreou, Ada—339
Papandreou, Georgios Andreas—339–340, 926, 929, 941
Parker, Nick—953
Parker, Scott J.—921, 960
Parks, David R.—234
Pasco, James O., Jr.—661
Paterson, David A.—526
Patrick, Deval L.—37, 441–442, 446–447, 934
Patrick, Nicholas J.M.—206
Patton, Mary Ellen—830
Patton, Rebecca M.—830
Paul, Chris—953
Paxson, John—72
Payne, Charles—947
Payne, Donald M.—303, 614
Pearce, Mark G.—932, 966
Pearson, Willie, Jr.—926
Pelosi, Christine P.—705
Pelosi, Nancy—23, 75, 116, 258, 290, 294, 296–299, 302, 377, 382, 391–392, 394, 398, 401, 420, 422, 651–655, 697, 709, 760, 834, 915–916, 921
Pence, Michael R.—100, 104–105, 112
Perciak, Thomas P.—367
Perdue, Beverly Eaves—451–452, 922
Perdue, George E. "Sonny"—312
Peres, Shimon—513
Perkinson, Darryl—925
Perriello, Thomas S.P.—422
Perry, J. Richard—940
Perry, William J.—413
Pete, Mary Ciuniq—954
Peterson, Collin C.—875
Peterson, Woody N.—927
Petraeus, David H.—854–855, 860, 889, 912, 951, 953
Picard, Roger J.—85
Pierce, Tracy—194
Pietrzyk, Joseph Pius—954, 972
Pignato, Vanda—335
Pijeaux, Lawrence J., Jr.—928, 962
Pinera Echenique, Sebastian—920, 928, 936
Pingree, Chellie—435, 438
Pinzone, Mike—817–818
Pistole, John S.—945, 968
Plummer, Christopher W.—819
Podesta, John D.—954, 972
Polak, Willem—178–179
Polis, Jared—211, 851
Polizzi, Nicole—590
Pollack, Lana—920, 959
Poptodorova, Elena B.—935
Posada, Jorge Luis—541
Posada, Jorge Rafael De—541
Posada, Laura—541
Pospisil, Ross A.—594
Poulin, Steven D.—811, 816
Powell, Alma J.—309–311
Powell, Colin L.—309, 311, 758
Pratt, Tanya Walton—918, 957
Preval, Rene Garcia—26–27, 30–31, 341, 917
Price, David E.—718
Price, Michael K.—819
Price, Thomas E.—111
Pride, Curtis—953
Puglisi, Richard F., II—643
Puglisi, William R.—643
Pulwer, Mitch—451
Punke, Michael W.—932, 966
Purdon, Timothy Q.—921, 960

Quinn, Patrick J., III—565, 567, 921
Quiroz, Lisa M.—954, 972

Rabiteau, Marsha J.—918, 958
Rae, Corinne Bailey—759
Ramos de Chavira, Perla Conception—533, 607
Randolph, Bernard, Sr.—620
Randolph, Charlotte A.—737–738, 740
Rangel, Charles B.—277, 288, 295–298, 422, 651, 653, 915
Rao, Nirupama—761
Rapp, William E.—692
Raskin, Sarah B.—940, 967
Ravenstahl, Luke—751
Ravis, Doris—457
Rawlings-Blake, Stephanie—97
Ray, S. Alan—955
Reed, John F.—692
Reed-Rowe, Helen P.—945, 968

Reeves, Carlton W.—940, 967
Reid, Charles—703, 705
Reid, Harry M.—16, 144, 147–149, 151–157, 187, 220–224, 226, 228, 230–231, 234–239, 258–259, 262, 266, 271, 273, 302, 382, 391–392, 394, 401, 422, 525, 686, 776, 916, 921
Reid, Rory—220
Reilly, William K.—691–692, 746–747, 768–769
Rendell, Edward G.—241, 243, 328
Reuther, Alan—689
Reysack, Carla—581
Rhatigan, Wayne—658, 942
Rice, Linda Johnson—921
Rice, Michael F.—779–780, 783
Rice, Susan E.—337–338, 942
Richardson, Earl S.—303
Richardson, Laura—72, 514
Richardson, William B.—508
Rigaud, Patti W.—769–770, 773
Riley, Amber—463
Riley, Joseph P., Jr.—52, 292
Riley, Robert R.—721, 738–739, 741, 813–815, 820, 825, 940, 946
Rimando, Nick—766
Ritter, A. William, Jr.—211, 217
Riva, Wendy—926
Rivera, Mariano—540
Rivlin, Alice M.—926
Roberson, Molly—177
Roberson, Piper—177
Robinson, Austin L.—32, 36
Robinson, Grover C., IV—819
Robinson, Larry—920, 960
Robinson, Marian—239, 433, 917
Robinson, Peter—378, 380
Robinson, Stephen K.—206
Robinson, William "Smokey," Jr.—194
Robyn, Dorothy—508
Rockefeller, John D. "Jay," IV—276–277, 279–280, 477
Rodriguez, Arturo S.—933
Roemer, Timothy J.—761
Rogers, Desiree—305
Rogers, Mike—47
Romer, Christina D.—337, 432
Romero, Ramona E.—954, 972
Romney, W. Mitt—445, 590
Rooney, Daniel M.—380, 751
Rosenberg, Alexandra—693
Rosenthal, Hannah—919
Rosenthal, Lynn—338
Roskam, Peter J.—113, 114, 264, 294, 300
Roughead, Gary—429
Rounds, M. Michael—922
Rove, Karl C.—392
Rowling, Joanne K.—781
Roybal-Allard, Lucille—72
Rubinstein, Daniel—949
Rudd, Kevin M.—930, 949
Rude, Kenneth J.—971
Rudman, Mara—949
Runde, Kenneth J.—950
Ruppersberger, C.A. "Dutch"—204
Russell, Emily J.—899
Ryan, David—129
Ryan, Paul D.—106–107, 113, 115, 256, 266, 282, 284–285, 287, 289, 316
Ryan, Timothy J.—367, 657, 665, 667
Ryce, Sundra L.—647

Saakashvili, Mikheil—934, 936
Saban, Nick—334
Saban, Terry—334
Sachs, Albie—777
Sacks, Cari—926
Salahi, Michaele—589
Salahi, Tareq—589
Salazar, Kenneth L.—159, 420, 429–430, 508, 576, 579, 592, 606, 659, 691, 721, 726–727, 730, 732, 744, 747, 826, 922
Saldana, Anthony—47
Sale, Chris—928
Salti, Soraya—544
Sanchez, Francisco J.—932, 966
Santos Calderon, Juan Manuel—954
Sarbanes, John P.—97
Sargsian, Serzh—936
Saris, Patti B.—940, 967
Sarkozy, Nicolas—423, 931, 933, 943
Sarukhan Casamitjana, Arturo—605
Sass, Dawn Marie—899
Savage, Melissa—947
Sawyer, Diane—919
Scaparrotti, Curtis M. "Mike"—415
Scheyer, Jon—719
Schiff, Adam—72, 663
Schiff, Charlene P.—919
Schimmel, Paul—921
Schloegel, George—812, 951
Schmidt, Eric—25
Schroeder, Christopher H.—958
Schumer, Charles E.—152, 266–267, 365, 384, 534, 573, 579, 888, 928–929
Schuster, Brett—60
Schwartz, Allyson Y.—328
Schwarzenegger, Arnold A.—243, 711, 714–715, 717, 924, 947
Scott, Robert C.—303, 422
Scurlock, James—61

Sebelius, Kathleen—262–263, 271, 273–275, 278, 288, 300, 317–318, 328, 337, 380, 394, 398, 401, 407, 419, 613, 783, 785–788, 790–792, 794, 832, 845, 848, 852, 928, 938, 944
Sedgwick, Theodore—918, 958
Sedlak, Joe—97, 99
Segal, Phyllis N.—954, 972
Segal, William—90
Seidenberg, Ivan G.—246
Seinfeld, Jerry—759
Sens, Andrew D.—380
Serino, Richard A.—441
Sessions, Jefferson B., III—334, 525
Sestak, Joseph A., Jr.—328, 732
Shadid, James E.—948, 969
Shah, Rajiv J.—17, 916, 927
Shaheen, C. Jeanne—129
Shahzad, Faisal—597, 658, 942
Shankar, Meera—761
Sharpton, Alfred C., Jr.—574
Shaw, William J.—951
Shea-Porter, Carol—129
Shelby, Richard C.—188, 334
Shepard, Judy—852
Shepro, Helen—745
Shepro, Jonathan—745
Shepro, Steven M.—429, 744
Sher, Susan S.—74, 919
Sherman, Brad—72
Shinseki, Eric K.—21, 604, 692, 698, 718, 842, 916, 947
Shmatko, Sergey I.—870
Shore, Michael—455
Shulman, Douglas H.—45
Shultz, George P.—413
Siddiqui, Islam A.—932, 966
Simons, Paul E.—928
Simpson, Alan K.—209–211, 215, 546–547, 647, 924
Simpson, India.Arie—514
Sims, Terry—97–99
Singh, Amy K.—926
Singh, Manmohan—74, 481, 761–762, 883, 935, 948
Singler, Kyle—719
Sink, Adelaide "Alex"—85, 503, 817–819
Slagle, Dennis—689
Slaughter, Louise McIntosh—276, 641, 915
Slay, Francis G.—356
Small, La Donica M. "Donnie"—321
Smart, Bryan—303
Smith, C. Kenneth—947
Smith, Daniel B.—949, 970
Smith, Ian—953
Smith, Judith A.—932, 964
Smith, Mary L.—958
Smith, Michael S.—921
Smith, Nolan—719
Smith, Peter J.—937, 965
Smith, Ryan—401, 403–404, 409
Smithey, Brian—85
Smoot, J. Patricia Wilson—920, 959
Snowe, Olympia J.—103, 437
Soap, Charlie—466
Sodi Miranda, Ariadna Thalia—605
Soetoro-Ng, Maya—47, 310, 557, 698, 843
Solis, Hilda L.—337, 432, 477, 495–496, 606, 808, 817, 845, 924, 937–938
Solomon, Ken—521, 922
Solso, Tim—689
Sorensen, Theodore C.—292
Sorrentino, Mike—590
Sotomayor, Sonia M.—164, 172, 182, 337, 444, 477, 525, 606, 622
Southers, Erroll G.—959
Spalding, Esperanza—503
Sparrow, Malcolm K.—928
Specter, Arlen—147, 328, 946, 950
Spektor, Regina I.—734
Spellings, Margaret—309
Spillane, Johnny—212
Spokes, Barbara—844
Spotted Bear, Alyce—945
Spratt, John M., Jr.—451
Spring, John A.—565
Springsteen, Bruce—714
Srinivasan, Srinija—935
Stafford, Willie R., III—928, 962
Stanton, Alysa—734
Stanton, Edward L., III—937, 965
Stark, Leonard P.—930, 963
Starr, Ringo—760
Stebbins, Ashley—137
Steele, Michael S.—589
Steinbrenner, George M., III—540
Steinbrenner, Harold Z.—540
Steinbrenner, Henry G.—540
Steinbrenner, Jessica—540
Steinbrenner, Joan—540
Steinem, Gloria M.—337
Stella, Frank—292
Stephanopoulos, George—918
Stern, Andrew L.—926
Sternberg-Powidzki, Edwarda—919
Stetson, Jane—172, 448
Stevens, Brad—934
Stevens, George, Jr.—290
Stevens, John B., Jr.—925, 961
Stevens, John Paul—477, 525–526, 621–622, 935
Stevens, Tracie—940, 967
Stewart, Donald M.—935
Stewart, Mitch—168–169, 170–171
Stoflet, Barbara—4–5
Stone, Elizabeth—844

Storella, Mark C.—947, 969
Strand, Mark—100
Strickland, Theodore—55–56, 367, 665, 667–668, 837, 950
Stricklin, Kevin G.—495–496
Strong, Charlene—852
Stroum, Cynthia—947
Sturtevant, Thomas M.—703–704
Suleman, Mohamed Bachir—748
Sullivan, David P.—641–645, 649
Sullivan, Maura C.—952
Sulmasy, Daniel—935
Summers, Lawrence H.—817, 882, 942
Suresh, Subra—949, 970
Surgev, Maxim—205
Susman, Louis B.—945
Sutley, Nancy H.—159, 429, 508, 851, 942
Sutton, Betty—55–57, 367
Svanberg, Carl-Henric—811, 815, 818, 826, 828–830
Swaby, Shanae—207
Swallow, Ruth—206
Swett, Richard—138
Swindal, Jennifer Steinbrenner—540

Tabb, Winston—918, 958
Tafta, Joe—561
Takai, Teresa—933, 964
Takvorian, Diane—945
Talabong, Elison—819
Tatum, Beverly Daniel—926
Taweel, Wa'd al—544
Taylor, James L.—927, 962
Tchen, Christina—956
Tebow, Tim—594
Teferi, Berhan Kifetew—533
Tefft, John F.—924
Teixeira, Mark C.—540
Telles, Cynthia A.—935
Templin, Robert G., Jr.—419, 421
Thayer, Craig E.—952, 971
Thie, Bonnie—956
Thomas, Harry K., Jr.—954
Thomas, Lance—719
Thomas, Raye Lyneer—41
Thomas, Romaine—41
Thompson, Jill Long—932, 966
Thompson, John, Jr.—42
Tiao, Paul M.—947, 969
Tillman, Michael F.—918, 958
Titus, A. Constadina—220, 228, 234
Tobias, Andrew—172, 181
Tolson, Kenneth—926
Toner, Dennis J.—920, 959
Torres, Carmen Sara—772
Totenberg, Amy—930, 963
Toth, Robert B.—451, 454, 457–458
Towns, Edolphus—45–46
Tradewell, Thomas J., Sr.—952
Trakatellis, Archbishop Demetrios—339
Travis, Justin—582
Travis, Shirley S.—385
Treadwell, Marc T.—922, 960
Tucker, Josephine Staton—922, 960
Tufte, Edward—928
Turner, Evan—367
Tusk, Donald—74, 480, 935
Tutu, Desmond—777

Udall, Mark E.—211–212, 214, 217–218
Udall, Stewart L.—397
Uehling, Dale—550
Ulmer, Frances—951
Umarov, Doku—869
Underwood, Brian T.—918, 958
Underwood, Robert A.—948, 970
Unsworth, Malcolm—581
Ustian, Daniel C.—689, 764

Valencia Fedora, Pilar Veronica—605
Valenzuela, Arturo A.—919
Van Hollen, Christopher—23, 391, 651, 689, 783
Van Roekel, Dennis—577
Van Rompuy, Herman—954
Varmus, Harold—945
Vaudreuil, John W.—948, 970
Vaughn, Ronald L.—85
Veeramani, Alagaiya—761
Veeramani, Anamika—761
Veeramani, Malar—761
Vegas, Terry—769–770, 773
Velazquez, Nydia M.—542, 606, 834
Vera, Hernan D.—918, 959
Verveer, Melanne—338, 924
Vieau, David—581
Villafuerte, Stephanie—965
Villaraigosa, Antonio R.—522
Villarreal, Jose H.—955
Villarreal Barragan, Sergio Enrique—748
Vilsack, Thomas J.—159, 216, 363, 407, 508, 548–551, 553, 559, 563, 565, 924
Virts, Terry W., Jr.—207
Voinovich, George V.—917
Volcker, Paul A.—50–51, 510–511, 528, 919
Vonn, Lindsey—212, 306

Wade, Edward—604–605
Wade, Sarah—604–605
Wakefield, Mary K.—830, 944
Walsh, Dennis P.—918, 959
Walsh, John F.—937, 965
Wang Qishan—700
Ward, Paul—925, 961

Warner, Mark R.—323
Warren, Michael J.—926, 962
Washington, Kerry—336
Washington, Von, Jr.—779
Wasserman Schultz, Deborah—85, 503–504
Waterhouse, Jonathan—945
Watson, Diane E.—514
Watt, Melvin L.—451
Watts, Myles—921
Waxman, Henry A.—288, 292–294, 296, 301, 422, 689, 915
Wedgeworth, Robert—918, 959
Weeks, Charles T., II—950, 971
Weener, Earl F.—918, 959, 971
Weinberg, Scott—812
Welch, Peter—610
Wessling, Sarah Brown—577–578
Weston, Marla J.—830
Wheat, Steven—805–806
Wheeler, Carla—32
Wheeler, Cornelius R.—32–33
Wheeler, Jason—32
Wheeler, Jordan D.—32, 36
Whitacre, Edward E., Jr.—221
White, Beth—921
White, Jack—759
White, Jesse—565
White, Shaun—212
Whitehorn, Henry L., Sr.—936, 965
Whitehouse, Sheldon—691
Wieman, Carl—931, 963
Wiesel, Elie—74, 942
Wiggins, Michael C.—817–819
Wigginton, Stephen R.—937, 965
Wilhite, Amy—845–846, 848–849
Wilhite, Taylor—845, 848
Wilkes, Nathan—848–849
Wilkes, Sonji—848
Wilkes, Thomas—848
Wilkins, Robert L.—946, 969
Williams, Cecil—709
Williams, Jay—665, 668
Williams, Jeffrey N.—205, 208
Williams, Joey—194
Williams, Rashonda—92
Williams, Ronald A.—597, 600
Willis, Bruce—505
Wilmerding, John—921
Wilson, Charlie—367, 665, 667, 837
Wilson, David—926
Wilson, John S.—304
Wilson, Kelsey—779–780
Winfrey, Oprah—305, 786
Withers, Bill—539
Witt, Robert E.—334
Wohlers, Laurence D.—951, 971
Wojciechowski, Steve—719
Wolff, Alejandro D.—954, 972
Wolin, Neal—949
Wonder, Stevie—759
Wooden, James—776
Wooden, John R.—775
Woodson, Jonathan—938, 966
Woteki, Catherine E.—938, 967
Wright, Chely—851
Wyden, Ronald L.—296–297

Yang, Jerry—544
Yanukovych, Viktor—482, 923–924, 936
Yar'Adua, Umaru—608
Yellen, Janet L.—940, 967
York, Patricia M.—344
Young-Holmes, Pamela—954, 972
Yu Yuan—533
Yudhoyono, Susilo Bambang—603, 882, 930, 949
Yunus, Muhammad—544–545
Yurkas, Dennis—792–794

Zafar, Roshaneh—545
Zak, Leocadia—956
Zamka, George D.—204–205
Zapatero, Jose Luis Rodriguez—160, 943, 952
Zardari, Asif Ali—627, 631
Zatlers, Valdis—935
Zavala Gomez del Campo, Margarita Esther—608, 670–671, 684–685, 945
Zeitlin, Jide J.—959
Ziegler, Jennifer—478
Zients, Jeffrey D.—22, 45
Zomer, Donald, Sr.—781
Zoubek, Brian—719
Zuma, Jacob—481
Zweifel, Clint—351

Document Categories List

Addresses to the Nation

Oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico—825
State of the Union—75

Addresses and Remarks

See also Addresses to the Nation; Appointments and Nominations; Bill Signings and Vetoes; Interviews With the News Media; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials
Afghanistan, Bagram Air Base, remarks to U.S. and coalition troops—415
American Nurses Association—830
American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, first anniversary of signing—201
America's Great Outdoors, White House Conference on—508
America's Promise Alliance education event—308
Arts
"A Celebration of Music From the Civil Rights Movement: In Performance at the White House"—194
"Paul McCartney: The Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song In Performance at the White House"—759
Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month reception—697
BP p.l.c. leadership, meeting—828
Business Council—597
Business Roundtable—246
Cabinet meetings—777, 849
Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA—751
Celgard, LLC, remarks and a question-and-answer session in Charlotte, NC—451
Central Intelligence Agency officers, memorial service in Langley, VA—176
Chesapeake Machine Company in Baltimore, MD—97
Chile, earthquake—307
Cinco de Mayo celebration—605
Civil rights movement, intergenerational conversation—41
Columbus, OH—837
Commander in Chief's Trophy, presentation to U.S. Naval Academy midshipmen—593
Congress
Congressional leaders and Senate Judiciary Committee members, meeting—525
Congressional leaders, meetings—186, 494, 802

Addresses and Remarks—Continued
Congress—Continued
House of Representatives, House Democratic Caucus—23, 391
House of Representatives, House Republican Conference, meeting and question-and-answer session—100
Congressional picnic—796
Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York City—526
Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, dinner in New York City—651
Democratic National Committee
Boston, MA, dinner—447
Boston, MA, reception—440
Miami, FL, reception—502
Washington, DC, fundraiser—172
Washington, DC, fundraiser and question-and-answer session—163
Washington, DC, meeting—181
Earth Day, 40th anniversary—492, 531
Easter egg roll—463
Easter prayer breakfast—463
Economy and clean energy—13
Economy, national—579, 611
Elyria, OH, town hall meeting and question-and-answer session—55
Energy
Andrews Air Force Base, MD—429
Governors, meeting to discuss—158
Export-Import Bank of the U.S. Annual Conference—360
Father's Day event—842
Federal budget—118
Federal Reserve Chairman Ben S. Bernanke, meeting—896
Financial Crisis Responsibility Fee, proposed—19
Financial regulatory reform and consumer protection legislation—50, 686, 875
Ford's Theatre
Gala—776
Reception—776
Forum on Modernizing Government, opening session—20
Fuel efficiency standards on cars and trucks, strengthening efforts, remarks on signing the memorandum—688
George Mason University in Fairfax, VA—385
Global Nuclear Security Summit, opening session—483
Government contracts, remarks on signing the memorandum blocking tax delinquent applicants from obtaining—45

Addresses and Remarks—Continued
Governors Association, National
Dinner—241
Meeting—242
Graham Road Elementary School in Falls Church, VA—43
Grand Isle, LA, business community, discussion—769
Greek Independence Day celebration—339
Gulf of Mexico oil spill
Grand Isle, LA, briefing—738
Gulfport, MS, briefing—811
New Orleans, LA, briefing—766
Pensacola, FL, briefing—817
Washington, DC—658
Gulfport, MS, community members, discussion—812
Haiti, earthquake relief efforts—16–17, 26, 30
Hampton University, commencement address in Hampton, VA—618
Health care reform—318
Glenside, PA—328
Strongsville, OH—367
Wheaton, MD—783
Health care reform legislation, House of Representatives passage—398
Health care reform, bipartisan meeting
Cost containment—259
Deficit—281
Insurance coverage—292
Insurance reform—271
Opening session—255
Height, Dorothy I., funeral service—574
Henderson, NV, town hall meeting and question-and-answer session—220
Historically Black Colleges and Universities, remarks on signing the Executive order regarding—303
Homeland security improvement efforts—2, 8
Industrial Support Inc., remarks and a question-and-answer session in Buffalo, NY—641
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in Lanham, MD—198
International Women's Day reception—336
Iran, United Nations Security Council resolution on sanctions—800
Iraq, parliamentary elections—325
Jewish American Heritage Month reception—734
John F. Kennedy Space Center in Merritt Island, FL—497
Kalamazoo Central High School, commencement address in Kalamazoo, MI—779
Korea Society 2010 Annual Dinner, videotaped remarks—758
K. Neal International Trucks, Inc., in Hyattsville, MD—762

Addresses and Remarks—Continued
Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce and Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority in Las Vegas, NV—234
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month reception—851
Major League Soccer champion Real Salt Lake—765
Martin Luther King, Jr.
Church service honoring—32
"Let Freedom Ring" concert—42
Meddin Studios in Savannah, GA—315
Memorial Day, remarks at Andrews Air Force Base, MD—744
Middle Class Task Force, meeting—70
Mine safety, meeting—495
Nashua, NH, town hall meeting and question-and-answer session—129
National and State Teachers of the Year—576
National Association of Police Organizations, ceremony honoring TOP COPS awardees—657
National Basketball Association champion Los Angeles Lakers—72
National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform
Executive order establishing, remarks on signing—209
First meeting—546
National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, meeting with Cochairs—746
National Humanities Medal and the National Medal of the Arts, presentation—290
National Mentoring Month reception—47
National Peace Officers Memorial Service—661
National Prayer Breakfast—160
Naval Air Station Pensacola in Pensacola, FL—819
NCAA athletics
Football champion University of Alabama Crimson Tide—333
Men's basketball champion Duke University Blue Devils—718
Women's basketball champion University of Connecticut Huskies—664
Nowruz, videotaped remarks—396
Oasis Mechanical Contractors, Inc., in Lanham, MD—178
Opower in Arlington, VA—321
Ottumwa, IA, town hall meeting and question-and-answer session—550
Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act—402, 845
POET Biorefining in Macon, MO—563

Addresses and Remarks—Continued
Poland, Auschwitz concentration camp, 65th anniversary of liberation, videotaped remarks commemorating—74
Port Fourchon, LA—737
Portland, ME—435
Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship—542
President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board, meeting—510
Quincy, IL—565
Racine, WI, town hall meeting and question-and-answer session—899
Real Time Crime Center in New York City—651
Russia, U.S.-Russia Business Summit—864
Saint Patrick's Day
Luncheon—377
Shamrock presentation ceremony—379
Savannah Technical College in Savannah, GA—312
Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics educators, remarks honoring—4
Senate Democratic Policy Committee Issues Conference, remarks and question-and-answer session—144
Senatorial candidates
Bennet, Sen. Michael F., fundraiser in Denver, CO—211
Bennet, Sen. Michael F., reception in Denver, CO—216
Boxer, Sen. Barbara, dinner in Los Angeles, CA—521
Boxer, Sen. Barbara, fundraiser in Los Angeles, CA—514
Boxer, Sen. Barbara, fundraiser in San Francisco, CA—705
Boxer, Sen. Barbara, reception in Los Angeles, CA—519
Boxer, Sen. Barbara, reception in San Francisco, CA—709
Coakley, Martha M., rally in Boston, MA—37
McCaskill, Sen. Claire, dinner in St. Louis, MO—351
McCaskill, Sen. Claire, reception in St. Louis, MO—356
Siemens Energy, Inc., in Fort Madison, IA—548
Small-business legislation—805
Solyndra, Inc., in Fremont, CA—714
Space shuttle *Endeavour* and International Space Station crewmembers, question-and answer session—204
State Small Business Persons of the Year—703
Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
Prague, Czech Republic, signing remarks—467
Washington, DC—412
St. Charles High School in St. Charles, MO—344

Addresses and Remarks—Continued
Tampa, FL, town hall meeting and question-and-answer session—85
Task Force on Childhood Obesity, remarks on signing the memorandum establishing—185
Theodore Industrial Port in Theodore, AL, tour—813
University of Iowa in Iowa City, IA—407
University of Michigan, commencement address in Ann Arbor, MI—583
U.S. Armed Forces, active duty servicemembers, naturalization ceremony—533
U.S. Conference of Mayors—52
U.S. Military Academy, commencement address in West Point, NY—692
U.S.-India Strategic Dialogue reception—760
Venice, LA—591
V&M STAR Ohio in Youngstown, OH—665
Weekly addresses—1, 14, 28, 69, 117, 179, 196, 240, 306, 324, 365, 390, 413, 462, 478, 512, 535, 582, 613, 660, 691, 743, 772, 808, 840, 877
West Virginia, Upper Big Branch mine
Disaster victims, memorial service in Beckley—538
Explosion—477
White House Correspondents' Association dinner—588
White House Press Pool, remarks aboard Air Force One—572
Workplace Flexibility Forum, closing session—432
World Series champion New York Yankees—540
YouTube town hall meeting—121

Appointments and Nominations

See also Digest, Nominations Submitted, and Checklist at the end of the volume
Director of National Intelligence, nomination, remarks—774
Supreme Court Associate Justice, nomination, remarks—621

Bill Signings and Vetoes

Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010, signing remarks—604
Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act of 2009, signing remarks—663
Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010, signing remarks in Alexandria, VA—419
Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment Act, signing remarks—382
Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act of 2009, signing statement—699
Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, signing remarks—400

Communications to Congress

Afghanistan and Pakistan, letter transmitting report—219, 428
Australia, proposed agreement for cooperation with the U.S. on peaceful uses of nuclear energy, message transmitting—608
Belarus, blocking property of certain persons undermining democratic processes or institutions, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—795
Bermuda-U.S. Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, message transmitting—899
Budget amendments for fiscal year 2011, letters transmitting—196, 406, 463, 833, 840, 851
Burma, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—656
China, U.S. export licenses, message reporting—802
Cote d'Ivoire, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—143
Cuba
  Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996, review of title III, letter—28
  U.S. national emergency relating to the anchorage and movement of vessels, message on continuation—246
Drug trafficking, interdiction of aircraft, message transmitting report—69
Federal Government interagency strategy for public diplomacy and strategic communications, letter transmitting report—374, 379
Federal spending reduction, message transmitting proposed legislation—702
Gulf of Mexico oil spill, budget amendments to respond to, letter transmitting—639
Haiti, earthquake relief efforts, activation of U.S. Armed Forces Reserve members to assist, letter ordering—31
Health care reform, letter to congressional leaders—316
International Atomic Energy Agency, protocol additional to the agreement with the U.S. for application of safeguards, letter reporting—379
Iran
  Free flow of information and exercise of universal rights, letter transmitting report—440
  U.S. engagement, letter—308
  U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—351
Iraq, U.S. national emergency with respect to stabilization, message on continuation—640
Kingpin Act, letter transmitting designations—748

Communications to Congress—Continued
Middle East, terrorists who threaten to disrupt the peace process, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—49
North Korea
  Letter transmitting report—160
  U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—817
Russian Federation
  Proposed agreement for cooperation with the U.S. on peaceful uses of nuclear energy, message transmitting—623
  Treaty with the U.S. on measures for the further reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms, message transmitting—650
  U.S. national emergency with respect to weapons-usable fissile material, message on continuation—834
Small-business legislation, letter—809
Somalia, blocking property of certain persons contributing to the conflict, message—493
Syria, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—596
U.S. combat-equipped Armed Forces, deployments, letter reporting—823
U.S. National Security Strategy, message transmitting—737
U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile, letter transmitting report—650
Western Balkans, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—795
Zimbabwe, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—308

Communications to Federal Agencies

Intelligence, screening, and watchlisting system, memorandum on corrective actions following the December 25, 2009, attempted terrorist attack—11
Liberia, refugees in the U.S., deferred enforced departure, memorandum—384
National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010, delegation of functions, memorandum—563
U.S. Outer Continental Shelf, withdrawal of certain areas from leasing disposition, memorandum—434

Interviews With the News Media

Exchanges with reporters
  Air Force One—572
  Grand Isle, LA—738
  New Orleans, LA—766
  Port Fourchon, LA—737
  Prague, Czech Republic—467
  Savannah, GA—315

Interviews With the News Media—Continued
Exchanges with reporters—Continued
Theodore, AL—813
White House—209, 281, 375, 494, 510, 525, 663, 796, 849, 875, 896
Interviews
ABC, ABC News—918
ABC, "World News with Diane Sawyer"—919
CBS, "CBS Evening News with Katie Couric"—922
CNN, "Larry King Live" program—949
FOX News—930
NBC, "Today" program—933, 950
Rossiya TV—614
Turner Newtowk Television (TNT)—946
Joint news conferences
Afghanistan, President Karzai—626
France, President Sarkozy—423
Mexico, President Calderon Hinojosa—671
Russia, President Medvedev—855
News conferences
February 9—187
April 13—484
May 27—720
June 27—884

Joint Statements

Afghanistan, President Karzai—635
European Union, Iranian human rights obligations—185
Mexico
Border management—682
President Calderon Hinojosa—676
Russia, President Medvedev
Accession to the World Trade Organization—871
Afghanistan—867
Counterterrorism cooperation—869
Elbe River meeting of Soviet and American troops, 65th anniversary—539
Energy efficiency—869
Intercountry adoption—870
Kyrgyzstan situation—873
People-to-people connections—870
Promotion and implementation of open government—871
Strategic partnership in innovation—872
Strategic stability—872
Ukraine, President Yanukovych—482

Letters and Messages

See also Communications to Congress
G–20 summit in Toronto, Canada, letter to G–20 leaders—835
National Aeronautics and Space Administration's day of remembrance, message—117

Letters and Messages—Continued
Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, letter to participants—596
U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, letter to participants—700

Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials

See also Interviews With the News Media; Joint Statements
Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan—936
Afghanistan, President Karzai—414, 932, 944, 953
Argentina, President Fernandez de Kirchner—936
Armenia, President Sargsian—936
Australia
Prime Minister Gillard—954
Prime Minister Rudd—930, 949
Brazil, President Lula da Silva—916
Bulgaria
Ambassador to U.S. Poptodorova—935
Prime Minister Borisov—935
Canada, Prime Minister Harper—916, 936, 948, 952, 954
Chile
President Bachelet Jeria—916, 927
President Pinera Echenique—920, 936
China, President Hu—881, 934, 936
Colombia, President-elect Santos Calderon—953
Costa Rica, President-elect Chinchilla—923
Croatia, Prime Minister Kosor—935
Czech Republic
President Klaus—476, 935
Prime Minister Fischer—935
Dominican Republic, President Fernandez—917
Egypt, President Mubarak—939
El Salvador, President Funes Cartagena—335
Estonia, President Ilves—935
European Union, President Van Rompuy—954
France, President Sarkozy—931, 933, 943
Georgia, President Saakashvili—934, 936
Germany, Chancellor Merkel—926, 931, 936, 939, 943, 946, 952
Greece, Prime Minister Papandreou—929, 941
Group of Eight (G–8) nations, leaders—954
Group of Twenty (G–20) nations
Leaders—955
Ministers of Labor—938
Haiti, President Preval—341, 917
Honduras, President Lobo Sosa—939
Hungary, Prime Minister Bajnai—935
India, Prime Minister Singh—883, 935, 948
Indonesia, President Yudhoyono—882, 893, 930, 949

Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials—Continued
Iraq
Kurdistan Regional Government President Barzani—919
Vice President Abd Al-Madhi—916
Vice President Hashimi—920
Ireland, Prime Minister Cowen—375
Israel
Minister of Defense Barak—939
Prime Minister Netanyahu—931, 941, 948
Italy, President Napolitano—947
Japan
Prime Minister Hatoyama—936, 947
Prime Minister Kan—893, 949
Jordan, King Abdullah II—920, 936
Kazakhstan, President Nazarbayev—935
Latvia, President Zatlers—935
Lebanon, Prime Minister Hariri—923, 946
Liberia, President Johnson Sirleaf—733
Lithuania, Prime Minister Kubilius—935
Malaysia, Prime Minister Najib bin Abdul Razak—936
Mexico, President Calderon Hinojosa—670, 684, 916, 931, 945
Netherlands, Prime Minister Balkenende—936
Nigeria, Acting President Jonathan—935
Pakistan, Prime Minister Gilani—935
Palestinian Authority, President Abbas—796, 944
Peru, President Garcia Perez—749
Philippines, President Aquino—950
Poland
Acting President Komorowski—937
Prime Minister Tusk—935
Romania, President Basescu—935
Russia, President Medvedev—467, 476, 920, 932, 933, 935, 944, 953
Saudi Arabia, King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud—898, 931, 955
Slovakia, Prime Minister Fico—935
Slovenia, Prime Minister Borut—935
South Africa
Former President Mandela—923
President Zuma—481
South Korea, President Lee—879, 933, 945
Spain
King Juan Carlos I—924
Prime Minister Zapatero—943, 952
Tibet, Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso—924
Turkey
President Gul—927
Prime Minister Erdogan—936, 945, 949, 955
Ukraine, President Yanukovych—923, 936

Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials—Continued
United Kingdom
Prime Minister Brown—926, 931
Prime Minister Cameron—878, 944, 951, 953, 954
United Nations, Secretary-General Ban—916

Resignations and Retirements

Director of National Intelligence, resignation, statement—688
NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan, commander, resignation, remarks—854
White House Office
Director of Recovery for Auto Communities and Workers, resignation, statement—817
Social Secretary, resignation, statement—305

Statements by the President

See also Appointments and Nominations; Bill Signings and Vetoes; Joint Statements
1965 Voting Rights March, 45th anniversary—327
Armenian Remembrance Day—537
Ash Wednesday—209
Aung San Suu Kyi, 65th birthday—839
Bangladesh Independence Day—413
Bayh, Sen. Evan, decision not to seek reelection—198
Bernanke, Ben S., Senate confirmation as Chairman of the Federal Reserve—97
Campaign finance laws, U.S. Supreme Court ruling on—54
Campaign finance legislation
Congressional action—578
House of Representatives action—688
China, exchange rate, decision to increase flexibility—842
Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, Indonesia ratification—603
Credit Card Accountability Responsibility and Disclosure Act of 2009, implementation—245
Croatian Statehood Day—876
Cuba situation—406
Deaths
Byrd, Sen. Robert C.—895
Escalante, Jaime—434
Finn, John W.—736
Haig, Alexander M., Jr.—241
Height, Dorothy I.—525
Hernandez Gomez, Carlos—42
Hooks, Benjamin L.—502
Horne, Lena—623
Kaczynska, Maria, First Lady of Poland—480
Kaczynski, Lech, President of Poland—480
Mankiller, Wilma P.—466

Statements by the President—Continued
Deaths—Continued
Miranda Marin, William—772
Murtha, Rep. John P., Jr.—185
Udall, Stewart L.—397
Wooden, John R.—775
Yar'Adua, Umaru, President of Nigeria—608
Dodd, Sen. Christopher J., decision not to seek reelection—7
Dominican Republic National Day—305
"Don't ask, don't tell" policy, Congressional action—736
Dorgan, Sen. Byron L., decision not to seek reelection—4
Earned Income Tax Credit Awareness Day—116
Earth Day, 40th anniversary—532
Election spending disclosure legislation, House of Representatives passage—874
Emancipation Day in Washington, DC, anniversary—511
Energy legislation
Promotion efforts—639
Senate action—805
Equal Pay Act of 1963, 47th anniversary—804
Financial regulatory reform and consumer protection legislation
House of Representatives passage—913
Promotion efforts—373, 400, 638
Senate action—542, 610
Fiscal responsibility legislation, House of Representatives passage—571
Great Feast of the Nativity—11
Gulf of Mexico, Deepwater Horizon oil spill response efforts—744
Haiti
Earthquake—16
Haitian Flag Day—669
Health insurance industry fair competition legislation, House of Representatives passage—254
Holocaust Remembrance Day—482
Home Star legislation
House of Representatives Energy and Commerce Committee vote—501
House of Representatives passage—610
Hungarian Revolution, anniversary—367
Immigration reform legislation
Bipartisan framework—384
Congressional meeting with President—365
Senate proposal—579
Indian Health Care Improvement Act, reauthorization—406
India, Republic Day—73
Iraq, parliamentary elections—326
Israel, State of, 62d anniversary of establishment—513

Statements by the President—Continued
Japan, Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the U.S. and Japan, 50th anniversary—45
Job growth and tax reform legislation, House of Representatives passage—742
Job growth legislation, Senate cloture vote—246
Juneteenth—841
Kentucky, Dotiki Mine, accident—582
Langley, Arkansas, flash flooding—807
Lithuanian National Day—200
Medicare payments to physicians, legislation to limit cuts, Congressional passage—874
National Broadband Plan—374
National Girls and Women in Sports Day—160
National HIV Testing Day—876
National space policy—895
Nuclear Posture Review—465
Oil pollution liability legislation, Senate action—669
Pakistan National Day—399
Pay-As-You-Go legislation, House of Representatives passage—163
Petraeus, Gen. David H., Senate confirmation as commander of the NATO International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan—912
Philippine Independence Day—807
Pigford class-action lawsuit on discrimination by the Department of Agriculture, settlement—216
Poland
Funeral service for President Lech Kaczynski—513
Polish Constitution Day—593
Portugal, Camoes, and the Portuguese Communities, Day of—804
Presidential nominees, Senate confirmation—195
Reid, Sen. Harry M.—16
Roe v. *Wade* Supreme Court decision, 37th anniversary—68
Russia
Russia Day—807
Terrorist attacks in Moscow—419
World War II, 65th anniversary of conclusion, commemoration—617
Zheleznogorsk plutonium reactor, closure—492
Rwanda, 1994 genocide, 16th anniversary—466
Same-sex domestic partners of Federal employees, extension of benefits—759
Serbian National Day—198
Small-business legislation, House of Representatives passage—834
Small-business lending fund legislation, House Financial Services Committee passage—676
Southeast region, flooding—603
Statutory fiscal commission, legislation creating—70

Statements by the President—Continued
Sunshine Week—374
Tax Code provisions and unemployment aid, legislation extending, Senate passage—351
Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
2010 Review Conference—742
40th anniversary—323
Unemployment insurance extension legislation
Congressional passage—502
Senate passage—315

Statements by the President—Continued
United Kingdom, appointment of David Cameron as Prime Minister—625
United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture—882
West Virginia, Upper Big Branch Mine, accident—480
World Day Against Child Labor—808
World Press Freedom Day—595