

Chairman Levin, for their leadership and their support of the Recovery Act. I also want to thank my Secretary of Energy, Steven Chu, for his extraordinary work to get the money out the door quickly and wisely.

But most of all, I want to congratulate and thank all the men and women of A123 Systems. You guys are making us proud. The work you're doing will help power the American economy for years to come. And so everybody there should just feel very, very good about what you

guys are doing. And I am looking forward to continuing to see the great work that you guys do in the years to come.

So thank you very much, everybody. And good luck.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House to A123 Systems employees. In his remarks, he referred to David Vieau, president and chief executive officer, A123 Systems.

Remarks at a Reception for Presidents of Historically Black Colleges and Universities

September 13, 2010

The President. Hello, everybody!

Audience members. Hello!

The President. Welcome. Welcome to the White House. It is good to see some old friends and familiar faces. And I want to especially welcome three of our newest board members of the President's Board of Advisers on Historically Black Colleges and Universities. I am so grateful that they've agreed to join, and I'm looking forward to working with all of you.

Now, last February, I saw some of you here when I signed the Executive order to strengthen the White House Initiative on HBCUs. And this is allowing the Government to collaborate with educational associations, with philanthropic organizations, and with the private sector to increase your capacity to offer a college degree to as many students as possible.

And we've also declared this week to be National HBCU Week. And we do this for two reasons: first of all, to remember our history. We remember all the men and women who took great risks and made extraordinary sacrifices to ensure that these institutions that you lead could exist. We remember that at a critical time in our Nation's history, HBCUs waged war against illiteracy and ignorance and won. You've made it possible for millions of people to achieve their dreams and gave so many young people a chance they never thought they'd have, a chance that nobody else would give

them. And that's something to celebrate, and that's something to be very, very proud of.

But we also use this week as an opportunity to look forward towards the future and to take stock of the work that we've got left to do. As many of you know, I set a goal that by 2020, the United States would once again lead in the number of college graduates, have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. I set that goal because our success in a 21st-century economy is going to depend almost entirely on having a skilled workforce, how well trained our young people are.

We cannot reach that goal without HBCUs. We can't get there unless all of you are improving your graduation rates. We can't get there unless all of you are continuing to make the dream of a college education a reality for more students. We want to help you do that in every way that we can. Already, we've eliminated billions of dollars of unnecessary subsidies to banks and financial institutions so that that money could go directly to your students. And that is incredibly important. And as a consequence of that, we're making it possible for millions of more students to attend colleges and universities and community colleges all across the country.

We also want to keep strengthening HBCUs, which is why we're investing \$850 million in these institutions over the next 10 years. And as I said in February, strengthening your institu-

tions isn't just a task for our advisory board or for the Department of Education, it's a job for the entire Federal Government. And I expect all agencies to support this mission.

Now, none of this is going to be easy. I know—I'm sure you know that. As leaders of these institutions, you are up against enormous challenges, especially during an economic crisis like the one that we are going through. But we all have to try. We have to try. We have to remain determined. We have to persevere.

That's what the first founders of HBCUs did. They knew that even if they succeeded, that inequality would persist for a very, very long time. They knew that the barriers in our laws, the barriers in our hearts would not vanish overnight. But they also recognized a larger and distinctly American truth, and that is that the right education might one day allow us to overcome barriers, to let every child fulfill their God-given potential. They recognized, as Frederick Douglass once put it, that education means emancipation. And they recognized that education is how

America and its people might fulfill our promise.

That's what helped them get through some very difficult times. It's what kept them fighting and trying and reaching for that better day, even though they might not be able to live to see that better day. That's the kind of commitment that we're going to need today from everybody here at the White House, from all of you at your respective institutions.

We are extraordinarily proud of what you've done. But we've got a lot more work to do. And I just want everybody here to understand that you've got a partner in me and you've got a partner in the Department of Education and you've got a department with everybody here at the White House who's absolutely committed to making sure that you can succeed in your mission.

So thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:36 a.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session in Fairfax, Virginia September 13, 2010

The President. Thank you so much, all of you, for being here, and I want to say a special thanks to John and Nicole. Trevor and Olivia are back there.

Nicole Armstrong. They're going to turn the A/C unit off for you.

The President. Yes, exactly. That's all right. But I'm so grateful for their hospitality. They are just a wonderful family, and for them to open up their backyard for us is just terrific. So we really—

[At this point, the President was handed a microphone.]

The President. Oh, I've got a mike. So thank you to the entire family for opening up, and thanks to all of you for taking the time to be here. Because I want to—I was telling John and Nicole that a lot of times, when you're in Washington, you're busy, you've got a lot of stuff to

do, and you're in a bubble when you're President. And sometimes, you just don't have the opportunity to have the kinds of interactions that I used to have even when I was a Senator.

And so these kinds of formats are terrific for me. And my hope is, is that despite all these people who are here with cameras and microphones and all that stuff, that people won't be shy, because the whole point of this is for me to hear directly from you and to answer your questions, hear about your concerns, hear about your hopes, and hopefully, that will translate itself into some of the things that we're doing at the White House.

I obviously want to make some introductions that—I think all of you know that you've got some Members of Congress who are working very hard here in Northern Virginia, and I want to acknowledge them. First of all, Congressman Jim Moran, who's been doing great work for a very long time. Congressman Gerry Connolly