

No matter what you do, no matter where you end up, you will always know in your heart what it means to be the best there is at what you do. You'll always know what it's like to set a goal and then reach it, what it feels like to hit your limit and then go beyond it, to get to the top and turn around and give others a hand.

In other words, you're always going to know what it means to compete and what it means to be a champion. That's something that nobody will ever be able to take away from you. And that is something that you should be extraordinarily proud of.

So I'm thrilled to have a chance to meet all of you. You guys don't just make your communities proud, but you make America proud. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:46 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Matthew Szczur, wide receiver, Villanova University football team.

## Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Amendments September 13, 2010

*Dear Madam Speaker:*

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 Budget amendments for the Department of the Interior. Overall, the discretionary budget authority proposed in my FY 2011 Budget would not be increased by these requests.

These amendments are necessary to strengthen oversight of offshore oil and gas operations, address deficiencies in mineral revenue collec-

tion, and facilitate the reorganization of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation, and Enforcement—formerly known as the Minerals Management Service.

The details of these requests are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Acting Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

## Remarks at Julia R. Masterman Laboratory and Demonstration School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania September 14, 2010

Thank you. Well, hello, Philadelphia, and hello, Masterman. It is wonderful to see all of you. What a terrific introduction by Kelly. Give Kelly a big round of applause. I was saying backstage that when I was in high school, I could not have done that. [*Laughter*] I would have muffed it up somehow. [*Laughter*] So we are so proud of you and everything that you've done. And to all the students here, I'm thrilled to be here.

Now, we've got a couple introductions I want to make. First of all, you've got the outstanding Governor of Pennsylvania, Ed Rendell, in the house. The mayor of Philadelphia, Michael

Nutter, is here. Congressman Chaka Fattah is here. Congresswoman Allyson Schwartz is here. Your own principal, Marge Neff, is here. The school superintendent, Arlene Ackerman, is here and doing a great job. And the Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, is here.

And I am here. And I am thrilled to be here. I am just so excited. I've heard such great things about what all of you are doing, both the students and the teachers and the staff here.

Today is about welcoming all of you and all of America's students back to school, even though I know you've been in school for a little bit now. And I can't think of a better place to do it than

at Masterman, because you are one of the best schools in Philadelphia. You are a leader in helping students succeed in the classroom. Just last week, you were recognized by a National Blue Ribbon—as a National Blue Ribbon School because of your record of achievement. And that is a testament to everybody here, to the students, to the parents, to the teachers, to the school leaders. It's an example of excellence that I hope communities across America can embrace.

Over the past few weeks, Michelle and I have been getting Sasha and Malia ready for school. And they're excited about it. I'll bet they had the same feelings that you do. You're a little sad to see the summer go, but you're also excited about the possibilities of a new year: the possibilities of building new friendships and strengthening old ones, of joining a school club or trying out for a team; the possibilities of growing into a better student and a better person and making not just your family proud, but making yourself proud.

But I know some of you may also be a little nervous about starting a new school year. Maybe you're making the jump from elementary to middle school or from middle school to high school and you're worried about what that's going to be like. Maybe you're starting a new school. You're not sure how you'll like it, trying to figure out how you're going to fit in. Or maybe you're a senior and you're anxious about the whole college process, about where to apply and whether you can afford to go to college.

And beyond all those concerns, I know a lot of you are also feeling the strain of some difficult times. You know what's going on in the news, and you also know what's going on in some of your own families. You've read about the war in Afghanistan. You hear about the recession that we've been through. And sometimes maybe you're seeing the worries in your parents' faces or sense it in their voice.

So a lot of you as a consequence, because we're going through a tough time as a country, are having to act a lot older than you are. You got to be strong for your family while your brother or sister is serving overseas, or you've got to look after younger siblings while your

mom is working that second shift, or maybe some of you who are a little bit older, you're taking on a part-time job while your dad's out of work.

And that's a lot to handle. It's more than you should have to handle. And it may make you wonder at times what your own future will look like, whether you're going to be able to succeed in school, whether you should maybe set your sights a little lower, scale back your dreams.

But I came to Masterman to tell all of you what I think you're hearing from your principal and your superintendent and from your parents and from your teachers: Nobody gets to write your destiny but you. Your future is in your hands. Your life is what you make of it. And nothing, absolutely nothing is beyond your reach. So long as you're willing to dream big, so long as you're willing to work hard, so long as you're willing to stay focused on your education, there is not a single thing that any of you cannot accomplish, not a single thing. I believe that.

And that last part is absolutely essential, that part about really working hard in school, because an education has never been more important than it is today. I'm sure there are going to be times in the months ahead when you're staying up late doing your homework or cramming for a test or you're dragging yourself out of bed on a rainy morning and you're thinking, oh, boy, I wish maybe it was a snow day. *[Laughter]*

But let me tell you, what you're doing is worth it. There is nothing more important than what you're doing right now. Nothing is going to have as great an impact on your success in life as your education, how you're doing in school.

More and more, the kinds of opportunities that are open to you are going to be determined by how far you go in school. The farther you go in school, the farther you're going to go in life. And at a time when other countries are competing with us like never before, when students around the world—in Beijing, China, or Bangalore, India—are working harder than ever and doing better than ever, your success in school is not just going to determine your success, it's going to determine America's success in the 21st century.

So you've got an obligation to yourselves and America has an obligation to you to make sure you're getting the best education possible. And making sure you get that kind of education is going to take all of us working hard and all of us working hand in hand.

It takes all of us in government, from the Governor to the mayor to the superintendent to the President, all of us doing our part to prepare our students, all of them, for success in the classroom and in college and in a career. It's going to take an outstanding principal, like Principal Neff, and outstanding teachers like the ones you have here at Masterman, teachers who are going above and beyond the call of duty for their students. And it's going to take parents who are committed to your education.

Now, that's what we have to do for you. That's our responsibility. That's our job. But you've got a job too. You've got to show up to school on time. You've got to pay attention in your class. You've got to do your homework. You've got to study for exams. You've got to stay out of trouble. You've got to instill a sense of excellence in everything that you do. That kind of discipline, that kind of drive, that kind of hard work is absolutely essential for success.

And I can speak from experience here, because unlike Kelly, I can't say I always had this discipline. See, I can tell she was always disciplined. I wasn't always disciplined. I wasn't always the best student when I was younger. I made my share of mistakes. I still remember a conversation I had with my mother in high school. I was kind of a goof-off. And I was about the age of some of the folks here. And my grades were slipping. I hadn't started my college applications. I was acting, as my mother put it, sort of casual about my future. I was doing good enough. I was smart enough that I could kind of get by. But I wasn't really applying myself.

And so I suspect this is a conversation that will sound familiar to some students and some parents here today. She decided to sit me down and said I had to change my attitude. My attitude was what I imagine every teenager's attitude is when your parents have this conversation with you like that. I was like, you know, I

don't need to hear all this. I'm doing okay; I'm not flunking out.

So I started to say that, and she just cut me right off. She said, you can't just sit around waiting for luck to see you through. She said, you can get into any school you want in the country if you just put in a little bit of effort. And she gave me a hard look, and she said, you remember what that's like? Effort? [*Laughter*] Some of you have had that conversation. [*Laughter*] And it was pretty jolting hearing my mother say that.

But eventually, her words had the intended effect, because I got serious about my studies. And I started to make an effort in everything that I did. And I began to see my grades and my prospects improve.

And I know that if hard work could make the difference for me, then it can make a difference for all of you. And I know that there may be some people who are skeptical about that. Sometimes you may wonder if some people just aren't better at certain things. You know, well, I'm not good at math, or I'm just not really interested in my science classes.

And it is true that we each have our own gifts, we each have our own talents that we have to discover and nurture. Not everybody is going to catch on in certain subjects as easily as others. But just because you're not the best at something today doesn't mean you can't be tomorrow. Even if you don't think of yourself as a math person or a science person, you can still excel in those subjects if you're willing to make the effort. And you may find out you have talents you never dreamed of.

Because one of the things I've discovered is excelling, whether it's in school or in life, isn't mainly about being smarter than everybody else. That's not really the secret to success. It's about working harder than everybody else. So don't avoid new challenges, seek them out. Step out of your comfort zone. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Your teachers and your family are there to guide you. They want to know if you're not catching on to something, because they know that if you keep on working at it, you're going to catch on.

Don't feel discouraged. Don't give up if you don't succeed at something the first time. Try

again, and learn from your mistakes. Don't feel threatened if your friends are doing well. Be proud of them, and see what lessons you can draw from what they're doing right.

Now, I'm sort of preaching to the choir here, because I know that's the kind of culture of excellence that you promote at Masterman. But I'm not just speaking to all of you. I'm speaking to kids all across the country. And I want them to all here that same message: That's the kind of excellence we've got to promote in all of America's schools.

That's one of the reasons why I'm announcing our second Commencement Challenge. Some of you may have heard of this. If your school is the winner, if you show us how teachers and students and parents are all working together to prepare your kids and your school for college and a career, if you show us how you're giving back to your community and your country, then I will congratulate you in person by speaking at your commencement.

Last year, I was in Michigan at Kalamazoo and had just a wonderful time. Although I got to admit, their graduating class was about 700 kids, and my hands were really sore at the end of it—[laughter]—because I was shaking all of them.

But the truth is, an education is about more than getting into a good college. It's about more than getting a good job when you graduate. It's about giving each and every one of us the chance to fulfill our promise and to be the best version of ourselves we can be. And part of that means treating others the way we want to be treated, with kindness and respect. So that's something else that I want to communicate to students not just here at Masterman, but all across the country.

Sometimes, kids can be mean to other kids. Let's face it, we don't always treat each other with respect and kindness. That's true for adults as well, by the way.

And sometimes that's especially true in middle school or high school, because being a teenager isn't easy. It's a time when you're wrestling with a lot of things. When I was in my teens, I was wrestling with all sorts of questions about who I was. I had a White mother and a Black father, and my father wasn't around; he had left

when I was 2. And so there were all kinds of issues that I was dealing with. Some of you may be working through your own questions right now and coming to terms with what makes you different.

And I know that figuring out all of that can be even more difficult when you've got bullies in a class who try to use those differences to pick on you or poke fun at you or to make you feel bad about yourself.

And in some places, the problem is even more serious. There are neighborhoods in my hometown of Chicago and there are neighborhoods right here in Philadelphia where kids are doing each other serious harm.

So what I want to say to every kid, every young person, what I want all of you—if you take away one thing from my speech, I want you to take away the notion that life is precious, and part of what makes it so wonderful is its diversity, that all of us are different. And we shouldn't be embarrassed by the things that make us different. We should be proud of them, because it's the thing that makes us different that makes us who we are, that makes us unique. And the strength and the character of this country has always come from our ability to recognize—no matter who we are, no matter where we come from, no matter what we look like, no matter what abilities we have—to recognize ourselves in each other.

I was reminded of that the other day when I read a letter from Tamerria Robinson. She's a 12-year-old girl in Georgia. And she told me about how hard she works and about all the community service she does with her brother. And she wrote, "I try to achieve my dreams and help others do the same." "That," she said, "is how the world should work." That's a pretty good motto: I work hard to achieve my goals, and then I try to help others to achieve their goals.

And I agree with Tamerria. That's how the world should work. But it's only going to work that way if all of you get into good habits while you're in school. So yes, each of us need to work hard. We all have to take responsibilities for our own education. We need to take responsibility for our own lives. But what makes us who we

are is that here, in this country, in the United States of America, we don't just reach for our own dreams, we try to help others do the same. This is a country that gives all its daughters and all of its sons a fair chance, a chance to make the most of their lives and fulfill their God-given potential.

And I'm absolutely confident that if all of our students here at Masterman and across this country keep doing their part, if you guys work hard and you're focused on your education and you keep fighting for your dreams and then you help each other reach each other's dreams, then you're not only going to succeed this year, you're going to succeed for the rest of your

lives. And that means America will succeed in the 21st century.

So my main message to all of you here today: I couldn't be prouder of you. Keep it up. All of you, I know, are going to do great things in the future. And maybe some time in the 21st century, it's going to be one of you that's standing up here speaking to a group of kids as President of the United States.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Kelly Ca, student body president, Julia R. Masterman Laboratory and Demonstration School.

## Statement on the Iranian Government's Release of Sarah Shourd *September 14, 2010*

I am very pleased that Sarah Shourd has been released by the Iranian Government and will soon be united with her family. All Americans join with her courageous mother and family in celebrating her long-awaited return home. We are grateful to the Swiss, the Sultanate of Oman, and other friends and allies around the world who have worked tirelessly and admirably over the past several months to bring about this joyous reunion.

While Sarah has been released, Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal remain prisoners in Iran who have committed no crime. We remain hopeful that Iran will demonstrate renewed

compassion by ensuring the return of Shane, Josh, and all the other missing or detained Americans in Iran. We salute the courage and strength of the Shourd, Bauer, and Fattal families, who have endured the unimaginable absence of their loved ones. We have gained strength from their resolve and will continue do everything we can to secure the release of their loved ones.

NOTE: The statement referred to Nora Shourd, mother of Sarah Shourd, an American citizen detained by Iranian authorities since July 31, 2009.

## Statement on Senate Action on Small-Business Legislation *September 14, 2010*

Today's vote brings us one step closer to ending the months-long partisan blockade of a small-business jobs bill that was written by both Democrats and Republicans. This is a bill that would cut taxes and help provide loans to millions of small-business owners, who create most of the new jobs in this country. It is fully paid for, it won't add to the deficit, and small businesses across the country have been waiting for Washington to act on this bill for far too long. I am

grateful to Senators Reid, Baucus, and Landrieu for their leadership on this issue, as well as the two Republican Senators who put partisanship aside and joined Democrats in overcoming this filibuster. I urge all Members of the Senate to support final passage as soon as possible.

NOTE: The statement referred to Sens. George V. Voinovich and George S. LeMieux. The statement also referred to H.R. 5297.