

who want to collaborate with them in thinking about this new potential breakthrough cancer drug.

So I'm talking to her, pretending like I understand everything that she's saying. [*Laughter*] And I'm thinking to myself, think about what this means. You've got the portrait of Lincoln in the State Dining Room looking down over us. You've got an African American President named Barack Obama. You've got a young Chinese American girl, 16 years old, who is designing cancer drugs, having taught herself chemistry in high school. That idea of America is alive and well. But we have to nurture it, and we have to sustain it.

And for all the meanness of our political season and the yelling and nonsense that we see day in and day out on television, that is something that is worth remembering, because I think sometimes during difficult times, some of us may get discouraged or lose heart.

I don't want you to be discouraged. Just think about those young people, think about the young people who are here. Think about Rajeev

and his family and Seema and her family, and think about Barbara and Ben and their families, when they emigrated. That story continues. We just have to build on it. We have to have confidence in it.

And we have to remember that as long as we're unified as opposed to divided, as long as we think towards the future and not just toward the present, that America will prosper and that the 21st century will be the American century, just as the 20th was.

Thank you so much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:03 p.m. at the residence of Rajeev and Seema Sharma. In his remarks, he referred to White House science fair student participants Mathilda Lloyd of Kingston, TN, Samuel Snodgrass and Sonja Solomon of Oak Ridge, TN, and Amy Chyao and her chemistry teacher, Vashka Desai, of T.H. Williams High School in Plano, TX. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 19.

Remarks on Signing an Executive Order Renewing the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics

October 19, 2010

Excellent. Everybody, please be seated. Welcome to the White House, everybody. Thank you, Javier, for that outstanding introduction. I will not play you chess. [*Laughter*] You may not have won at the nationals, but you'd beat me. [*Laughter*] And then Malia and Sasha would laugh about it. [*Laughter*] We are very proud of you, and we're glad you are here.

Thank you also to the University of Texas-Pan American Mariachis that performed for us. And hello to everybody across the country participating in watch parties and in education reform efforts in your own communities. It's precisely that kind of participation—engaging the American people, giving all of you more say in the policies that affect your lives, and holding ourselves accountable to deliver real results in return—that is at the heart of a new Executive order I'm about to sign to strengthen the White

House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics.

Now, before I sign this document, I'd like to acknowledge a few people who have been and will continue to be instrumental to our success: our Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, Thelma Melendez de Santa Ana; our Assistant Secretary for Post-Secondary Education, Eduardo Ochoa; and our Assistant Deputy Secretary, Rosalinda Barrera.

I also want to thank Eduardo Padron, the president of Miami Dade Community College, who has been a leader in my administration's efforts to strengthen America's community colleges. And because that's not enough, in addition to running a community college, he's also agreed to serve as the Chair of this initiative's Presidential advisory commission. So we are grateful to you. This will be a group of 30 Latino

leaders who are going to make sure that, when it comes to our children's education, my administration hears the voices of the Latino community loud and clear.

And I also want to give a special recognition to our recently confirmed Ambassador to the Dominican Republic, Raul Yzaguirre. It was Raul's vision and tenacious commitment to equal education for all our people that helped this initiative become a reality back in 1990 under George H.W. Bush. And so we are very proud that he is here today to see that his work continues.

The question then back in 1990 is the same question we face now: How do we best improve educational opportunities and outcomes for our Hispanic students? Over the past year and a half, under Juan Sepulveda's leadership—and Juan, thank you for your outstanding work—over the last year and a half, this initiative has worked to gather the answers from those who know best, people in communities across this country. Juan hosted more than a hundred conversations. He's taken comments from more than 10,000 Americans. And he's worked with leaders from more than 30 States, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, to come up with real solutions that work best for our kids.

We know why this is so important. Today, Latinos make up the largest minority group in America's schools—more than one in five students overall—and they face challenges of monumental proportions. Latino students are more likely to attend our lowest performing schools, more likely to learn in larger class sizes, more likely to drop out at higher rates. Fewer than half take part in early childhood education. Only about half graduate on time from high school. And those who do make it to college often find themselves underprepared for its rigors. In just a single generation, America has fallen from first to ninth in college completion rates for all our students.

Now, this is not just a Latino problem, this is an American problem. We've got to solve it because if we allow these trends to continue, it won't just be one community that falls behind, we will all fall behind together. At a time when

the unemployment rate for Americans who've never gone to college is almost double what it is for those who have gone to college, when most of the new jobs that are being created require some higher education, when other countries are outeducating us today to outcompete us tomorrow, making sure that we offer all our kids, regardless of race, a world-class education is more than a moral obligation. It is an economic imperative if we want to succeed in the 21st century.

And that's why, when I took office, I set two big goals for American education. One was to make sure all our students, like the ones who are here with us today, receive a complete and competitive education from cradle to career. And number two, by the year 2020—the year Javier will graduate from college—America will once again have a higher share of college graduates than any other nation on Earth. That is our goal.

Now, improving educational outcomes for the Hispanic community is critical to reaching these overall goals. And reaching these goals is behind every battle that we've waged on behalf of our children's education since I took office.

We are expanding and reforming early childhood education so that our children aren't behind by the time they reach the schoolhouse door. We're challenging programs that don't measure up to compete for their funding, because if you're receiving tax dollars, you'd better be able to deliver results for our children.

We've launched a Race to the Top encouraging States to change their schools from the bottom up for all our children, Black, White, and Latino alike. Already, 48 States and DC have competed to raise standards, improve curricula, and turn around struggling schools. And we'll take steps to recruit and train more good teachers, including bilingual teachers.

We're tackling the dropout crisis that affects the Hispanic community more than any other community. And we're challenging States and communities to turn around our 5,000 worst schools, including many of the ones that produce the most Latino and African American dropouts.

To reach the second goal that I've set, leading the world in the proportion of college graduates, we're offering middle class families the American opportunity tax credit, which is a tax credit worth up to \$2,500 a year that's already helped put the dream of a college degree within the reach of more than 12 million students from working families.

We're upgrading our community colleges so that we can link students looking for work with businesses looking to hire. We're funding and implementing the post-9/11 GI bill so our veterans, including our outstanding Latino veterans, can come home to the same chance to earn a college education as my grandfather had when he came back from World War II.

We're eliminating \$60 billion over the next decade in wasteful giveaways to banks that profited from a broken student loan system, and we're using that money to make college more affordable for millions of students. In fact, we estimate that these steps will make college more affordable for more than 150,000 additional Latino students.

And as I've said before, Congress should finally pass the "DREAM Act." I've supported this bill—[applause]—I have supported this bill for years, and I'll do everything it takes to sign it into law on behalf of students seeking a college education and those who wish to serve in our country's uniform.

Turning around our troubled schools, putting the dream of a college education within the reach of working families, educating our kids—all of them—to graduate ready for college, ready for a career, ready to make the most of their lives, that's what we're doing. That is why we're here.

But while strengthening Hispanic education in America is the purpose of this initiative, it's not something that can fall on the Department of Education alone. I expect agencies across the Federal Government to take this initiative seriously and support its mission. And it's also not something the Government can do by itself. It's going to take all of us—public and private sectors, teachers and principals, all of you at home at those watch parties, parents getting involved in their kids' education and students giving their best—because the farther they go in school, the farther they will go in life, and that means the farther we'll go as a country.

Now I know there will be cynics out there who say that this improvement that we're seeking is not possible, that the reforms won't work, the problems in our education system are too entrenched. It's easy to think that way. This initiative, for example, has been around for 20 years, and we still face many of the same challenges. And it's true, as I've said ever since I ran for this office—and as everyone here knows firsthand—that change is hard. Change takes time. Fixing what is broken in our education system will not be easy. We won't see results overnight. It may take years, even decades, for all these changes to pay off.

But that's no reason not to get started. That's no reason not to strive for these changes. That's a reason for us, in fact, to start making them right now. It's a reason for us to follow through. And as long as I'm President, I will not give in to calls to shortchange any of our students.

So in the end, this is about building a brighter future where every child in this country—Black, White, Latino, Asian, or Native American; regardless of color, class, creed—has a chance to rise above any barrier to fulfill their God-given potential. It's about keeping the promise at the heart of this country that we love. The promise of a better life, the promise that our children will dream bigger, hope deeper, climb higher than we could ever imagine, that's the promise that so many of you work to advance each and every day in your own respective fields. And as long as I have the privilege of being your President, that's a promise that I intend to work to keep.

Thank you very much, everybody. Now I'm going to sign this initiative. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:11 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Javier Garcia, student, Stell Middle School in Brownsville, TX; and Juan Sepulveda, Director, White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on the Settlement in the *Keepseagle* Class-Action Lawsuit on Discrimination by the Department of Agriculture October 19, 2010

Today the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Justice announced a settlement agreement with the plaintiffs in the *Keepseagle* class-action lawsuit. This suit was originally filed in 1999 by Native American farmers alleging discrimination in access to and participation in USDA's farm loan programs. With today's agreement, we take an important step forward in remedying USDA's unfortunate civil rights history.

I applaud Secretary Vilsack and Attorney General Holder for their hard work to reach this settlement, a settlement that helps

strengthen the nation-to-nation relationship and underscores the Federal Government's commitment to treat all citizens fairly. In light of that commitment, Congress must also act to implement the historic settlements of the *Pigford II* lawsuit brought by African American farmers and the *Cobell* lawsuit brought by Native Americans over the management of Indian trust accounts and resources. My administration also continues to work towards a resolution of the claims made by women and Hispanic farmers against the USDA.

Remarks at a Rally for Governor John Kitzhaber in Portland, Oregon October 20, 2010

The President. Hello, Portland! Thank you! Thank you very much, everybody. It is good to be back in the State of Oregon. And it is an honor to be standing here with your next Governor, John Kitzhaber.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back. Great to be here.

Now, I have to first of all say, look, I've got a special place in my heart for Oregon. My best friend from high school lives in Eugene and is a big Ducks fan. So he's got season tickets. I'm always getting some e-mail from him about how good they're doing. Congratulations.

Now, on the other hand, my brother-in-law happens to be the coach of the Beavers. But I'm not confused. [*Laughter*] I root for them both. I've got the whole State covered.

We've got some wonderful guests here. You may have heard from a couple of them, but I want to make sure that you hear—that I have a chance to introduce them. First of all, your outstanding senior Senator, Ron Wyden, is in the house. Give him a big round of applause. Your outstanding junior Senator, Jeff Merkley, is here. My great friend and one of my earliest supporters who always has that little bike thing

on his lapel—[*laughter*]—Earl Blumenauer is here. One of his outstanding partners in the House of Representatives, is doing a great job, David Wu is here.

Audience members. Wu! Wu! Wu!

The President. Wu! Wu, Wu, Wu. Just want everybody—I want all the press to be clear, they were saying, "Wu." [*Laughter*] Secretary of State Kate Brown is here. State Treasurer Ted Wheeler is here. And Attorney General Kroger is here.

Now, Portland, let's talk about this Governor's race for a second. This should not be a difficult choice. [*Laughter*] This should not be a difficult choice. I know you have a race where both candidates are talking about change. But there's only one candidate who's actually delivered change. And that's John Kitzhaber.

When John—you know John's track record. When John was Governor, this economy grew, created more than 120,000 new jobs. When John was Governor, he increased access to health care for thousands of children. When John was Governor, he invested in education and improved Oregon's public schools. When John was Governor, he protected the environment of one of the most beautiful States in the