

They are the courageous men and women serving in Afghanistan even as we speak. They keep clear focus on their mission: to deny safe haven for terrorists who would attack our country, to break the back of the Taliban insurgency, to build the Afghans' capacity to defend themselves. They possess the steely resolve to see their mission through. They are made of the same strong stuff as the troops in this room, and I am absolutely confident that they will continue to succeed in the missions that we give them, in Afghanistan and beyond.

After all, our brave service men and women and their families have done everything they've been asked to do. They have been everything that we have asked them to be. "If I am a hero," Sal has said, "then every man who stands around me, every woman in the military, every person who defends this country is." And he's right.

This medal today is a testament to his uncommon valor, but also to the parents and the community that raised him, the military that trained him, and all the men and women who served by his side.

All of them deserve our enduring thanks and gratitude. They represent a small fraction of the American population, but they and the families who await their safe return carry far more than

their fair share of our burden. They fight half-way around the globe, but they do it in hopes that our children and our grandchildren won't have to.

They are the very best part of us. They are our friends, our family, our neighbors, our classmates, our coworkers. They are why our banner still waves, our founding principles still shine, and our country—the United States of America—still stands as a force for good all over the world.

So please join me in welcoming Staff Sergeant Salvatore A. Giunta for the reading of the citation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:07 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Douglas L. Carver, USA, Chief of Chaplains; Reps. Leonard L. Boswell, Bruce Braley, and Steve King; Mario Giunta, brother, and Katie Giunta, sister, of S. Sgt. Giunta; Michael Brennan, father, and Janice Gates, mother, of Sgt. Joshua C. Brennan, USA; Jesus C. Mendoza, father, and Sara Mendoza, mother, of Spc. Hugo V. Mendoza, USA; and Capt. Daniel P. Kearney, USA, former commander, Company B, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade Combat Team.

Remarks on Presenting the National Medals of Science and National Medals of Technology and Innovation November 17, 2010

The President. Thank you so much, everybody. Thank you. Wonderful to see you. Please, everyone sit down, sit down. We've got a lot of work to do here. [*Laughter*] Have a seat.

Welcome to the White House. It is a great honor to be joined by so many leading researchers and innovators. I want to give some special thanks to a few members of my Cabinet, Members of Congress who are here today. Secretary Gary Locke, our Commerce Secretary, is here. Members of Congress: We have Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania and Bart Gordon of Tennessee. Please give them a big round of applause for their great work.

We also have NASA Administrator Bolden, who is here—Charlie. Dr. Subra Suresh, who's the Director of our National Science Foundation, is here. Mr. Dave Kappos, who's the Director of the Patent and Trademark Office, he was here—he may have had some work to do; Dr. Patrick Gallagher, who's the Director of our National Institute of Standards and Technology; and Dr. Larry Strickling, Administrator of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

Now, the achievements of the men and women who are onstage today stand as a testament to the ingenuity, to their zeal for discovery, and

to the willingness to give of themselves and to sacrifice in order to expand the reach of human understanding.

All of us have benefited from their work. The scientists in this room helped develop the semiconductors and microprocessors that have propelled the information age. They've modeled the inner workings of the human mind and the complex processes that shape the Earth's climate. They've conducted pioneering research, from mathematics to quantum physics, into the sometimes strange and unexpected laws that govern our universe.

Folks here can also claim inventions like the digital camera, which has revolutionized photography—as all these folks back here will testify—[laughter]—as well as superglue, which, in addition to fascinating children—[laughter]—has actually saved lives as a means of sealing wounds. And the men and women we celebrate today have helped to unlock the secrets of genetics and disease, of nanotechnology and solar energy, of chemistry and biology, breakthroughs that provide so many benefits and hold so much potential, from new sources of electricity to new ways of diagnosing and treating illness.

Along the way, many of these folks have broken down barriers for women and minorities, who've traditionally been underrepresented in scientific fields, but obviously are no less capable of contributing to the scientific enterprise. Just as an example, at the start of her career, decades ago, Esther Cornwell [Conwell]^{*} was hired as an assistant engineer, but soon after, she was told that this position wasn't open to a woman. She had to serve as an engineer's assistant instead. Of course, that didn't stop her from becoming a pioneer in semiconductors and materials science.

It's no exaggeration to say that the scientists and innovators in this room have saved lives, improved our health and well-being, helped unleash whole new industries and millions of jobs, transformed the way we work and learn and communicate. And this incredible contribution serves as proof not only of their incredible cre-

ativity and skill, but of the promise of science itself.

Every day, in research laboratories and on proving grounds, in private labs and university campuses, men and women conduct the difficult, often frustrating work of discovery. It isn't easy. It may take years to prove a hypothesis correct or decades to learn that it isn't correct. Often the competition can be fierce, whether in designing a product or securing a grant. And rarely do those who give their all to this pursuit receive the attention or the acclaim they deserve.

Yet it is in these labs, often late at night, often fueled by a dangerous combination of coffee and obsession—[laughter]—that our future is being won. For in a global economy, the key to our prosperity will never be to compete by paying our workers less or building cheaper, lower quality products. That's not our advantage. The key to our success, as it has always been, will be to compete by developing new products, by generating new industries, by maintaining our role as the world's engine of scientific discovery and technological innovation. It's absolutely essential to our future.

And that's why we're here today and why I look forward to events like these. I believe one of the most important jobs that I have as President is to restore science to its rightful place. That means strengthening our commitment to research. It means ensuring that our Government makes decisions based on the best evidence, rather than politics. It means reforming and improving math and science education and encouraging the private sector to inspire young people to pursue careers in science and engineering. And it means fostering a climate of innovation and entrepreneurship, from incentives in clean energy to tax breaks to startups. I'd also point out, that's not just a job for government. Creating this climate depends on all of us, including businesses and universities and nonprofits.

One of the most important ways in which we can restore science to its rightful place is by celebrating the contributions of men and women

^{*} White House correction.

like all of you, because that's how we'll excite a new generation to follow in your footsteps. That's how we can spark the imagination of a young person who just might change the world. I was reminded of how important this is just a few weeks ago. We held a science fair here at the White House. Some of you may have heard about it.

We welcome all the time championship sports teams to the White House to celebrate their victories. I thought we ought to do the same thing for the winners of science fairs and robotic contests and math competitions, because those young people often don't get the credit that they deserve. Nobody rushes on the field and dumps Gatorade on them—[laughter]—when you win a science award. Maybe they should. [Laughter]

So I got to meet these incredibly talented and enthusiastic young men and women. There was a team of high school kids from Tennessee that had designed a self-powered water purification system. We had robots running all over through the State Dining Room. [Laughter]

The last young person I spoke to was a young woman from Texas. She was 16 years old. She was studying biology as a freshman, decided she was interested in cancer research, so taught herself chemistry during the summer, then designed a science project to look at new cancer drugs based on some experimental drugs that are activated by light. They could allow a more focused treatment that targets the cancer cells while living, healthy cells remain unharmed.

She goes on to design her own drug, wins the international science competition. And she told me that she and her high school science teacher are being approached by laboratories across the country to collaborate on this potential new cancer treatment. This is a true story: 16 years old, taught herself chemistry, incredibly inspiring.

And at a time of significant challenge in this country, at a moment when people are feeling so much hardship in their lives, this has to give us hope for the future. It ought to remind us of the incredible potential of this country and its people, as long as we unlock it, as long as we put

resources into it and we celebrate it and we encourage it, we embrace it.

You know, Carl Sagan once said, "Science is a way of thinking much more than it is a body of knowledge." That way of thinking, that combination of curiosity and skepticism, the sense of wonder and the willingness to test our assumptions, it's what, at root, we are honoring today. It's what has spurred countless advances and conferred untold benefits on our society. And it's an idea that has driven our success for as long as we have been a nation.

And I'm confident that this spirit of discovery and invention will continue to help us succeed in the years and decades to come. And our country owes every one of our laureates with us today a big measure of thanks for nurturing that spirit and expanding the boundaries of human knowledge.

So it is now my privilege to present the National Medals of Science and the National Medals of Technology and Innovation.

[At this point, Maj. Reginald McClam, USMC, Marine Corps Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medals.]

The President. Well, let me make two closing points. Number one, I feel really smart just standing up here with these folks. [Laughter] I think it kind of rubbed off on me. [Laughter] Number two, I want to congratulate our military aide for being able to read all those things. [Laughter] I want to assure you, he practiced a lot. [Laughter]

And finally, let me just once again say to all the honorees who are here tonight, you have truly revolutionized the world in ways that are profoundly important to people in their day-to-day lives, but also help to create those steps in human progress that really make us who we are as human beings. And so we could not be prouder of you, could not be more grateful to you for your contributions.

Please give them one last big round of applause.

All right. Everybody, enjoy the party. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:25 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to White House science fair partici-

pant Amy Chyao of Plano, TX, and her chemistry teacher Vashka Desai.

Statement on Senate Action on Paycheck Fairness Legislation November 17, 2010

I am deeply disappointed that a minority of Senators have prevented the “Paycheck Fairness Act” from finally being brought up for a debate and receiving a vote. This bill passed in the House almost 2 years ago; today it had 58 votes to move forward, the support of the majority of Senate, and the support of the majority of Americans. As we emerge from one of the worst recessions in history, this bill would ensure that American women and their families

aren’t bringing home smaller paychecks because of discrimination. It also helps businesses that pay equal wages as they struggle to compete against discriminatory competition. But a partisan minority of Senators blocked this commonsense law. Despite today’s vote, my administration will continue to fight for a woman’s right to equal pay for equal work.

NOTE: The statement referred to S. 3772.

Statement on General Motors Company November 17, 2010

General Motors’ initial public offering (IPO) marks a major milestone in the turnaround of not just an iconic company, but the entire American auto industry. Through the IPO, the Government will cut its stake in GM by nearly half, continuing our disciplined commitment to exit

this investment while protecting the American taxpayer. Supporting the American auto industry required tough decisions and shared sacrifices, but it helped save jobs, rescue an industry at the heart of America’s manufacturing sector, and make it more competitive for the future.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting on the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and an Exchange With Reporters November 18, 2010

The President. I want to begin by thanking the incredible leaders who are around this table, not only the Vice President and the Secretary of State, but also some of the most able statesmen from both parties that we’ve had in modern American history, who are sitting around this table.

We are here to discuss the importance of ratifying the START Treaty. And let me be clear: It is in the national security imperative—it is a national security imperative that the United States ratify the new START Treaty this year.

There is no higher national security priority for the lame duck session of Congress. The stakes for American national security are clear,

and they are high. The new START Treaty responsibly reduces the number of nuclear weapons and launchers that the United States and Russia deploy, while fully maintaining America’s nuclear deterrent.

If we ratify this treaty, we’re going to have a verification regime in place to track Russia’s strategic nuclear weapons, including U.S. inspectors on the ground. If we don’t, then we don’t have a verification regime: no inspectors, no insights into Russia’s strategic arsenal, no framework for cooperation between the world’s two nuclear superpowers. As Ronald Reagan said, we have to trust, but we also have to verify.