

that that is how we are going to move this country forward once again.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:05 p.m. at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

## Statement on the 35th Anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act *November 29, 2010*

In America, we believe that every child, regardless of class, color, creed, or ability, deserves access to a world-class education. But as recently as 35 years ago, an American child with a disability might have attended school without the interventions and accommodations necessary for their success or been involuntarily isolated in a State-run institution or even received no education at all.

That was wrong, and America set out to right it. Today, across the United States, nearly 6.6 million students with disabilities rely on the provisions of the landmark Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to ensure that they enjoy the same educational rights as all children.

And as we mark the 35th anniversary of that law, we remember what it was all about: equal

opportunity, equal access; not dependence, but independence. We know that our education system must hold children with disabilities to the same high standards as those without disabilities and hold them accountable for their success and their growth. We remember that disability rights are civil rights too and pledge to enforce those rights in order to live up to our founding principles and ensure the promise of opportunity for all our people. And even as we celebrate children with disabilities and their parents, teachers, advocates, and all who still strive to tear down the true barriers to success, even as we celebrate how far we've come, we commit ourselves to the ever-unfinished work of forming that more perfect Union.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With Congressional Leaders *November 30, 2010*

Hello, everybody. By the way, for those of you who are curious, we're using this room because we've got about a hundred volunteers decorating the White House. So we're spending a little more time in the EEOB.

I just wrapped up a meeting with leaders from both parties. It was our first chance to get together face to face since the election to talk about how we can best work together to move the country forward.

It's no secret that we have had differences that have led us to part ways on many issues in the past. But we are Americans first, and we share a responsibility for the stewardship of our Nation. The American people did not vote for gridlock. They didn't vote for unyielding partisanship. They're demanding cooperation, and they're demanding progress. And they'll hold all of us—and I mean all of us—accountable for it.

And I was very encouraged by the fact that there was broad recognition of that fact in the room.

I just want to say I thought it was a productive meeting. I thought that people came to it with a spirit of trying to work together. And I think it's a good start as we move forward.

I think everybody understands that the American people want us to focus on their jobs, not ours. They want us to come together around strategies to accelerate the recovery and get Americans back to work. They want us to confront the long-term deficits that cloud our future. They want us to focus on their safety and security and not allow matters of urgent importance to become locked up in the politics of Washington.

So today we had the beginning of a new dialogue that I hope—and I'm sure most Ameri-

cans hope—will help break through the noise and produce real gains. And as we all agreed, that should begin today because there's some things we need to get done in the weeks before Congress leaves town for the holidays.

First, we should work to make sure that taxes will not go up by thousands of dollars on hard-working middle class Americans come January 1, which would be disastrous for those families, but also could be crippling for the economy. There was broad agreement that we need to work to get that resolved before the end of the year.

Now, there's still differences about how to get there. Republican leaders want to permanently extend tax cuts not only to middle class families, but also to some of the wealthiest Americans at the same time. And here we disagree. I believe—and the other Democrats who were in the room believe—that this would add an additional \$700 billion to our debt in the next 10 years. And I continue to believe that it would be unwise and unfair, particularly at a time when we're contemplating deep budget cuts that require broad sacrifice.

Having said that, we agreed that there must be some sensible common ground. So I appointed my Treasury Secretary, Tim Geithner, and my Budget Director, Jack Lew, to work with representatives of both parties to break through this logjam. I've asked the leaders to appoint Members to help in this negotiation process. They agreed to do that. That process is beginning right away and we expect to get some answers back over the next couple of days about how we can accomplish our key goal, which is to make sure the economy continues to grow and we are putting people back to work. And we also want to make sure that we're giving the middle class the peace of mind of knowing that their taxes will not be raised come January 1.

I also urged both parties to move quickly to preserve a number of other tax breaks for individuals and businesses that are helping our recovery right now and that are set to expire at the end of the year. This includes a tax credit for college tuition, a tax credit for 95 percent—a tax break for 95 percent of working families that I initiated at the beginning of my Presidency, as

well as a tax cut worth thousands of dollars for businesses that hire unemployed workers.

We discussed a number of other issues as well, including the importance of ratifying the new START Treaty so we can monitor Russia's nuclear arsenal, reduce our nuclear weapons, and strengthen our relationship with Russia. I reminded the room that this treaty has been vetted for 7 months now; it's gone through 18 hearings; it has support from Senators of both parties; it has broad bipartisan support from National Security Advisers and Secretaries of Defense and Secretaries of State from previous administrations, both Democrat and Republican; and that it's absolutely essential to our national security. We need to get it done.

We also talked about the work of the bipartisan deficit reduction commission and the difficult choices that will be required in order to get our fiscal house in order. We discussed working together to keep the Government running this year and running in a fiscally responsible way. And we discussed unemployment insurance, which expires today. I've asked that Congress act to extend this emergency relief without delay to folks who are facing tough times by no fault of their own.

Now, none of this is going to be easy. We have two parties for a reason. There are real philosophical differences, deeply held principles to which each party holds. And although the atmosphere in today's meeting was extremely civil, there's no doubt that those differences are going to remain no matter how many meetings we have. And the truth is, there's always going to be a political incentive against working together, particularly in the current hyperpartisan climate. There are always those who argue that the best strategy is simply to try to defeat your opposition instead of working with them.

And frankly, even the notion of bipartisanship itself has gotten caught up in this mentality. A lot of times, coming out of these meetings, both sides claim they want to work together, but try to paint the opponent as unyielding and unwilling to cooperate. Both sides come to the table, they read their talking points, then they head out to the microphones, trying to win the news cycle instead of solving problems, and it

becomes just another move in an old Washington game.

But I think there was recognition today that that's a game that we can't afford, not in these times. And in a private meeting that I had without staff—without betraying any confidences—I was pleased to see several of my friends in the room say, let's try not to duplicate that. Let's not try to work the Washington spin cycle to suggest that somehow the other side is not being cooperative. I think that there was a sincere effort on the part of everybody involved to actually commit to work together to try to deal with these problems.

And they understand that these aren't times for us to be playing games. As I told the leaders at the beginning of the meeting, the next election is 2 years away and there will be plenty of time for campaigning. But right now we're facing some very serious challenges. We share an obligation to meet them. And that will require

choosing the best of our ideas over the worst of our politics.

So that's the spirit in which I invited both parties here today. I'm happy with how the meeting went. And I told all the leadership that I look forward to holding additional meetings, including at Camp David.

Harry Reid mentioned that he's been in Congress for 28 years; he's never been to Camp David. And so I told him, well, we're going to have to get them all up there sometime soon.

And I very much appreciate their presence today. I appreciate the tenor of the conversations. I think it will actually yield results before the end of the year, and I look forward to continuing this dialogue in the months ahead.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:50 p.m. in Room 430 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

## Statement on Senate Passage of Food Safety Modernization Legislation

November 30, 2010

With the Senate's passage of the Food Safety Modernization Act, we are one step closer to having critically important new tools to protect our Nation's food supply and keep consumers safe. This legislation ensures more frequent inspections of food manufacturing facilities and will require these facilities to take preventative actions to reduce the risks of outbreaks and

foodborne illness. I urge the House, which has previously passed legislation demonstrating its strong commitment to making our food supply safer, to act quickly on this critical bill, and I applaud the work that was done to ensure its broad bipartisan passage in the Senate.

NOTE: The statement referred to S. 510.

## Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Legislation Settling Claims Against the Department of Agriculture

November 30, 2010

I am pleased that today the House has joined the Senate in passing the claims settlement act of 2010. This important legislation will fund the agreements reached in 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. I want to thank Attorney General Holder and Secretaries Salazar and Vilsack for all their work to reach this outcome, and I

applaud Congress for acting in a bipartisan fashion to bring this painful chapter in our Nation's history to a close.

This bill also provides funding for settlements reached in four separate water rights suits brought by Native American tribes, and it represents a significant step forward in addressing the water needs of Indian Country. Yet, while today's vote demonstrates important progress, we must remember that much work