

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

remains to be done. And my administration will continue our efforts to resolve claims of past discrimination made by women and His-

panic farmers and others in a fair and timely manner.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 4783.

Statement on a Department of Defense Report on the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Policy

November 30, 2010

As Commander in Chief, I have pledged to repeal the “don’t ask, don’t tell” law because it weakens our national security, diminishes our military readiness, and violates fundamental American principles of fairness and equality by preventing patriotic Americans who are gay from serving openly in our Armed Forces. At the same time, as Commander in Chief, I am committed to ensuring that we understand the implications of this transition and maintain good order and discipline within our military ranks. That is why I directed the Department of Defense earlier this year to begin preparing for a transition to a new policy.

Today’s report confirms that a strong majority of our military men and women and their families—more than two-thirds—are prepared to serve alongside Americans who are openly gay and lesbian. This report also confirms that, by every measure, from unit cohesion to recruitment and retention to family readiness, we can transition to a new policy in a responsible manner that ensures our military strength and

national security. And for the first time since this law was enacted 17 years ago, today both the Secretary of Defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have publicly endorsed ending this policy.

With our Nation at war and so many Americans serving on the frontlines, our troops and their families deserve the certainty that can only come when an act of Congress ends this discriminatory policy once and for all. The House of Representatives has already passed the necessary legislation. Today I call on the Senate to act as soon as possible so I can sign this repeal into law this year and ensure that Americans who are willing to risk their lives for their country are treated fairly and equally. Our troops represent the virtues of selfless sacrifice and love of country that have enabled our freedoms. I am absolutely confident that they will adapt to this change and remain the best led, best trained, best equipped fighting force the world has ever known.

Message to the Congress Transmitting an Alternative Plan for Pay Increases for Civilian Federal Employees

November 30, 2010

To the Congress of the United States:

The law authorizes me to implement an alternative pay plan for locality pay increases for civilian Federal employees covered by the General Schedule and certain other pay systems in January 2011, if I view the adjustments that would otherwise take effect as inappropriate due to “national emergency or serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare.” Our country faces serious economic conditions af-

fecting the general welfare. As the economic recovery continues, the time has come to put our Nation back on a sustainable fiscal course, an effort that requires tough choices and shared sacrifice. Accordingly, I have determined that it is appropriate to exercise my statutory alternative plan authority under 5 U.S.C. 5304a to set alternative January 2011 locality pay rates. This decision will not materially affect our ability to attract and retain a well-qualified Federal workforce.