

And that feeling is shared by Susan Retik. It's a feeling they know all too well. After her husband David was killed on September 11th, Susan could have easily lost herself in feelings of hopelessness and grief. But instead, she turned her personal loss into a humanitarian mission, cofounding Beyond the 11th, a group that reaches out to Afghan widows facing their own struggles.

So on this second night of Hanukkah, let us give thanks to the blessings that all of us enjoy. Let us be mindful of those who need our prayers. And let us draw strength from the words of a great philosopher who said that a miracle is "a confirmation of what is possible."

And now I'd like to turn it over to Susan, who, by the way, has been on this stage before, receiving a Presidential award for her outstanding work. But she happens to be joined by a beautiful family: Donald, Ben, Molly, Dina, and Rebecca. [Laughter] Rebecca is down here. So I want to turn—there she is.

Audience members. Aww!

The President. Yes, she is adorable. [Laughter] As Michelle said as we were getting on stage, she will be stealing the show. [Laughter] So we're going to turn it over to Susan and her family for the blessings.

[At this point, a blessing was offered, and the menorah was lit. Afterwards, saxophonist Joshua Redman performed a Hanukkah song. Some members of the audience sang along.]

The President. So happy Hanukkah to all of you. We're going to see most of you downstairs. Be patient in the line. [Laughter] And I just want to let everybody know that, yes, they will be able to Photoshop my lip for the picture. [Laughter] Happy Hanukkah, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:44 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Donald Ger, husband of Susan Retik, and their children Benjamin Retik, Molly Retik, Dina Retik, and Rebecca Ger.

Statement on the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform Report

December 3, 2010

I want to thank the members of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform for their important work in highlighting the magnitude of the challenge before us and outlining an array of options to confront it. Jobs and growth are our most urgent need. But if we want an America that can compete for the jobs of tomorrow, we simply cannot allow our Nation to be dragged down by our debt. We must correct our fiscal course.

Nothing would be more valuable to addressing this challenge than strong, sustained economic growth. But the Commission's report underscores that to sustain growth in the medium and long term we need to face some difficult choices to curb runaway debt. It will require cutting the spending we don't need in order to invest in what's necessary to grow our economy and our middle class. It will require all of us, Democrats and Republicans, to find common

ground without compromising the fundamental principles we hold dear. Because the undeniable fact is that no one party can successfully tackle this challenge alone.

Chairmen Bowles and Simpson met the charge that I gave them and the Commission: to bring our deficits down in the medium term and to meaningfully improve our long-run fiscal situation so that we can keep commitments made to future generations. The Commission's majority report includes a number of specific proposals that I, along with my economic team, will study closely in the coming weeks as we develop our budget and our priorities for the coming year. This morning, my budget director, Jack Lew, spoke with Chairman Bowles and invited the entire Commission in to meet with him and Secretary Geithner to discuss the Commission's proposals. Overall, my goal is to build on the steps we've already taken to reduce

our deficit, like slowing the growth of health care costs, proposing a 3-year freeze in non-security discretionary spending and a 2-year pay freeze for Federal civilian workers, and restoring the rule that we pay for all of our priorities.

I don't doubt our ability to meet this challenge, but our success depends on our willingness to engage in the kind of honest conversation and cooperation that hasn't always happened in Washington. We cannot afford to fall back on old ideologies, and we will all have to

budge on long-held positions. So I ask members of both parties to maintain an open mind and a commitment to progress as we work to lift this burden from the shoulders of future generations.

NOTE: The statement referred to Erskine B. Bowles and Alan K. Simpson, Coauthors, National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform; and Jacob J. "Jack" Lew, Director, Office of Management and Budget.

Statement on the Presidential Election in Cote d'Ivoire *December 3, 2010*

I congratulate Alassane Ouattara on his victory in Cote d'Ivoire's November 28 elections. The Independent Electoral Commission, credible and accredited observers, and the United Nations have all confirmed this result and attested to its credibility.

Cote d'Ivoire is now at a crossroads. I urge all parties, including incumbent President Laurent

Gbagbo, to acknowledge and respect this result and to allow Cote d'Ivoire to move forward toward a peaceful, democratic future, leaving long years of conflict and missed opportunities in the past. The international community will hold those who act to thwart the democratic process and the will of the electorate accountable for their actions.

Statement on the South Korea-United States Free Trade Agreement *December 3, 2010*

I am very pleased that the United States and South Korea have reached agreement on a landmark trade deal that is expected to increase annual exports of American goods by up to \$11 billion and support at least 70,000 American jobs. Last month in Seoul, I directed our negotiators to achieve the best deal for American workers and companies, and this agreement meets that test.

American manufacturers of cars and trucks will gain more access to the Korean market and a level playing field to take advantage of that access. We are strengthening our ability to create and defend manufacturing jobs in the United States, increasing exports of agricultural products for American farmers and ranchers, and opening Korea's services market to American

companies. High standards for the protection of workers' rights and the environment make this a model for future trade agreements, which must be both free and fair.

Today's agreement is an integral part of my administration's efforts to open foreign markets to U.S. goods and services, create jobs for American workers, farmers, and businesses, and achieve our goal of doubling of U.S. exports over 5 years. It deepens the strong alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea and reinforces American leadership in the Asia-Pacific. I look forward to working with Congress and leaders in both parties to get this done and to ensure that America competes aggressively for the jobs and markets of the 21st century.