

a hundred million people, that somehow that was a sign of weakness and compromise.

Now, if that's the standard by which we are measuring success or core principles, then let's face it, we will never get anything done. People will have the satisfaction of having a purist position and no victories for the American people. And we will be able to feel good about ourselves and sanctimonious about how pure our intentions are and how tough we are, and in the meantime, the American people are still seeing themselves not able to get health insurance because of preexisting conditions or not being able to pay their bills cause their unemployment insurance ran out.

That can't be the measure of how we think about our public service. That can't be the measure of what it means to be a Democrat. This is a big, diverse country. Not everybody agrees with us. I know that shocks people. The New York Times editorial page does not permeate across all of America; neither does the Wall Street Journal editorial page. Most Americans, they're just trying to figure out how to go about their lives and how can we make sure that our elected officials are looking out for us. And that means, because it's a big, diverse country and people have a lot of complicated positions, it means that in order to get stuff done, we're going to compromise. This is why FDR, when he started Social Security, it only affected widows and orphans. You did not qualify. And yet now it is something that really helps a lot of people. When Medicare was started, it was a small program. It grew.

Under the criteria that you just set out, each of those were betrayals of some abstract ideal. This country was founded on compromise. I couldn't go through the front door at this country's founding. And if we were really thinking

about ideal positions, we wouldn't have a Union.

So my job is to make sure that we have a north star out there. What is helping the American people live out their lives? What is giving them more opportunity? What is growing the economy? What is making us more competitive? And at any given juncture, there are going to be times where my preferred option, what I am absolutely positive is right, I can't get done.

And so then my question is, does it make sense for me to tack a little bit this way or tack a little bit that way, because I'm keeping my eye on the long term and the long fight—not my day-to-day news cycle, but where am I going over the long term?

And I don't think there's a single Democrat out there who, if they looked at where we started when I came into office and look at where we are now, would say that somehow we have not moved in the direction that I promised.

Take a tally. Look at what I promised during the campaign. There's not a single thing that I've said that I would do that I have not either done or tried to do. And if I haven't gotten it done yet, I'm still trying to do it.

And so the—to my Democratic friends, what I'd suggest is, let's make sure that we understand this is a long game. This is not a short game. And to my Republican friends, I would suggest—I think this is a good agreement, because I know that they're swallowing some things that they don't like as well, and I'm looking forward to seeing them on the field of competition over the next 2 years.

Thanks very much everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:25 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House.

## Statement on the Death of Elizabeth A. Edwards *December 7, 2010*

Michelle and I were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Elizabeth Edwards. This afternoon I spoke to Cate Edwards and John Edwards and offered our family's condolences. I came to

know and admire Elizabeth over the course of the Presidential campaign. She was a tenacious advocate for fixing our health care system and fighting poverty, and our country has benefited

from the voice she gave to the cause of building a society that lifts up all those left behind.

In her life, Elizabeth Edwards knew tragedy and pain. Many others would have turned inward; many others in the face of such adversity

would have given up. But through all that she endured, Elizabeth revealed a kind of fortitude and grace that will long remain a source of inspiration. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family and friends.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With President Bronislaw Komorowski of Poland and an Exchange With Reporters

*December 8, 2010*

*President Obama.* Good morning, everybody. I want to extend the warmest possible greetings to President Komorowski and his delegation. Poland is one of our strongest and closest allies in the world and is a leader in Europe. And so it is fitting that my first visitor from Central and Eastern Europe is, in fact, the Polish President.

Before I mention the substance of our meeting, let me just say something very quickly to the American news crews about something that's on everybody's minds, and that is the current debate about the tax agreement that we've come up with.

We announced this agreement, and over the last couple of days economists throughout the country have looked at what would be the results of getting this agreement through Congress. And I think it's worth noting that the majority of economists have upwardly revised their forecasts for economic growth and noted that as a consequence of this agreement we could expect to see more job growth in 2011 and 2012 than they originally anticipated.

And I just think it's very important for Congress to examine the agreement, look at the facts, have a thorough debate, but get this done. The American people are watching, and they're expecting action on our parts.

I don't think you need to translate that.

Now, having said that, I just want to say that I first spoke to President Komorowski in the wake of a tragedy that broke the hearts not only of the Polish people, but caused the entire world to grieve. The loss of President Kaczynski, the First Lady, the entire planeload full of extraordinary Polish leaders caused extraordinary shock. But I have been so impressed with the steady hand and the leadership that Presi-

dent Komorowski has shown as he stepped in to guide the Polish people forward.

Something that the Polish people and the American people have long shared is not only a love of freedom, but also a deep faith and resilience in the face of hardship. And President Komorowski exhibited all those traits as the leader of Poland during this difficult period.

So given these strong bonds between our two peoples—bonds that I feel very personally given that I'm from Chicago, which has the largest Polish population outside of Poland—this has been a very productive meeting and we discussed a wide range of issues.

We started with the issue that is at the heart of our relationship, and that is our status as allies in NATO. And coming out of the Lisbon summit, we once again reaffirmed the centrality of article 5 as the central tenet of the NATO alliance. And I reiterated my determination and the American people's determination to always stand by Poland in its defense and its security needs.

And that commitment is exemplified by the joint adoption at Lisbon by NATO of a NATO-wide missile defense capacity. It's exemplified by the Air Force detachment that will be placed in Poland as part of our ongoing relationship in the training process. It is indicated by the SM-3s and the interceptors that are going to be located in Poland as part of our phased adoptive approach to missile defense. And most importantly, it's affirmed by the fact that not only are we NATO allies, but strong bilateral allies, and that bond between our two countries is unbreakable.

I know that was a mouthful, I'm sorry. [*Laughter*]