

to that end they welcomed agreement in principle on a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding to enhance cooperation on scientific, technical and policy aspects of clean and efficient energy technologies. They underlined their respective governments' readiness to cooperate in good faith and in a fair, open and transparent manner on a broad range of energy-related issues, including civilian nuclear power, unconventional gas, energy efficiency, renewable energy and other clean power resources in Poland. They welcomed new and continuing efforts under the Global Shale Gas Initiative.

*JOINT EFFORTS TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY IN EASTERN EUROPE AND AROUND THE WORLD*

Pointing to the successful democratic transition of Poland and other Central European states, President Obama cited Poland as a model for other countries striving to build democratic institutions and praised Poland's leadership in the Community of Democracies.

The United States and Poland call for genuinely free and fair presidential elections in Belarus on December 19. President Obama and President Komorowski reiterated their strong support for the EU's Eastern Partnership Initia-

tive, designed to strengthen ties between the EU and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, and to spur reform and strengthen democracy in those countries. The two leaders hailed NATO's historic decision in Lisbon to create a strategic and modern partnership with Russia. The United States and Poland are pursuing complementary policies of strengthening ties with Russia.

*EXPANDING CITIZEN CONTACTS*

The two leaders committed to expanding the Fulbright program; our two governments will also discuss expansion of the Parliamentary Youth Exchange. President Obama and President Komorowski applauded the partnership between the Polish American Freedom Foundation and leading U.S. companies to bring Polish university students and young professionals to the United States for internships in the private sector.

President Komorowski thanked President Obama and the American people for their hospitality, and extended an invitation to President Obama to visit Poland.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

*Remarks on Signing the Claims Resolution Act of 2010  
December 8, 2010*

Welcome, everybody. We are thrilled to have you here. And I want to start by acknowledging a few people who have worked so hard to allow us to be here today on this wonderful occasion: our Attorney General, Eric Holder—you can give him a round of applause; two outstanding members of my Cabinet who couldn't have worked harder to make today happen, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack; and four outstanding leaders who made it their business to see this thing through, Senator Max Baucus, Democrat of Montana, Senator Jeff Bingaman, Democrat of New Mexico, Representative Jim Clyburn, Democrat of South Carolina, and Representa-

tive Tom Cole, Republican of Oklahoma. Please give them a big round of applause.

And one last person who doesn't get a lot of notice but put a huge amount of time and actually crossed the t's and dotted the i's to help this thing along, my good friend from law school, even though he now looks younger than me because I've gotten the gray hair and he hasn't—*[laughter]*—and what's the official title? Is it deputy or—it's associate—Associate Attorney General Tom Perrelli.

Obviously, despite the extraordinary leadership on the stage, this also would not have gotten done without the activists, the tribal leaders, and the outstanding Members of Congress, both Democrat and Republican, who have

come together and done so much over the years to make this a reality.

Here in America, we believe that all of us are equal and that each of us deserves the chance to pursue our own version of happiness. It's what led us to become a nation. It's at the heart of who we are as a people. And our history is defined by the struggle to fulfill this ideal: to build a more perfect Union, to ensure that all of us, regardless of our race or religion, our color or our creed, are afforded the same rights as Americans and the fair and equal treatment under the law.

I think all of us understand that we haven't always lived up to those ideals. When we've fallen short, it's been up to ordinary citizens to stand up to inequality and unfairness wherever they find it. That's how we've made progress. That's how we've moved forward. And that's why we are here today: to sign a bill into law that closes a long and unfortunate chapter in our history.

First, for many years African American farmers claimed they were discriminated against when they applied for Federal farm loans, making it more difficult for them to stay in business and maintain their farms. In 1999, a process was established to settle these claims. But the settlement was implemented poorly and tens of thousands of African American families who filed paperwork after the deadline were denied their chance to make their case.

And that's why, as Senator, I introduced legislation to provide these farmers the right to have their claims heard. That's why I'm proud that Democrats and Republicans have come together to lay this case to rest. And that's why I'm proud that Secretary Vilsack and everybody at the Department of Agriculture are continuing to address claims of past discrimination by other farmers throughout our country.

The second case we're addressing today has to do with the responsibilities that the Government has to Native Americans. It began when Elouise Cobell, who is here today, charged the Interior Department with failing to account for tens of billions of dollars that they were supposed to collect on behalf of more than 300,000 of her fellow Native Americans.

Elouise's argument was simple: The Government, as a trustee of Indian funds, should be able to account for how it handles that money. And now, after 14 years of litigation, it's finally time to address the way that Native Americans were treated by their Government. It's finally time to make things right.

The bipartisan agreement finalized this month will result in payments to those affected by this case. It creates a scholarship fund to help make higher education a reality for more Native Americans. It helps put more land in the hands of tribes to manage for their members. And it also includes money to settle lawsuits over water rights, giving seven tribes in Arizona, Montana, and New Mexico permanent access to secure water supplies year round.

After years of delay, this bill will provide a small measure of justice to Native Americans whose funds were held in trust by a Government charged with looking out for them. And it represents a major step forward in my administration's efforts to fulfill our responsibilities and strengthen our government-to-government relationship with the tribal nations.

In the end, the work that is represented on this stage and among these Members of Congress, this isn't simply a matter of making amends. It's about reaffirming our values on which this Nation was founded, principles of fairness and equality and opportunity. It's about helping families who suffered through no fault of their own get back on their feet. It's about restoring a sense of trust between the American people and the Government that plays such an important role in their lives.

As long as I have the privilege of serving as your President, I will continue to do everything I can to restore that trust. And that's why I am so extraordinarily proud to sign this bill today.

I want to thank once again all those Members of Congress. We got a lot of members here—the Congressional Black Caucus, who I know worked the *Pigford* issue tirelessly. We've got, as I said, Democrats and Republicans who were supportive of this issue for so long. This is one of those issues where you don't always get

political credit, but it's just the right thing to do. And I couldn't be prouder of you.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:34 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisen-

hower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Elouise C. Cobell, executive director, Native American Community Development Corporation. H.R. 4783, approved December 8, was assigned Public Law No. 111-291.

## Statement on Signing the Claims Resolution Act of 2010 *December 8, 2010*

Today I have signed into law H.R. 4783, the "Claims Resolution Act of 2010." This Act, among other things, provides funding and statutory authorities for the settlement agreements reached in the *Cobell* lawsuit, brought by Native Americans; the *Pigford II* lawsuit, brought by African American farmers; and four separate water rights suits, brought by Native American tribes. While I am pleased that this Act reflects important progress, much work remains to be done to address other claims of past discrimination made by women and Hispanic farmers against the Department of Agriculture as well as to address needs of tribal communities.

I am also pleased that the Act includes authorities proposed by my Administration concerning Unemployment Compensation program integrity, to expand the ability of the Federal Government to recover from individual income tax overpayments certain Unemployment

Compensation debts that are due to an individual's failure to report earnings. My Administration has been working to protect taxpayer funds through improved recovery of improper Federal payments, and the additional authorities in this Act will assist in that effort. In order to ensure that the intent and effect of these program integrity provisions are realized, my Administration is working with the Congress to correct an inadvertent technical drafting error in section 801(a)(3)(C), so that the provision can be implemented as intended.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,  
December 8, 2010.

NOTE: H.R. 4783, approved December 8, was assigned Public Law No. 111-291.

## Statement on Senate Action on Legislation To Limit Cuts in Medicare Payments to Physicians *December 8, 2010*

I am pleased Democratic and Republican leaders in the Senate have agreed on legislation that will prevent a significant pay cut for doctors from taking effect and help ensure seniors on Medicare can continue to see the doctor they know and trust. I encourage Congress to act quickly on this proposal. This agreement is an important step forward to stabilize Medicare, but our work is far from finished. For too

long, we have confronted this reoccurring problem with temporary fixes and stopgap measures. It's time for a permanent solution that seniors and their doctors can depend on, and I look forward to working with Congress to address this matter once and for all in the coming year.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 4994.