

referred to Neil J. Mulholland, president and chief executive officer, National Park Foundation; Darrell D. Morton, pastor, Evangelical

Lutheran Church in America; and musician Lonnie R. “Common” Lynn, Jr. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson.

Statement on Senate Action on Defense Authorization Legislation December 9, 2010

I am extremely disappointed that yet another filibuster has prevented the Senate from moving forward with the “National Defense Authorization Act.” Despite having the bipartisan support of a clear majority of Senators, a minority of Senators are standing in the way of the funding upon which our troops, veterans, and military families depend. This annual bill has been enacted each of the past 48 years, and our Armed Forces deserve nothing less this year.

A minority of Senators were willing to block this important legislation largely because they oppose the repeal of “don’t ask, don’t tell.” As Commander in Chief, I have pledged to repeal this discriminatory law, a step supported by the Secretary of Defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and informed by a compre-

hensive study that shows overwhelming majorities of our Armed Forces are prepared to serve with Americans who are openly gay or lesbian. A great majority of the American people agree. This law weakens our national security, diminishes our military readiness, and violates fundamental American principles of fairness, integrity, and equality.

I want to thank Majority Leader Reid, Armed Services Committee Chairman Levin, and Senators Lieberman and Collins for all the work they have done on this bill. While today’s vote was disappointing, it must not be the end of our efforts. I urge the Senate to revisit these important issues during the lame duck session.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 5136.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Former President William J. Clinton and an Exchange With Reporters December 10, 2010

President Obama. I thought it was a slow day, so I’d—

Q. Slow news day, huh?

President Obama. —bring the other guy in.

Obviously, there’s a big debate going on about taxes and about the need to grow the economy and to create jobs. And just about every day this week, I’ve been making an argument as to why the agreement that we’ve struck to provide billions of dollars in payroll tax cuts that can immediately help rejuvenate the economy, as well as tax cuts for middle class families, unemployment insurance for folks who desperately need it, credits for college, credits for—child tax credits, as well as a range of business investments credits are so important to make sure that we keep this recovery moving.

I just had a terrific meeting with the former President, President Bill Clinton. And we just

happened to have this as a topic of conversation. And I thought, given the fact that he presided over as good an economy as we’ve seen in our lifetimes, that it might be useful for him to share some of his thoughts.

I’m going to let him speak very briefly. And then I’ve actually got to go over and do some—just one more Christmas party. So he may decide he wants to take some questions, but I want to make sure that you guys heard from him directly.

[*At this point, former President Clinton made remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Former President Clinton. So in my opinion, this is a good bill. And I hope that my fellow Democrats will support it. I thank the Republican

leaders for agreeing to include things that were important to the President.

There is never a perfect bipartisan bill in the eyes of a partisan. And we all see this differently. But I really believe this will be a significant net plus for the country. I also think that in general a lot of people are heaving a sigh of relief that there's finally been some agreement on something.

But don't minimize the impact of the unemployment relief for working families, of the payroll tax relief, and of the continuation of the incentives to grow jobs, which will trigger more credit coming out of the banks.

Keep in mind, ultimately the long-term answer here is to get the \$2 trillion which banks now have in cash reserves uncommitted to loans out there in the economy again, the \$1.8 trillion in corporate treasuries not now being invested out there in the economy again. I think this is a net plus.

And you know how I feel. I think the people that benefit most should pay most. That's always been my position, not for class warfare reasons, for reasons of fairness and rebuilding the middle class in America. But we have the distribution of authority we have now in the Congress and what we're going to have in January, and I think this is a much, much better agreement than would be reached were we to wait until January. And I think it will have a much more positive impact on the economy.

So for whatever it's worth, that's what I think.

President Obama. That's worth a lot.

Former President Clinton. I would like to say one other thing on another subject, just to be recorded on record. They don't need my support on this because we have some good Republican support, including the first President Bush. I think this START agreement is very important to the future of our national security.

And it is not a radical agreement. Boris Yeltsin and I agreed in principle on this same reduction, and there was no way in the wide world he could get it through the Russian Duma that existed at the time in his second term. So we didn't proceed because it couldn't be ratified there. I'm not sure the Senate would have rati-

fied it then, but I think they will now with enough encouragement.

But the cooperation that we will get from the Russians, and the signal that will be sent to the world on nonproliferation, when all these other things are going on which threaten to increase nuclear proliferation, is very important. One of the things you know is that when people fool with these weapons, they're expensive to build, expensive to maintain, and expensive to secure the material that goes into making the weapons.

This is something that is profoundly important. This ought to be way beyond party. They worked very hard. They've worked out, in my opinion, the details. And I hope it will be ratified.

[*Former President Clinton answered a question and then received an additional question as follows.*]

Cooperation With Congress

Q. And then as a follow-up, you mentioned the Republican Congress taking office in January. What was your advice to President Obama today about how to deal with the Congress from the opposition party?

Former President Clinton. I have a general rule, which is that whatever he asked me about my advice and whatever I say should become public only if he decides to make it public. He can say whatever he wants, but we—

Q. What do you think? [*Laughter*]

President Obama. Here's what I'll say, is I've been keeping the First Lady waiting for about half an hour, so I'm going to take off, but—

Former President Clinton. I don't want to make her mad. Please go.

President Obama. You're in good hands, and Gibbs will call last question.

[*President Obama left, and former President Clinton took more questions.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:20 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included former President Clinton's remarks and exchange with reporters.

Statement on the Awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo *December 10, 2010*

One year ago, I was humbled to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, an award that speaks to our highest aspirations and that has been claimed by giants of history and courageous advocates who have sacrificed for freedom and justice. Mr. Liu Xiaobo is far more deserving of this award than I was.

All of us have a responsibility to build a just peace that recognizes the inherent rights and dignity of human beings, a truth upheld within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In our own lives, our own countries, and in the world, the pursuit of a just peace remains incomplete, even as we strive for progress. This past year saw the release of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, even as the Burmese people continue to be denied the democracy that they deserve. Nobel laureate Jose Ramos-Horta has continued his tireless work to build a free and prosperous East Timor, having made the transition from dissident to President. And this past year saw the retirement of Nobel laureate Desmond Tutu, whose own career demonstrates

the universal power of freedom and justice to overcome extraordinary obstacles.

The rights of human beings are universal; they do not belong to one nation, region, or faith. America respects the unique culture and traditions of different countries. We respect China's extraordinary accomplishment in lifting millions out of poverty and believe that human rights include the dignity that comes with freedom from want. But Mr. Liu reminds us that human dignity also depends upon the advance of democracy, open society, and the rule of law. The values he espouses are universal, his struggle is peaceful, and he should be released as soon as possible. I regret that Mr. Liu and his wife were denied the opportunity to attend the ceremony that Michelle and I attended last year. Today, on what is also International Human Rights Day, we should redouble our efforts to advance universal values for all human beings.

NOTE: The statement referred to Liu Xia, wife of Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo.

Statement on United States Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard C. Holbrooke *December 10, 2010*

Earlier today I spoke to Richard Holbrooke's wife Kati and told her that Michelle and I are praying for Richard. Richard Holbrooke is a towering figure in American foreign policy, a critical member of my Afghanistan and Pakistan team, and a tireless public servant who has won the admiration of the American people and people around the world. I know that Secretary Clinton, Admiral Mullen, Tom Donilon, and

other members of our team have been with him at George Washington hospital, and we continue to pray for his recovery and support his family in this difficult time.

NOTE: The statement referred to Kati Marton, wife of Ambassador Holbrooke; and National Security Adviser Thomas E. Donilon.

The President's Weekly Address *December 11, 2010*

Right now there's a big debate taking place in Washington that'll affect how much you pay in taxes next year. If Congress doesn't act, tax rates

will automatically go up for just about everyone in our country. Typical middle class families would end up paying an extra \$3,000.