

Washington, DC. We celebrate that spirit of service off the court, because it's very hard to do what these guys do on the court, but everybody can serve off the court.

Now, on the court, there aren't too many folks who can do what the Los Angeles Lakers do. This year, they won their 2d title in a row and their 16th championship overall. That's one behind the Boston Celtics for the most of all time. The Boston Celtics, of course, they beat in this year's finals.

I want to congratulate Coach Phil Jackson on earning his 11th NBA championship ring. It was his fifth championship with the Lakers, which I should point out, is still one behind the six he won with the Chicago Bulls.

*Kobe Bryant.* Not for long.

*The President.* Kobe said, not for long, though. [Laughter] We are still grateful for you, Coach, in Chicago. And it has been a long drought since Phil left Chicago, although I have to say they witnessed in person on Friday that my Bulls are showing some signs of life. [Laughter]

I want to congratulate Kobe Bryant, the NBA Finals MVP for the second year in a row. Kobe was there when we organized a little pickup game for my 49th birthday. Pau Gasol and some other NBA players participated; Derek was there. Kobe was sidelined because he had just gotten some treatment on his knee. I was not yet sidelined with my busted lip. But nobody was taking it easy on me because Pau was on my

team, so I kept on just passing to him. And now I got to see how everybody else on the Lakers gets so many open looks, if you've got Pau Gasol in the middle.

So I just want to congratulate all the L.A. Lakers for being one of the outstanding sports franchises in our country and in our history. I wish all of you guys great luck for the rest of the season.

But especially, I just want to thank you for being so generous with your time with these kids. These young people here are working hard. They're doing well in school. They were really helping me out as I was going through that line packing those care boxes, making sure I didn't screw up. We are incredibly proud of them.

But every once in a while they need a little encouragement and they need to know that no dream is beyond their reach. And so when they see people like the Los Angeles Lakers who are willing to spend time with them, that sends a message to them that they're special. And you guys can't give a better gift than that during the holiday season.

So thank you very much. We're really proud of you. Congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:09 p.m. at the Town Hall Education Arts Recreation Campus. In his remarks, he referred to Kobe Bryant, guard, Derek Fisher, guard, and Pau Gasol, forward-center, Los Angeles Lakers.

## Remarks on Congressional Action on Legislation To Extend Tax Cuts and Unemployment Insurance Benefits December 13, 2010

Hello, everybody. I am pleased to announce, at this hour the United States Senate is moving forward on a package of tax cuts that has strong bipartisan support. This proves that both parties can, in fact, work together to grow our economy and look out for the American people.

Once the Senate completes action on this bill, it will move over to the House of Representative for its consideration. I've been talking with several Members of that body. I recognize that folks on both sides of the political spectrum

are unhappy with certain parts of the package, and I understand those concerns. I share some of them. But that's the nature of compromise: sacrificing something that each of us cares about to move forward on what matters to all of us. Right now that's growing the economy and creating jobs. And nearly every economist agrees that that is what this package will do.

Taken as a whole, the bill that the Senate will allow to proceed does some very good things for America's economy and the American people.

First and foremost, it is a substantial victory for middle class families across the country who would no longer have to worry about a massive tax hike come January 1. It would offer hope to millions of Americans who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own by making sure that they won't suddenly find themselves out in the cold without the unemployment insurance benefits that they were counting on. And it would offer real tax relief for Americans who are paying for college, parents raising their children, and business owners looking to invest in their businesses and propel our economy forward.

So I urge the House of Representatives to act quickly on this important matter. Because if there's one thing we can agree on, it's the urgent work of protecting middle class families, removing uncertainty for America's businesses, and giving our economy a boost as we head into the new year.

Thanks very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:31 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.R. 4853. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

## Remarks at a Reception at the Department of State December 13, 2010

Thank you. I have to say, just first of all, looking out at the audience, I'm reminded of, Hillary, how hard we've been working because I recognize everybody. [Laughter] I've seen all of you here. I've seen you in your home countries. And we are grateful to you.

First of all, thanks not only to Hillary for her gracious introduction, but I think there's a consensus building that this may be one of the best Secretaries of State we've ever had in this country's history—[inaudible]. One of my better decisions. [Laughter] It is a bipartisan view, by the way. [Laughter]. That doesn't happen very often.

Before I say anything else, I want to echo what I know Hillary addressed earlier, just say a few words about our friend and partner, Richard Holbrooke. We're honored to be joined by Richard's wife Kati and their family, David, Anthony, Lizzie, Christopher. I just had a chance to take a few moments with them before we came out to talk about their husband, dad, friend.

Richard Holbrooke has been serving this Nation with distinction for nearly 50 years, from a young Foreign Service officer in Vietnam to the architect of the accords that ended the slaughter in the Balkans, to advancing our regional efforts as our Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and countless crises and hot

spots in between. He is simply one of the giants of American foreign policy.

And as anyone who has ever worked with him knows, or had the clear disadvantage of negotiating across the table from him, Richard is relentless. He never stops, he never quits, because he's always believed that if we stay focused, if we act on our mutual interests, that progress is possible. Wars can end; peace can be forged.

This is the conviction that animates his work in Afghanistan and Pakistan and that of his SRAP team, many of whom join us tonight. Where are they? There they are back there. Richard recruited them. He mentored them. And I want you to know that in our meetings he consistently gave you guys unbelievable credit. He was so proud—and is so proud—of the work that you do. And I thank you for all the progress that we're making in that region, which is so vital to our national security.

So tonight we're all praying for Richard's recovery. To Kati and the family, our thoughts are with you. And I know that everyone here joins me when I say that America is more secure and the world is a safer place because of the work of Ambassador Richard Holbrooke. So Michelle and I, to the entire family, just know we are thinking and praying for you and for Richard every single day. And he is a tough son of a gun,