

the tough fight, despite all their sacrifice, they continue to stand up for our security and for our values that we hold so dear.

We're going to have to continue to stand up. We'll continue to give our brave troops and civilians the strategy and resources they need to succeed. We will never waver from our goal of disrupting, dismantling, and ultimately defeating Al Qaida. We will forge enduring partnerships with people who are committed to progress and to peace. And we will continue to do everything in our power to

ensure the security and the safety of the American people.

So with that, Vice President Biden and myself will depart, and I'm going to turn it over to Secretaries Clinton, Gates, as well as Vice Chairman Cartwright, and they will be able to answer your questions and give you a more detailed briefing.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at Long Branch Elementary School in Arlington, Virginia

December 17, 2010

[Prior to his remarks, the President read aloud to the assembled students from two books.]

The President. Now, let me just say one more thing, and then maybe we can take a picture together. One of the things about Christmas obviously is getting presents and having stockings full and spending time with your family and eating good stuff. But part of the Christmas spirit is also making sure that we're kind to each other and we're thinking about people who aren't as lucky as we are.

And so I hope that all of you, even as you're having a lot of fun during the holidays, whether it's Christmas or Hanukkah, I want to make sure that all of you are also thinking about how can you guys be nicer to each other and think about people who have less than you do, because not everybody is as lucky as we are. There are a lot of kids out there who they may not be able to get a lot of presents for Christmas because their parents don't have a lot of money.

There are a lot of parents right now who are maybe away from their families. Some of them are in our military and they're fighting overseas, and so they can't be home for Christmas or the holidays. So I hope you guys think about them too, all right? And I want you all to remember that the spirit of Christmas is making sure

that—not just that you're getting something from somebody, but that you're also giving back to other people. Does that make sense?

Students. Yes.

The President. Who wants to take a picture with me?

[At this point, the students took a picture with the President.]

The President. Okay, so—now, is today the last day of school before the holidays?

Students. No!

The President. The teachers are all, like, "No." [Laughter] When do you guys get out?

Students. On the 23d.

The President. Not until Wednesday, huh? All right. Well, listen, I hope you guys have so much fun during the holidays. And I'm so proud of you. You guys are all working hard in school and learning all kinds of stuff. It's really exciting to see you guys doing so well.

So—and I want to thank all the teachers and the faculty, the staff who are here, because I know that you guys put your heart and soul into doing this great work.

You guys have a couple questions for me before I go? I thought so.

What's your question?

President's Daughters

Q. I don't have a question, but my name is Malia.

The President. Your name is Malia too? Give me a high five for that. That's a great name. That's a great name.

All right, let's see. What's your name?

White House Holiday Decorations

Q. Sebastian.

The President. Hey, Sebastian.

Q. I don't have a question, but I do know Mrs. Obama gave us these ornaments so we could make them for your Christmas tree.

The President. Excellent. Well, thank you so much. We have all these volunteers come out to decorate the whole White House, and it's pretty spectacular. But one of those ornaments might have been yours. Way to go. Appreciate it.

What's your name?

Signing Autographs

Q. Can I have an autograph?

The President. Here's the thing. If I sign autographs, then I have to sign them for everybody.

Students. Yay! [*Laughter*]

The President. I'd be here a really long time. But here's what I did, though, is I signed my book. So it's in the library. And so that's for the whole school. All right?

How about you?

President's Book, "Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters"

Q. How did you get the—since you're so busy, how did you get to write that book since you're so busy?

The President. You know what happened was, I actually wrote it a couple of years ago, before I was sworn in as President, because I had written a couple books for adults, and then they said, well, would you be interested in writing a children's book and then you can give the money to charity? And I said I would, so I wrote the book, but then it takes a really long time be-

cause the art is so nice—the artists, they—it's like each page is like a painting. So it takes them a long time to make it. So that's why it's just coming out now. Yes.

All right. What else?

Letters to the President

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. I get 10,000 letters every day. That's a lot. That's a lot. Now, I want to be honest, I don't read every single piece of mail I get, because then obviously—well, I just couldn't get through all of it. So I have a whole staff that just reads my mail, and then they give me letters that they think are really especially terrific, and I read those.

All right.

[*The students pointed to a student off camera.*]

The President. Oh, it's Lawrence.

What were you going to say?

Living in the White House

Q. How much fun is it just going around—running around the White House all day?

The President. You know, the truth is, I run around a lot in the White House, but most of the time I'm working. So it's not like I'm just running around having fun. But sometimes it's fun. Because the White House—how many people have visited the White House? So it's a pretty—it's a beautiful building, and there's a big yard in the back called the South Lawn. So a lot of times I walk Bo at night, and that's fun. Sometimes, I run around with Bo, although I have to—sometimes I have to scoop up his poop.

Students. Eww!

The President. Because I don't want to just leave it in the lawn. So if you guys have a dog, you got to walk your dog too and clean up after him a little bit.

All right, guys, I've got to get going. Merry Christmas, everybody! Happy holidays!

Students. Merry Christmas!

The President. Thank you. Thank you.

[There was a break while the President moved to another classroom.]

The President. Well, hello, everybody!

Students. Hello!

The President. So I just wanted to come by and wish everybody a wonderful holiday, merry Christmas, happy New Year, happy Hanukkah, happy, happy all, everything.

And now, I thought this was the last day of school. I just found out you guys are actually in until Wednesday.

But I did just want to come by to say how proud I am of all of you. This is just a wonderful school. The staff, the teachers do such a great job. And you guys, the students, are doing a great job. And I just left a children's book that I wrote called "Of Thee I Sing," so I left that as a Christmas present. I had a chance to read "The

Night Before Christmas." So—but I suspect everybody here has read it.

Students. We saw you.

The President. Oh, you were watching. Well, that's amazing. Well, then all I want to do is come in here and say, guys, I'm proud of you. I hope you guys have a wonderful holiday. And keep working hard, keep paying attention, because your teachers know more than you do. At least for now. But if they do a really good job, then at some point you'll know more than them. All right?

But we couldn't be prouder. So from Michelle, Malia, Sasha, and from Bo, we want to wish you guys a wonderful holiday. All right? Bye-bye, everybody. Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:14 a.m.

Remarks on Signing the Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010

December 17, 2010

Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat.

Good afternoon, everybody. Before I get started, I just want to acknowledge some of the extraordinary people who did some extraordinary work in a very short period of time. And I'm going to start with somebody who has been a champion for the middle class, but has also been just an extraordinary partner on every important initiative in this administration, my friend Joe Biden, the Vice President.

I want to acknowledge and thank Senator Mitch McConnell and the rest of the Republican leadership in the Senate, Dave Camp, Republican over in the House, for their willingness, as Joe indicated, to do what was right for the country, even though it caused occasional political discomfort. I especially want to thank the folks who are here—Dick Durbin, Max Baucus, Danny Davis, Allyson Schwartz, Rob Andrews—part of a broader team that worked very diligently both in the House and the Senate on the Democratic side to make this happen.

And we've got a bunch of other Members of Congress who are here, as well as activists and

economists and business leaders and people who generally recognize that at this critical juncture, we've got to think about what's best to grow the economy and what's best to put people back to work.

We are here with some good news for the American people this holiday season. By a wide bipartisan margin, both Houses of Congress have now passed a package of tax relief that will protect the middle class, that will grow our economy, and will create jobs for the American people. Not only do I want to thank all the leaders here today, but I want to thank mayors and Governors from across the country who couldn't be here today and all who worked together to get this done.

First and foremost, the legislation I'm about to sign is a substantial victory for middle class families across the country. They're the ones hit hardest by the recession we've endured. They're the ones who need relief right now. And that's what is at the heart of this bill.

This bipartisan effort was prompted by the fact that tax rates for every American were poised to automatically increase on January 1. If