

proliferation, but a host of other challenges around the world.

Ratifying a treaty like START isn't about winning a victory for an administration or a political party, it's about the safety and security of the United States of America. That's why this treaty is supported by both Presidents Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush. That's why it's supported by every living Republican Secretary of State, by our NATO allies, and the leadership of the United States military. Indeed, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Hoss Cartwright, said this week that the military needs this treaty, and they need it badly. And that's why every President since Ronald Reagan has pursued a treaty like START, and every one that has been reviewed by the Senate has passed with strong bipartisan support.

We have taken the time to get this right. The START Treaty has now been under review by the Senate for over 7 months. It's gone through 18 hearings. Nearly 1,000 questions have been asked and answered. Several Republican Senators have come out in support of ratification. Meanwhile, further delay comes at a cost. Every

minute we drag our feet is a minute that we have no inspectors on the ground at those Russian nuclear sites.

It's time to get this done. It's time to show the same spirit of common purpose on our security that we showed this week on our economy. It's time to remember the old saying that politics stops at the water's edge. That saying was coined by a Republican Senator, Arthur Vandenberg, who partnered with a Democratic President, Harry Truman, to pass landmark national security measures at the dawn of the cold war. Today, over 60 years later, when we're threatened not only by nuclear weapons, but an array of other dangers, that's a principle we must continue to uphold.

Thanks, and have a nice weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:15 p.m. on December 17 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for broadcast on December 18. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 17, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on December 18.

Statement on Senate Action on Legislation Providing Citizenship Opportunities for Alien Minors

December 18, 2010

In an incredibly disappointing vote today, a minority of Senators prevented the Senate from doing what most Americans understand is best for the country. As I said last week, when the House passed the "DREAM Act," it is not only the right thing to do for talented young people who seek to serve a country they know as their own, it is the right thing for the United States of America. Our Nation is enriched by their talents and would benefit from the success of their efforts. The "DREAM Act" is important to our economic competitiveness, military readiness, and law enforcement efforts. And as the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office reported, the "DREAM Act" would cut the deficit by \$2.2 billion over the next 10 years. There was simply no reason not to pass this important legislation.

It is disappointing that common sense did not prevail today. But my administration will not give up on the "DREAM Act" or on the important business of fixing our broken immigration system. The American people deserve a serious debate on immigration, and it's time to take the polarizing rhetoric off our national stage.

I thank Senators Durbin, Reid, and Menendez for their tireless efforts. Moving forward, my administration will continue to do everything we can to fix our Nation's broken immigration system so that we can provide lasting and dedicated resources for our border security, while at the same time, restoring responsibility and accountability to the system at every level.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

Statement on Senate Passage of Legislation Repealing the United States Military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Policy *December 18, 2010*

Today the Senate has taken an historic step toward ending a policy that undermines our national security while violating the very ideals that our brave men and women in uniform risk their lives to defend. By ending "don't ask, don't tell," no longer will our Nation be denied the service of thousands of patriotic Americans forced to leave the military, despite years of exemplary performance, because they happen to be gay. And no longer will many thousands more be asked to live a lie in order to serve the country they love.

As Commander in Chief, I am also absolutely convinced that making this change will only underscore the professionalism of our troops as the best led and best trained fighting force the world has ever known. And I join the Secretary of Defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,

as well as the overwhelming majority of service-members asked by the Pentagon, in knowing that we can responsibly transition to a new policy, while ensuring our military strength and readiness.

I want to thank Majority Leader Reid, Senators Lieberman and Collins, and the countless others who have worked so hard to get this done. It is time to close this chapter in our history. It is time to recognize that sacrifice, valor, and integrity are no more defined by sexual orientation than they are by race or gender, religion or creed. It is time to allow gay and lesbian Americans to serve their country openly. I urge the Senate to send this bill to my desk so that I can sign it into law.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 2965.

Letter to Senate Leadership on the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and Missile Defense *December 18, 2010*

Dear Senator:

As the Senate considers the New START Treaty, I want to share with you my views on the issue of missile defense, which has been the subject of much debate in the Senate's review of the treaty.

Pursuant to the National Missile Defense Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-38), it has long been the policy of the United States to deploy as soon as is technologically possible an effective National Missile Defense system capable of defending the territory of the United States against limited ballistic missile attack, whether accidental, unauthorized, or deliberate. Thirty ground-based interceptors based at Fort Greely, Alaska, and Vandenberg Air Force Base, California, are now defending the nation. All United States missile defense programs—including all phases of the European Phased Adaptive Approach to missile defense (EPAA) and programs

to defend United States deployed forces, allies, and partners against regional threats—are consistent with this policy.

The New START Treaty places no limitations on the development or deployment of our missile defense programs. As the NATO Summit meeting in Lisbon last month underscored, we are proceeding apace with a missile defense system in Europe designed to provide full coverage for NATO members on the continent, as well as deployed U.S. forces, against the growing threat posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles. The final phase of the system will also augment our current defenses against intercontinental ballistic missiles from Iran targeted against the United States.

All NATO allies agreed in Lisbon that the growing threat of missile proliferation, and our Article 5 commitment of collective defense, requires that the Alliance develop a territorial missile defense capability. The Alliance further