

to make care even better, to make it more affordable and fix what needs fixing.

You see, part of the genius of our Founders was the establishment of a Federal system in which each of our States serves as a laboratory for our democracy. Through this process, some of the best State ideas became some of America's best ideas. So whether it's through Race to the Top or improving the Affordable Care Act or reforming the way that we approach social programs by ensuring that spending is tied to success, our approach has been to give you the flexibility that you need to find your own innovative ways forward. In fact, this week I'm issuing a Presidential memorandum that instructs all Government agencies to follow this flexible approach wherever the law allows.

But even as we preserve the freedom and diversity that is at the heart of federalism, let's remember that we are one Nation. We are one people. Our economy is national. Our fates are intertwined. Today, we're not competing with each other, we're competing with other coun-

tries that are hungry to win new jobs, hungry to win new industries.

I'm confident we will win this competition as long as we're fighting it together. And I know that whatever our differences, you share that goal. So you've got a partner in the White House to make this happen. And I hope that this becomes the start of a productive and serious conversation going forward, one that I want to start by answering some of your questions.

So thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:16 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Christine O. Gregoire of Washington, in her capacity as chair, and Gov. David E. Heineman of Nebraska, in his capacity as vice chair, of the National Governors Association; Gov. Richard D. Snyder of Michigan; and former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden, who introduced the President.

Statement on the Death of Frank W. Buckles *February 28, 2011*

Michelle and I were inspired by the service and life story of former Army Corporal Frank W. Buckles, the last surviving American veteran of World War I and the oldest known World War I era veteran in the world, who passed away yesterday at the age of 110. A decorated soldier in the Great War, he also survived more than 3 years in Japanese prisoner of war camps during the Second World War.

Frank Buckles lived the American century. Like so many veterans, he returned home, continued his education, began a career, and along with his late wife Audrey, raised their daughter

Susannah. And just as Frank continued to serve America until his passing, as the honorary chairman of the World War I Memorial Foundation, our Nation has a sacred obligation to always serve our veterans and their families as well as they've served us.

We join Susannah and all those who knew and loved her father in celebrating a remarkable life that reminds us of the true meaning of patriotism and our obligations to each other as Americans.

NOTE: The statement referred to Susannah Flanagan, daughter of Mr. Buckles.