

mon ground to solve problems. Not everything is a fight. Not everything has to be a battle to the death. There have to be times when we step back for a moment and we say, you know what, we're thinking as Americans and not as partisans.

And that too is going to be, I think, a formula for our success in 2012. Because when I'm proudest of our party it's because I think our party is a practical party. I think it's a party of common sense. It's a party whose origins are with working people, who are thinking in practical, commonsense ways. And so on a whole range of issues, I think there's nothing—there's no weakness in us trying to reach out and seeing if we can find common ground.

Now, there are going to be times where we can't. I was born in Hawaii, what can I say? [Laughter] I mean, I just—I can't change those facts. [Laughter] And in these budget battles, I mean, there are going to be some things that we will not do because we think it's wrong for the country, and we're going to have some big fights about it.

But I want to make sure everybody understands here that the choices we make now are so important for the country that we're going to have to, wherever we can, try to build consensus and make decisions based not necessarily just on short-term politics, but also what's good for the country long term. And I think that when we do that, ultimately, that will be good politics. And when people look back on this era of politics, I hope that, just as they do

when they visit this museum and they see these portraits, they say, you know what, here were a group of leaders who weren't just thinking short term, but were thinking long term in this long, extraordinary experiment we've had with democracy.

So let me just close by saying this: I could not be more confident about the future of this country. And part of the reason that I'm so confident are those kids that I met at TechBoston and those college students that I met in that roundtable. But part of the reason that I couldn't be more confident is because of you.

I know a lot of the people in this room and the extraordinary contributions you've made in your own communities, starting businesses, helping on a whole range of civic efforts, and it gives me confidence to know that you are behind the DCCC and you're behind Nancy Pelosi and you're behind me. Because if we've got you behind us, I promise you we're going to keep this thing going not just for the next 2 years, but the next 2 years after that, the next 2 years after that, and we're going to be leading America into a bright and prosperous future.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:33 p.m. at the Museum of Fine Arts. In his remarks, he referred to Victoria Reggie Kennedy, wife of former Sen. Edward M. Kennedy; and Mary E. Skipper, principal, TechBoston Academy in Boston, MA. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 9.

Remarks on the Nomination of Secretary of Commerce Gary F. Locke To Be Ambassador to China

March 9, 2011

The President. Good morning, everybody. As many people know, our current Ambassador to China, Jon Huntsman, has decided to step down from his current job. During his tenure, Jon has been an outstanding advocate for this administration and for this country. He made a real sacrifice in moving his family out of the State that they loved and has helped to strengthen our critical relationship with the

Chinese Government and the Chinese people. And so I am very grateful for his service.

In replacing Ambassador Huntsman, I can think of nobody who is more qualified than Gary Locke. More than 100 years ago, Gary's grandfather left China on a steamboat bound for America, where he worked as a domestic servant in Washington State. A century later, his grandson will return to China as America's top diplomat.

In the years between these milestones, Gary has distinguished himself as one of our Nation's most respected and admired public servants. As our country's first Chinese American Governor, he worked tirelessly to attract jobs and businesses to Washington State and he doubled exports to China.

Two years ago, I asked Gary to continue this work as Commerce Secretary. I wanted him to advocate for America's businesses and American exports all around the world, make progress on our relationship with China, and use the management skills he developed as Governor to reform a complex and sprawling agency.

He has done all that and more. He's been a point person for my National Export Initiative, and last year, Gary's department led a historic number of trade missions that helped promote American businesses and support American jobs. He's overseen an increase in American exports and particularly exports to China, a country we recently signed trade deals with that will support 235,000 American jobs.

As Commerce Secretary, Gary oversaw a census process that ended on time and under budget, returning \$2 billion to American taxpayers. He's earned the trust of business leaders across America by listening to their concerns, making it easier for them to export their goods abroad, and dramatically reducing the time it takes to get a patent. When he's in Beijing, I know that American companies will be able to count on him to represent their interests in front of China's top leaders.

As one of the world's fastest growing economies, our relationship with China is one of the most critical of the 21st century. Over the last 2 years, we worked hard to build a relationship that serves our national interest, addressing global security issues and expanding opportu-

nities for American companies and American workers. Continued cooperation between our countries will be good for America, it will be good for China, and it will be good for the world.

As the grandson of a Chinese immigrant who went on to live the American Dream, Gary is the right person to continue this cooperation. I know he will bring the same skills and experience that he brought to Commerce Secretary to this new position that he's about to embark on.

I want to thank him, and I also want to thank his gorgeous and extraordinary family, who's standing here, Mona, Emily, Dylan, and Maddy. It's always tough to move families. Maddy just turned 14 today, so I was commiserating—

Secretary Locke. Emily.

The President. Emily just turned 14 today. So I was commiserating with her, as somebody who moved around a lot when I was a kid, as well. I assured her it would be great 10 years from now. *[Laughter]* Right now it's probably a drag. But I'm absolutely confident that this is—we could not have better representation of the United States of America in this critical relationship than we're going to get from the Locke family.

And, Gary, I wish you all the best of luck in Beijing. Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:55 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mona Locke, wife of Secretary Locke, and their children Emily, Madeline, and Dylan. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Locke.

Statement on the Observance of Ash Wednesday March 9, 2011

Michelle and I join with millions of Christians here and across the world to mark Ash Wednesday. As we observe the season of Lent, we receive

with thanksgiving this opportunity for grace and repentance, recommit ourselves to our faith, and remember our obligations to one another.