

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.