

expectations for themselves, and never give up on them no matter how challenging it might be.

All of us are here because at some point, somebody did that for us. And so today we are honored to recognize these outstanding men and women and all the teachers like them who have always had—and will continue to have—such an important impact on our lives.

So with that, I would like to present Michelle with her apple.

*[At this point, the President presented the Teacher of the Year award to Ms. Shearer, who then made brief remarks.]*

*The President.* The—[*applause*—]I think you can see why Michelle is Teacher of the

Year. I think I'm going to send her up to Congress to give them a pep talk. [*Laughter*]

Thank you, everybody. This ends the ceremony, but again, we are so grateful to Michelle, but we are also grateful to all the Teachers of the Year. Give them one more big round of applause.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sens. Barbara A. Mikulski and Benjamin L. Cardin; Kristen Brummel, teacher, Noelani Elementary School in Honolulu, HI; and George Shearer, husband, Phillip Meredith, father, and Beverly Meredith, mother, of Michelle M. Shearer. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

## Statement on World Press Freedom Day May 3, 2011

On this World Press Freedom Day, the United States joins with people around the world in reaffirming the fundamental freedoms of expression, assembly, and association that provide the foundation for media to operate freely and keep citizens informed. We rededicate ourselves to the basic principle enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that every person has the right “to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” And we recognize the courageous journalists who work every day to give meaning to these rights, often at great risk to their lives, as we have seen most recently with the tragic deaths of journalists in Libya.

Governments have an obligation to protect these rights and freedoms. Yet this year alone, at least 16 journalists have already been killed and more than 145 remain imprisoned around the world, simply for daring to report the truth. Dozens of countries continue to stand in the way of a free press. This includes recent crackdowns on the independent press in Bahrain, threats against and arrests of domestic and for-

eign journalists in China, political persecution of independent journalists and bloggers in Iran, arrests and detention of international journalists in Syria, and the Government takeover of independent media outlets in Venezuela. Countries such as Belarus, Burma, Cuba, Eritrea, Libya, North Korea, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan also continue to be notoriously repressive of press freedoms. Freedom of expression is also under attack through criminal violence and impunity in countries like Mexico, Honduras, and Russia.

As we witnessed in the historic events in Tunisia and Egypt, new media tools can also help empower citizens exercise their freedoms of speech and association, yet these same 21st-century tools can be used to filter, block, and restrict free expression. That is why we must always stand up for the free flow of information around the world.

History shows that one of the ingredients of successful, prosperous, and stable societies is a free press where citizens can freely access information and hold their governments accountable. On this World Press Freedom Day, we

recognize the vital role that journalists play in strengthening democratic governance around

the world and we honor all those who have given their lives in courageous pursuit of the truth.

## Remarks at the Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride Opening Ceremony May 4, 2011

*The President.* Thank you. Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to the White House. Thank you, Tammy, for the kind introduction, but more importantly, for your extraordinary service to our country in Iraq, in Illinois, and now as Assistant Secretary of the VA, where you're a champion for your fellow wounded warriors. God bless you. We are so thankful for Tammy Duckworth. Give her a big round of applause.

I was proud to kick off this Soldier Ride 2 years ago. I'm just as thrilled to be kicking it off today. I'm pleased that we're joined by a number of Members of Congress here. The Sun is coming out just as we start. We're also joined by the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and one of my top advisers over the last several years—I couldn't be more grateful to him—General Jim “Hoss” Cartwright. Please give him a big round of applause.

Now, this is one of the most inspiring events that we do at the White House. We're joined by folks from every service. We've got Army. We've got some Navy folks. We've got Air Force. You know we've got some Marines. And we've got some Coast Guard. And just as importantly, we are joined by those who serve and sacrifice alongside you, and that is all our outstanding military families.

Now, you've all got your gear on. You're on your bikes. You all look pretty sharp.

*Audience member.* Thank you, sir.

*The President.* Thank you. [*Laughter*] You're ready to go. So I'm not going to hold you back too long here with a long speech. But it is important to remember what this day is about.

Today is a reminder, as Michelle and Jill Biden have already said, that every American, every single person in this country, can do something to support our remarkable troops and their families. Everybody can do something.

So 7 years ago, a bartender from Long Island had the same idea. He wasn't from a mili-

tary family. He had never served in the military. But he knew that he owed our military something. He was just an ordinary American who was grateful for the service of all those who wear the uniform. And he said, “I just wanted to give something back.”

So he jumped on his bike and rode across the country, over 5,000 miles, to raise funds and awareness for our wounded warriors. Today there are Soldier Rides all across America giving our wounded warriors the confidence and support they need to recover. That's the difference a single person can make. Today we want to thank Chris Carney and everyone from the Wounded Warrior Project for reminding us of our obligations to each other as Americans. Give them a big round of applause.

And today is also a tribute to all of you, a generation that has written your own extraordinary chapter in the American story. Our Nation has been at war now for nearly 10 years. Tour after tour, year after year, you've done your duty. You've met every challenge, from the deserts of Iraq to the mountains of Afghanistan. You've risked everything. And you've carried in your hearts the memory of fallen heroes who gave everything.

You've earned your place among the greatest of generation of Americans. And we saw that again this past weekend when, thanks to the courage and precision of our forces, the terrorists who started this war and who took so many innocent lives learned that America does not forget; America will ensure that justice is done.

Of course, for our riders here today, coming home from war marked the beginning of another battle: the battle to recover, to stand again, to walk again, to relearn, in some cases, the simple things that are the true pleasures of life—dancing with your spouse or holding your children. In many ways, this might have been the toughest battle they've ever fought.