

All right? All right, we're going to take a picture.

We going to move this out? Thank you, guys.

[At this point, White House staff began to remove the podium, but were interrupted by the President, who continued his remarks as follows.]

The President. Coach, you want to say anything? Let him—[inaudible]. He won all these—

Head Coach Brian Agler. Well, first of all, President Obama, thank you for having us. It's a special moment for us and our organization, and we've got a special group here. And Lauren Jackson is not here today, but we miss her.

She's having surgery tomorrow, as a matter of fact. So our wishes with—are with her, but we'll continue on and be a strong team, and we'll be competitive this year.

So thank you so much.

The President. Thank you. Fantastic. Congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:07 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mona Lee Locke, wife of U.S. Ambassador-designate to China Gary F. Locke; and Dawn Trudeau, Lisa Brummel, and Ginny Gilder, co-owners, Anne Levinson, former co-owner, Lauren Jackson, forward/center, Swin Cash, forward, and Sue Bird, guard, Seattle Storm.

Remarks at a Reception Honoring Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month

June 29, 2011

The President. Hello, everybody! Hello. Welcome to the White House.

Nothing ruins a good party like a long speech from a politician. [Laughter] So I'm going to make a short set of remarks here. I appreciate all of you being here. I have learned a lesson: Don't follow Potomac Fever—[laughter]—because they sounded pretty good.

We've got community leaders here. We've got grassroots organizers. We've got some incredible young people here who are just doing great work all across the country, folks who are standing up against discrimination and for the rights of parents and children and partners and students—

Audience member. And spouses.

The President. —and spouses. You're fighting for the idea that everyone ought to be treated equally and everybody deserves to be able to live and love as they see fit.

Now, I don't have to tell the people in this room, we've got a ways to go in the struggle. How many people are still denied their basic rights as Americans, who are still, in particular circumstances, treated as second-class citizens or still fearful when they walk down the street or down the hall at school? Many of you have

devoted your lives to the cause of equality. So you all know that we've got more work to do.

But I think it's important for us to note the progress that's been made just in the last 2½ years. I just want everybody to think about this. It was here, in the East Room, at our first pride reception, on the 40th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, a few months after I took office, that I made a pledge, I made a commitment. I said that I would never counsel patience; it wasn't right for me to tell you to be patient any more than it was right for folks to tell African Americans to be patient in terms of their freedoms. I said it might take time to get everything we want done. But I also expected to be judged not by the promises I made, but the promises I kept.

Now, let's just think about it. I met with Judy Shepard. I promised her we'd pass an inclusive hate crimes law named after her son Matthew. And with the help of Ted Kennedy and others, we got it done and I signed the bill.

I met Janice Langbehn, who was barred from the bedside of the woman she loved as she lay dying, and I told her we were going to put a stop to that discrimination. And I issued an order so that any hospital in America that

accepts Medicare or Medicaid—and that means just about every hospital in America—has to treat gay partners just as they have to treat straight partners. Nobody in America should have to produce a legal contract.

I said we'd lift the HIV travel ban. We got that done. We put in place the first national strategy to fight HIV/AIDS.

A lot of people said we weren't going to be able to get "don't ask, don't tell" done, including a bunch of people in this room. *[Laughter]* And I just met Sue Fulton, who was part of the first class of women at West Point, and is an outstanding advocate for gay servicemembers. It took 2 years through Congress, working with Admiral Mullen and Secretary Gates and the Pentagon. We had to hold together a fragile coalition. We had to keep up the pressure. But the bottom line is, we got it done. And in a matter of weeks, not months, I expect to certify the change in policy, and we will end "don't ask, don't tell" once and for all.

I told you I was against the Defense—so-called Defense of Marriage Act. I've long supported efforts to pass a repeal through Congress. And until we reach that day, my administration is no longer defending DOMA in the courts. The law is discriminatory. It violates the Constitution. It's time for us to bring it to an end.

So bottom line is, I've met my commitments to the LGBT community. I have delivered on what I promised. Now, that doesn't mean our work is done. There are going to be times where you're still frustrated with me. *[Laughter]* I know there are going to be times where you're still frustrated at the pace of change. I understand that. I know I can count on you to let me know. *[Laughter]* This is not a shy group. *[Laughter]*

But what I also know is that I will continue to fight alongside you. And I don't just mean as an advocate. You are moms and dads who care about the schools that your children go to. You're students who are trying to figure out how to pay for going to college. You're folks who are looking for good jobs to pay the bills. You're Americans who want this country to

prosper. So those are your fights too. And the fact is, these are hard days for America. So we've got a lot of work to do to, not only on ending discrimination. We've got a lot of work to do to live up to the ideals on which we were founded and to preserve the American Dream in our time for everybody, whether they're gay or straight or lesbian or transgender.

But the bottom line is, I am hopeful. I'm hopeful because of the changes we've achieved just in these past 2 years. Think about it. It's astonishing, progress that just a few years ago people would have thought were impossible. And more than that, what gives me hope is the deeper shift that we're seeing that's a transformation not just in our laws, but in the hearts and minds of people, the progress led not by Washington, but by ordinary citizens.

It's propelled not by politics, but by love and friendship and a sense of mutual regard and mutual respect. It's playing out in legislatures like New York. It's playing out in courtrooms. It's playing out in the ballot box, as people argue and debate over how to bring about the changes where we are creating a more perfect Union. But it's also happening around water coolers. It's happening at Thanksgiving tables. It's happening on Facebook and Twitter and at PTA meetings and potluck dinners and church halls and VFW halls.

It happens when a father realizes he doesn't just love his daughter, but also her partner. It happens when a soldier tells his unit that he's gay, and they say, well, yes, we knew that—*[laughter]*—but you know, you're a good soldier. It happens when a video sparks a movement to let every single young person out there know that they're not alone. It happens when people look past their differences to understand our common humanity.

And that's not just the story of the gay rights movement. It is the story of America, and the slow, inexorable march towards a more perfect Union.

I want thank you for your contribution to that story. I'm confident we're going to keep on writing more chapters.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month

proclamation of May 31 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at an Armed Forces Farewell Tribute Honoring Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates in Arlington, Virginia June 30, 2011

Thank you very much. Admiral Mullen, thank you for your eloquent words, but also for your extraordinary service, as you near a well-deserved retirement. And thank you for four decades of incredible service, to you and Deborah.

Members of Congress, Vice President Biden, Deputy Secretary Lynn, members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Service Secretaries and distinguished guests, men and women of the finest military in the world, and most of all, Secretary Gates, Becky, Brad, and although she could not be here, I also want to acknowledge your daughter Eleanor.

When I took office, Bob Gates had already served under seven Presidents during an illustrious career that spanned four decades. He would have been forgiven if he had opted for a private life of comfort and ease. He had earned it. And when asked by a reporter whether he might stay on to serve an eighth President, he offered the answer, “Inconceivable.” [Laughter]

Why did he stay? I know there are days when Bob asks that himself. I’m sure Becky asked that also. But I believe I know the answer, because I’ve seen this man in those moments of debate and decision when a person’s character is revealed: in the Oval Office, in the Situation Room, in the theaters of war.

You see, if you look past all of Bob’s flashiness and bravado—[laughter]—and his sharp attire, his love for the Washington lime-light—[laughter]—then what you see is a man that I’ve come to know and respect, a humble American patriot, a man of common sense and decency, quite simply, one of our Nation’s finest public servants.

Bob, today you’re not only one of the longest serving Secretaries of Defense in American history, but it is also clear that you’ve been one of the best.

Why did Bob Gates serve? Our Nation is at war, and to know Bob is to know his profound sense of duty: to country, to our security, and most of all, to our men and women who get up every day and put on America’s uniform and put their lives on the line to keep us safe and to keep us free.

When the outcome of the war in Iraq was in doubt, Bob Gates presided over the extraordinary efforts that helped restore order. Over the past 2½ years, we’ve removed more than 100,000 troops from Iraq, ended our combat mission, and are responsibly ending that war.

When the fight against Al Qaida and our efforts in Afghanistan needed new focus, Bob Gates helped us devise the strategy that has finally put Al Qaida on a path to defeat and ensures that Afghanistan never again becomes a source for attacks against our Nation.

When institutional inertia kept funding systems our troops didn’t need, Bob Gates launched a war on waste, challenging conventional wisdom with courage and conviction, speaking hard truths, and saving hundreds of billions of dollars that can be invested in a 21st-century military.

Bob Gates made it his mission to make sure this Department is serving our troops in the field as well as they serve us. And today, we see the lifesaving difference he made in the mine-resistant vehicles and the unmanned aircraft, the shorter medevac times in Afghanistan, in our determination to give our wounded warriors the world-class care they deserve.

Bob, this may be your greatest legacy of all: the lives you saved and the confidence you gave our men and woman in battle, who knew that there was a Secretary of Defense who had their backs and who loved them and who