

President Kennedy didn't look up at the Moon and say: "Oh, that's too far! We can't go there." He said, "We can make it." And we did, because that's the American spirit when it is unleashed.

I know we've been going through tough times. But that's not an excuse for us to just sit back. That should be a motivation for us to try that much harder. There are too many of our fellow Americans who are hurting too bad for us to just sit by and do nothing. Now is the time for us to act. Now is the time for us to say, "Yes, we can." We don't sit back and do nothing when things aren't right. We set our minds to it, and we fix it. We make things work. We

stick with it. And that's the spirit we've got to bring right now.

So I just want to say to all of you, Virginia, I hope and I pray that all of us can get together and stay focused on what it takes to continue to make this a great nation. I don't want us to be playing politics all the time. I want us to meet this moment. I want us to get to work. And I want us to show the world once again why the United States of America is the greatest nation on Earth.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:43 p.m.

Remarks at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia October 19, 2011

Hello, Joint Base Langley-Eustis! Thank you very much.

I hate following Michelle. [Laughter] She's so good. How lucky am I to be married to Michelle Obama? See, for you men out there who are not yet married, let me explain: The whole goal is to marry up, to try to improve your gene pool. [Laughter] And we're lucky to have her as First Lady of the United States, I think.

I am thrilled to be here. I want to thank the outstanding leaders who welcomed us here today: Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley is here; General Mike Hostage is here; Colonels Kory Auch and Kevin Robbins and Reggie Austin are here. I want to give a shout-out to your outstanding senior enlisted leaders, including Chief Master Sergeants Kevin Howell and Marty Klukas. I want you to give a big round of applause to the Air Combat Command Heritage of America Band.

We've got a lot of folks in the house today. We've got Air Combat Command. We've got the 633d Air Base Wing. We've got the 1st Fighter Wing, with our amazing F-22 Raptors. I want to ride in one of those some day. [Laughter] We're going to have to set that up.

We've got the 480th Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Wing. They can cheer, but they can't talk about what they do.

[Laughter] They'd have to kill you. And I see we've got some Army too.

I want to salute Melissa Lee. Thank you so much. I want to salute Kathy Hostage. I want to salute Kristen Auch and the extraordinary military spouses who are here as well. We are inspired by them. Michelle is an honorary military spouse because she has to put up with me. [Laughter] But she and I both share such incredible admiration for the families of those who are serving in uniform.

We are grateful for our veterans who are here, including some very special airmen who taught the Nation the true meaning of service and honor and equality. We are honored to be joined by several of the legendary Tuskegee Airmen in the house. That's what heroes look like, right there.

Finally, I want to acknowledge your Governor, Bob McDonnell, and his lovely wife Maureen for joining us here today, as well as Congressman Bobby Scott, who's in the house. And I want to thank all the business leaders who have committed to hiring our Nation's heroes.

Those of you here today who have worn the uniform of these United States have done so with honor and have done so with distinction. Some of the most dangerous places on the planet, you have heroically performed and done everything that's been asked of you. Al-

ready, your generation has earned a special place in America's history. For that, you've got a grateful nation. As Michelle said, don't forget how everybody understands what you've done for this country.

Over the past decade, nearly 3 million servicemembers, like many of you, our 9/11 generation of veterans, have made the transition back to civilian life. They've taken their leadership experience, their mastery of cutting-edge technologies, their ability to adapt to changing circumstances, and they've become leaders here at home. They've become leaders in businesses all across the country.

Just think about how many veterans have led their comrades on life-and-death missions by the time they were 25. That's the kind of responsibility every business in America should want to take advantage of. Those are the Americans every company should want to hire.

Now, of course, as Michelle mentioned, there are far too many veterans who are coming home and having to struggle to find a job worthy of their talents. There are too many military spouses who have a hard time finding work after moving from base to base and city to city.

That's not right. It doesn't make any sense. It doesn't make sense for our veterans. It doesn't make sense for our businesses. It doesn't make sense for our families. And it doesn't make sense for America.

If you can save a life in Afghanistan, you can save a life in a local hospital or in a local ambulance. If you can oversee millions of dollars of assets in Iraq, you can help a business balance its books here at home. If you can juggle the demands of raising a family while a husband or wife are at war, you can juggle any demands of any job in the United States of America.

We ask our men and women in uniform to leave their families, our guardsmen and reservists to leave their jobs. We ask you to fight, to sacrifice, to risk your lives for our country. The last thing you should have to do is fight for a job when you come home. Not here, not in the United States of America.

So this has been one of my top priorities as your Commander in Chief. That's why we are

fully funding the post-GI—9/11 GI bill, which is helping more than 600,000 veterans and their family members pursue a college education. It's why we fought to make sure the bill included noncollege degrees and on-the-job training. It's why I directed the Federal Government to lead by example and hire more veterans, including 100,000 as of this summer.

And it's also why we're here today. As Michelle mentioned back in August, I challenged American businesses. I challenged them to hire or train 100,000 post-9/11 veterans or their spouses by the end of 2013. And now, just a few months later, thanks to the many extraordinary companies who are here today, we're already a quarter of the way there. Already, they've committed to train or hire 25,000 veterans and spouses in the next 2 years.

And this is incredible. It's a testament to their good business sense. It's a testament to their sense of patriotism. It's a testament to the fact that these veterans and military families are some of the most talented, trained, and experienced citizens that we have. It's a testament to these businesses' commitment to this country.

We're living through an economic crisis that partly came about because too many individuals and institutions were only thinking about their own interests, because they embraced an ethic that said, what's good enough for me is good enough. Well, the men and women of the United States Armed Forces, they've got a different ethic. You believe, your families believe, in something greater than your own ambitions. You've embraced an ethic that says the only thing that's good enough is what's best for the United States of America.

And by making a commitment to these brave men and women, the companies who are represented here today have shown that they've got that same ethic. They share in that belief that we're all in this together. Those companies who are represented here today are showing that they care about this country and those who serve it, not just with words, not just with slogans, not just with TV ads, but with the choices that you're making.

As President and Commander in Chief, I thank you for that. And I also want to thank my extraordinary wife and Dr. Jill Biden, our Second Lady, for leading the effort to support and honor our military families and making today possible. Give them a big round of applause. She does all this, and she looks cute. [*Laughter*] That's right. [*Laughter*]

But considering how many veterans are out there looking for work, we can't stop with today's announcement. We've got more work to do. Some of you probably know that last month I sent Congress a piece of legislation called the "American Jobs Act." Now, this is a bill that's fully paid for, and it's filled with the kind of proposals that traditionally Democrats and Republicans have supported in the past: tax cuts for every small worker—every worker and small business in America, funding to rebuild our schools and put our teachers back in the classroom so our children can get the education they deserve, a tax credit for small businesses that hire America's veterans.

The idea here is even though so many companies who are here today have committed to hiring our Nation's heroes, we want to make it even easier for the businesses that haven't made that commitment yet. It's the right thing to do for our veterans, and it's the right thing to do for America. You give smaller companies who may be interested in hiring, but are having a tough time—give them a tax break if they hire a veteran. Give them an even bigger tax break if they hire a disabled veteran.

Now, so far Congress hasn't acted on this proposal. But I want you to know that I'm pushing them a little bit. I'm going to keep pushing them a little bit. In the coming weeks, we're going to hold a series of votes in the Senate on individual pieces of my jobs bill. And one of the votes I'm going to urge Members of Congress to take is on whether or not they think it's a good idea to give companies an incentive to hire the men and women who have risked their lives for our country. And I'm hopeful we can get both parties on board for this idea.

When I first proposed this idea in a joint session of Congress, people stood up and ap-

plauded on both sides of the aisle. So when it comes for a vote in the Senate, I expect to get votes from both sides of the aisle. Don't just applaud about it, vote for it. Vote for it.

Standing up for our veterans is not a Democratic responsibility or a Republican responsibility, it is an American responsibility. It is an obligation for every citizen who enjoys the freedoms that our heroes defend. And it's time for us to meet those obligations here today.

This generation of veterans has learned that the challenges don't end in Kandahar or Baghdad. They continue right here at home. And today, we're saying to those veterans who fought for us, now we are fighting for you—for more jobs, for more security, for the opportunity to keep your families strong, the chance to keep America competitive economically in the 21st century.

These are tough times for America, but we faced tougher times before. And nobody is tougher than the men and women of America's Armed Forces. You all don't quit. Whenever we faced a challenge in this country, whether it was a depression or a Civil War or when our Union was at stake, our harbor was bombed, our country was attacked on that September day, we did not falter. We did not turn back. We picked ourselves up. We pushed ourselves forward. We got on with the task of fulfilling the ideas that so many Americans have struggled for and sacrificed for and given their lives for.

And that's the spirit all of you represent. That's the spirit our whole Nation needs right now. You remind us as a nation that no problem is too hard and no challenge is too great and no destiny is beyond our reach. So let's meet this moment. Let's get together and show the world just why it is that the United States of America is the greatest nation on Earth.

God bless you. God bless our veterans. God bless the men and women in uniform, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:41 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. G. Michael Hostage III, USAF, commander, and CMS Martin S. Klukas, command chief master ser-

geant, Air Combat Command; Col. Korvin D. Auch, USAF, commander, Col. Reggie L. Austin, USA, vice commander, and CMS Kevin L. Howell, USAF, command chief master sergeant, 633d Air Base Wing; Col. Kevin J. Rob-

bins, USAF, commander, First Fighter Wing; and Col. Melissa R. Lee, USA, 335th Signal Command Theater. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks at Fire Station 9 in North Chesterfield, Virginia October 19, 2011

The President. Hello, everybody!

Audience members. Hello!

The President. It is good to be in Chesterfield County. Thank you so much for the wonderful welcome.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. Well, I love you back. [Laughter]

It is great to be in Virginia. It is great to be here at Fire Station Number 9 with some of Chesterfield's finest.

Audience member. Hooah!

The President. There you go.

First of all, I want to thank Chief Urquhart not only for the introduction, but for the great service that he's been providing for 22 years, is it?

Chesterfield Fire and EMS Battalion Chief Vincent A. Urquhart. Yes, sir.

The President. Twenty-two years. Give him a big round of applause. And I want to say thank you to the chief of Chesterfield County Fire and EMS, Loy Senter. Give him a big round of applause. I appreciate opening up the firehouse here today. But if the bell goes off, just ignore me, do your thing. [Laughter]

We've been on a little road trip over the last few days. I've got a pretty nice ride; it's not your normal RV. And it's parked outside. We've been seeing some sights; we've been eating some good food. Most importantly, we've been getting a chance to hear from the American people. And it's always nice to spend a few days outside of Washington, because it doesn't seem like your voices are being heard the way they need to be heard in Washington.

Times are tough all over, and a lot of folks here in Virginia have spent months looking for work. Others are just barely making it, and they're having to make hard choices, and

they're having to make sacrifices. It's hard obviously watching friends or family or neighbors who are struggling. And all of us, I think, are mindful of the fact that the economy is not where it needs to be.

I think most people understand that the economy and its problems didn't happen overnight, so we're not going to solve all these challenges overnight. It's going to take time to rebuild the kind of America in which everybody has a fair shot, everybody is paying their fair share, where responsibility is rewarded, where the deck is not stacked against middle class families—in fact, we have a middle class that is growing again and solid again and secure again, and people who are striving to get in the middle class have ladders of opportunity. That's what we're striving for.

We're going to keep on fighting, we're going to keep on working to make sure that we've got the kind of economy that works for everybody and not just some. And here's the good news: There are things we can do right now that will make a difference. There are things that we can do right now that will put people back to work. There are things we can do right now that will make sure that we are competitive in this global economy.

Some of the challenges we face we're going to have to work on for a while: improving our schools, making sure that we've got the best infrastructure in the world, making sure that we're bringing down our deficit, making sure that we're continuing to invest in science and technology. But there are things we can do right now that will make a difference.

And that's why I sent to Congress the "American Jobs Act." It's a jobs bill—[applause]—you can go ahead and clap. Go ahead, nothing wrong with it.