

work in hospitals and community health centers. We reformed the student loan process so more young people can get out of debt faster. And we're going to keep announcing more changes like these on a regular basis.

These steps will make a difference. But they won't take the place of the bold action we need from Congress to get this economy moving again. And that's why I need all of you to make your voices heard. Tell Congress to stop playing politics and start taking action on jobs. If we want to rebuild an economy where every American has the chance to get ahead,

then we're going to need every American to get involved. That's how real change has always happened, and that's how it'll happen today.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:30 p.m. on October 28 in the Library at the White House for broadcast on October 29. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 28, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on October 29.

## Remarks at the National Italian American Foundation Gala October 29, 2011

*The President.* Hello, hello, hello! Thank you so much. *Viva Italia!* Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you, Nancy, for that generous introduction. I am biased, but I think Nancy was one of the best Speakers of the House this country ever had. She was no doubt the best Italian American Speaker of the House we ever had. And I believe that she will be the best Speaker of the House again in 2013.

Now, I was just out passing out Halloween candy—[laughter]—for the kids who were coming to the White House, but now that Malia and Sasha are with their friends, they do not notice that I'm gone. [Laughter] They're now getting to that age, they don't care. [Laughter] They're pleased that I didn't embarrass them too much during the brief time I was with them.

So I am honored to be here to celebrate National Italian American Heritage Month and to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Italian unification. And I want to congratulate the president, the chairman, all of you who are doing so much work to keep that heritage alive for the next generation. And I'm grateful for your generous welcome.

Now, I want to make a confession right off the bat. I do not, in fact, have any Italian ancestry. [Laughter] Not all of us are that lucky. [Laughter] I can't sing like Frankie Avalon. [Laughter] Where's Frankie? I can't—he looks

the same! Unbelievable. [Laughter] I can't cook as well as any of your grandmothers. [Laughter] Michelle won't let me have seconds or thirds anymore. [Laughter] So all I've got to offer is a last name that ends in a vowel. [Laughter] This is all I've got.

Nevertheless, it is good to see so many *amici*. [Laughter] I see many proud sons and daughters of the old country. I see a couple dozen proud Italian American Members of Congress here tonight. Let me offer a special welcome to the guests who join us from Italy this evening, including Italy's Ambassador to the United States, Ambassador Terzi. Thank you so much for your outstanding work. His counterpart, here as well, and he is doing an outstanding job representing us, our Ambassador to Italy, David Thorne. Italy is one of our strongest allies, a fellow founding member of NATO. We look forward to our work together with them, and we're going to be joining them next week at the G-20 to make a series of decisions that are going to be very important for the world economy.

I've also made sure to keep close the advice of Italian Americans by asking some of them to serve in my Cabinet. And as Nancy mentioned, we could not be prouder of Janet Napolitano, who is keeping us safe every single day, and my outstanding Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta. And as was mentioned, even though she's not here these evening, Jill Biden is proud to

come from a long line of Giacoppas. And so she sends her regards.

Tonight I think it's also important for us to honor the proud service of the countless Italian Americans who have fought for this country since our founding, and who wear the uniform today, from the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Ray Odierno, to a hero whom I was proud to bestow our Nation's highest military decoration, and was the first one in a very long time to personally receive the Medal of Honor, Staff Sergeant Salvatore Giunta.

So in a sense, every American joins us in celebrating this anniversary of Italian unification. What would America be without the contributions of Italy and Italian Americans? What would we be without the daring voyages of Columbus and Verrazano and Vespucci? What would our science and technology be without not just DaVinci and Galileo, but Fermi? What would movies and music be without the magic of Capra, Sinatra, or Sophia Loren, my favorite. [Laughter] I'm just saying. [Laughter]

What would sports be without the guts and the grit of DiMaggio and Lombardi and La Russa?

*Audience member.* Piazza!

*The President.* Piazza! [Laughter] The White Sox could still use you. [Laughter] What would this city be without the influence of Roman thought and architecture, the Piccirilli brothers who—their work on the Lincoln Memorial—Brumidi's magnificent touch on the Capitol?

Although, I must say, it might be nice to know what our politics would—like without the contribution of Machiavelli. [Laughter] We—that's been internalized a little too much here in Washington. [Laughter]

America would not be what it is today without the unique contributions and the uncommon pride of Italian Americans. And like so many other groups—as Nancy said, like so many other groups, the Italians came to America in search of opportunity. They came with little. Very few were wealthy. But they came with an unwavering faith in God, an unflinching commitment to family, and an unlikely hope in the possibilities of America, the belief that in

this country, you could be prosperous, you could be free, you could think and talk and worship as you please. It was a place where you could make it if you try.

And it wasn't always easy. Italians weren't always welcome. And when we think about today's immigrants, we have to remind ourselves that those of us who now feel comfortable in our American identity, that that wasn't always the case in the past. The opportunities our forebears hoped for wasn't always within reach right away. But they did not wait for anybody to hand it to them. They built new lives for themselves, and at the same time, they ended up building an entire nation. They enriched our heritage and our culture with their own. They helped forge the very promise of this country: that success is possible if you're willing to work for it. And those efforts built a better America for all of us.

Everybody in this room, just about everybody, has an ancestor or lots of ancestors who fit that story of transplanted roots that somehow grew in American soil, of families that struggled and sacrificed so that our families might know something better. Of parents who said, maybe I can't speak English, but I'll make sure my child can speak English; they might teach English someday. I might not have an education, but I'm going to make sure my child has an education. I might perform backbreaking labor today, but someday my child can be a Senator or a Supreme Court Justice or Speaker of the House or a Secretary in the Cabinet or President of the United States.

So that's what binds us together. That is what has always made our country unique. We've always been and we will always be a nation of immigrants from all over the world. And out of many, somehow we're able to forge ourselves into one people; and this is the place where the highest hopes can be reached and the deepest and most sincere dreams can be made real.

And that's the legacy our forebears left for us, and that's what we now have to leave to our children. These are tough times right now, and millions of Americans are hurting. Millions are without work, and those who have work are

still all too often struggling to get by. And for many, the dream that brought so many Italian Americans to these shores feels like it's slipping away.

So we've got work to do. But while these times are hard, we have to remind ourselves they're not as hard as those that earlier generations faced. And the legacy of their courage and their commitment and their determination and their generosity and their willingness to think about the next generation—we have to be just as passionate and just as selfless as they were to keep that dream alive and make sure our children inherit futures that are big and bright and that this country is as generous as it's always been.

And that's what we have to commit to ourselves tonight. So on behalf of all Americans, I

want to thank you for everything that the Italian American community has done, everything that you've done to contribute to the chronicles and the character of the greatest nation on Earth.

Thank you, so much. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:28 p.m. at the Washington Hilton and Towers hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Joseph V. Del Raso, president, and Jerry Colangelo, chairman, National Italian American Foundation; Italy's Ambassador to the U.S. Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata; Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden; Anthony La Russa, Jr., manager, Major League Baseball's St. Louis Cardinals; and former Major League Baseball player Michael J. Piazza.

## Remarks on Signing an Executive Order To Reduce Prescription Drug Shortages and an Exchange With Reporters October 31, 2011

*The President.* Well, thank you all for being here.

The United States, I think rightly, takes pride on having the most innovative and most successful drug industry in the world, and as a consequence the health of a lot of people, both here in the United States and around the world, is actively promoted. But as we also know, occasionally there are problems in our manufacture and distribution of drugs and how accessible they are to people.

And recently, we have seen how the potential of drug shortages for vital drugs, including some cancers, can really have a adverse impact on patients and those who are caring for patients. Sometimes, we run out of or run low on certain types of drugs, and that drives up prices and it increases patient risk.

And I've got a couple of people here beside me who have had to navigate this problem. Jay Cuetara knows what it's like. In August, the center where he was receiving chemotherapy ran out of the drug being used to treat his cancer. And when that happens, you have pharmacy managers like Bonnie Frawley who have to

scramble to make sure that their patients can somehow find the lifesaving medications that are necessary.

So over the last 5 years, the number of these drug shortages has nearly tripled. And even though the FDA has successfully prevented an actual crisis, this is one of those slow-rolling problems that could end up resulting in disaster for patients and health care facilities all across the country.

Congress has been trying since February to do something about this. It has not yet been able to get it done. And it is the belief of this administration, as well as folks like Bonnie and Jay, that we can't wait for action on the Hill, we've got to go ahead and move forward.

So as a consequence, I'm going to be signing an Executive order today that directs the FDA to step up work to reduce the drug shortages and protect consumers. We'll still be calling on Congress to pass a bipartisan bill that will provide additional tools to the FDA and others that can make a difference. But until they act, we will go ahead and move.