

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.

As part of this, we're going to require that drug companies let us know earlier about the potential for drug shortages so that we can respond successfully. We're going to make sure that if we find out that prices are being driven up because shortages are being made worse by manipulations of companies or distributors, that we are making sure that we stop those practices. We're going to further empower the FDA and the Department of Justice to investigate any kinds of abuses that would lead to drug shortages.

So there's a combination of tools that are going to be contained in this Executive order that can make sure that lifesaving drugs are available, and if we start seeing shortages, that we're able to catch those ahead of time so that Bonnie doesn't have to try to scramble as a pharmacy manager, and Jay obviously doesn't have to scramble as a patient.

This is something that needs to be done. I want to thank the leadership of both our FDA administrator and our Health and Human Services Secretary for having done outstanding work in preparing this Executive order. And again, I still urge Congress to move forward and build on this Executive order so that we

can provide even more tools for our agencies. And I want to thank Bonnie and Jay for being here and for helping inspire us to get this done.

All right. With that I'm going to sign this bill—or this Executive order—excuse me.

[At this point, the President signed the Executive order.]

*The President.* There you go. Thank you very much, everybody. Appreciate it.

*President's Meeting With Quartet Representative to the Middle East Tony Blair*

*Q.* Tony Blair—can you tell us anything about the meeting with Tony Blair this morning?

*The President.* I enjoyed our meeting with Tony Blair.

Thank you. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:50 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Margaret A. Hamburg, Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## Statement on the Presidential Election in Kyrgyzstan

*October 31, 2011*

I congratulate the people and Government of Kyrgyzstan for yesterday's democratic and peaceful Presidential election. In casting their ballots, the Kyrgyz people have taken an important and courageous step on the path of democracy and demonstrated their commitment to an orderly and open transition of power. I commend President Otunbaeva for her leadership and for her dedication to a vision of peace-

ful, democratic change. I also congratulate the many Kyrgyz leaders in Government and civil society who worked to realize this moment of promise. The people of Kyrgyzstan will have a partner in the United States as they undertake the hard work of building upon the democratic gains of the past 18 months and realizing a democratic, prosperous, and just future for all Kyrgyz citizens.

## Remarks on Signing a Proclamation Establishing the Fort Monroe National Monument and an Exchange With Reporters

*November 1, 2011*

*The President.* Well, one of the great pleasures of this job, but also one of my responsibilities, is making sure that we are preserving

our Nation's treasures so that they can be enjoyed by our children, our grandchildren, our great-grandchildren. And over the years, over a