

Statement on Representative Barney Frank's Decision Not To Seek Reelection *November 28, 2011*

This country has never had a Congressman like Barney Frank, and the House of Representatives will not be the same without him. For over 30 years, Barney has been a fierce advocate for the people of Massachusetts and Americans everywhere who needed a voice. He has worked tirelessly on behalf of families and businesses and helped make housing more affordable. He has stood up for the rights of LGBT Americans and fought to end discrimi-

nation against them. And it is only thanks to his leadership that we were able to pass the most sweeping financial reform in history designed to protect consumers and prevent the kind of excessive risk-taking that led to the financial crisis from ever happening again. Barney's passion and his quick wit will be missed in the halls of Congress, and Michelle and I join the people of the Bay State in thanking him for his years of service.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Mark Rutte of the Netherlands *November 29, 2011*

President Obama. Hello, everybody. It is wonderful to welcome Prime Minister Rutte and his delegation to the White House.

Part of the reason we wanted to make this meeting happen is because we have no stronger ally than the Netherlands. They consistently punch above their weight on a whole range of issues related to global security. Prime Minister Rutte has been a strong supporter of NATO, as was his predecessor, and we've been able to work together on a whole host of issues. They've made an enormous contribution to Afghanistan; they made a very important contribution to Libya, on anti-piracy. On a whole host of issues, the Netherlands consistently is supportive of efforts for our joint security, and we're very grateful for that.

In addition, despite the fact that the Netherlands doesn't have a huge population, they are one of our most important trading partners. The economic relationship between our two countries is deep; it is broad. We are one of the largest investors in the Netherlands. The Netherlands in turn is one of the largest investors in the United States. And so given both of our interests in promoting commerce, growth, and jobs, it is very important that we coordinate with the Netherlands.

On that score, obviously, we're both concerned about the situation in the euro zone, in

which the Netherlands has a very significant voice. And I'm going to be interested in hearing from Mark his views in terms of how this issue gets resolved. Because, as I said yesterday during my meeting with Presidents Van Rompuy and Barroso, we have a very deep interest here in the United States in making sure that that process is resolved so that we can continue to grow our economy and put people back to work here at home.

In addition, we're going to be talking about a wide range of global issues, from the Middle East to the situation in Iran, where we both share a deep commitment to making sure that Iran abides by its international obligations, including in the nuclear area.

On that score, I think it's important for me to just note that all of us, I think, are deeply disturbed by the crashing of the English Embassy—the Embassy of the United Kingdom in Iran. That kind of behavior is not acceptable. And I strongly urge the Iranian Government to hold those who are responsible to task. They have a responsibility to protect diplomatic outposts. That is a basic international obligation that all countries need to observe. And for rioters, essentially, to be able to overrun the Embassy and set it on fire is an indication that the Iranian Government is not taking its international obligations seriously.

And so obviously, we're deeply concerned about that situation, and we expect to see some sort of definitive action sometime very quickly.

Overall, though, I'm pleased to say that the relationship between our two countries is extremely strong, as reflected not only in the relationship between our governments, but also the people-to-people contacts. And I'm hoping that I have an opportunity at some point during my Presidency to visit the Netherlands, because—

Prime Minister Rutte. Yes, yes. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. —because all reports are that it is beautiful and the people are wonderful, and I look forward to enjoying some Dutch hospitality sometime soon.

So, Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Rutte. Yes. Well, thank you so much. I'm glad to be here and to meet once again with you, Barack Obama. And I hope very much to welcome you to the Netherlands. That would be a great honor and a great opportunity.

The relationship between our countries is very strong. It goes back a long time. And I came to the United States basically to discuss three issues: jobs, jobs, and jobs.

President Obama. Those are good issues to discuss.

Prime Minister Rutte. These are the main issues at the moment.

And first of all of course, our excellent economic ties—bilateral economic ties: 625,000 Americans are at work today because of our direct investment in the U.S. and also our trade

relationship. And the total investment of the U.S. in the Netherlands is more than the U.S. investment in Brazil, Russia, India, and China combined. And I believe we can work very hard to have this job engine grow even more powerful.

Secondly, we'll discuss, no doubt, the euro zone. It's the intention of my government to keep the euro zone intact, to keep the euro intact, to fight the debt crisis, and at the same time, get growth and job growth going again in the European Union, which is vital for our own future.

And thirdly, we will discuss, I have no doubt, the upcoming NATO summit, in your hometown, in Chicago—

President Obama. It will be a wonderful visit.

Prime Minister Rutte. —next year and our transatlantic alliance and international stability and, of course, the situation in the Arab region, where we pull on the same side, where we are working on progress and democracy in the Arab region and in the Middle East.

President Obama. Good.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:33 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende of the Netherlands; President Herman Van Rompuy of the European Council; and President Jose Manuel Durao Barroso of the European Commission.

Remarks at Scranton High School in Scranton, Pennsylvania November 30, 2011

The President. Hello, Scranton! Thank you. It is good to be back in Scranton. Go, Knights! The—[*applause*]—it is good to be here. Thank you, Principal Schaeffer, for letting us hold this little assembly here at the high school. [*Laughter*] The principal was bragging about both the basketball team and the football team. I understand they're—[*applause*]—this—right up there? All right.

Thank you, Donna, for the wonderful invitation. We had a chance to visit in the Festas' living room, and just a wonderful family, and their kids are doing great. So I'm really, really proud to be with all of you.

Audience member. Can you come to my house? [*Laughter*]

The President. What did she say? You want—next time, your house. [*Laughter*] All right?