

ing no rules at all. And that space is what Joe is going to be working on to try to identify where we can find some common ground.

So I've got—I'm going to take one last question. Go ahead, Jake [Jake Tapper, ABC News].

The President's Policy Agenda/Gun Control

Q. It seems to a lot of observers that you made the political calculation in 2008, in your first term, and in 2012 not to talk about gun violence. You had your position on renewing the ban on semiautomatic rifles that then-Senator Biden put into place, but you didn't do much about it. This is not the first issue—the first incident of horrific gun violence of your 4 years. Where have you been?

The President. Well, here's where I've been, Jake. I've been President of the United States dealing with the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, an auto industry on the verge of collapse, two wars. I don't think I've been on vacation.

And so I think all of us have to do some reflection on how we prioritize what we do here in

Washington. And as I said on Sunday, this should be a wake-up call for all of us to say that if we are not getting right the need to keep our children safe, then nothing else matters. And it's my commitment to make sure that we do everything can—we can to keep our children safe.

A lot of things go in—are involved in that, Jake. So making sure they've got decent health care and making sure they've got a good education, making sure that their parents have jobs—those are all relevant as well. Those aren't just sort of side issues. But there's no doubt that this has to be a central issue. And that's exactly why I'm confident that Joe is going to take this so seriously over the next couple months.

All right. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:02 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney. He also referred to the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994.

Statement on the Election in South Korea

December 19, 2012

I congratulate President-elect Park Geun-hye on her success in the election held on Wednesday. I look forward to working closely with the Park administration to further enhance our extensive cooperation with the Republic of Korea on a wide range of important bilateral, regional, and global issues. The U.S.-R.O.K. al-

liance serves as a linchpin of peace and security in the Asia-Pacific, and our two nations share a global partnership with deep economic, security, and people-to-people ties. I also wish to reiterate my admiration for all that President Lee has done to strengthen U.S.-R.O.K. relations and promote a global Korea.

Remarks at a Reception for Members of the Diplomatic Corps

December 19, 2012

Thank you. Well, good evening, everyone. It is wonderful to see all of you.

I want to publicly thank Deputy Secretary Bill Burns. For those of you who don't know, Bill is only the second career diplomat in American history to rise to the level of Deputy Secretary. It is a tribute to Bill's extraordinary skills. I first met him when I was a new

Senator and I traveled to Moscow. And he was then the Ambassador in Moscow, and he immediately impressed me. One of these guys who doesn't speak loud, but actually has something to say—[laughter]—which is hard to find in Washington. In Washington, you have a lot of folks who speak loud and have nothing to say. [Laughter]