

compete in a high-tech economy. That's why we're working to recruit and train 100,000 new teachers in the fields of the future: in science and technology and engineering and math, where we are most likely to fall behind.

We've got to redesign our high schools so that a diploma puts our kids on a path to a good job. We want to reward schools that develop new partnerships with colleges and employers and create classes that focus on science and technology and engineering and math, all the things that can help our kids fill those jobs that are there right now, but also in the future.

And obviously, once our kids graduate from high school, we've got to make sure that skyrocketing costs don't price middle class families out of a higher education or saddle them with unsustainable debt. I mean, some of the younger teachers who are here, they've chosen a career path that is terrific, but let's face it, you don't go into teaching to get rich. *[Laughter]* And it is very important that we make sure that they can afford to get a great education and can choose to be a teacher, can choose to be in a teaching profession.

So we've worked to make college more affordable for millions of students and families already through tax credits and grants and loans that go farther than before. But taxpayers can't keep subsidizing ever-escalating price tags for higher education. At some point you run out of money. So colleges have to do their part. And colleges that don't do enough to keep costs in check should get less Federal support, so that we're incentivizing colleges to think about how to keep their costs down.

And just yesterday we released what we're calling a new College Scorecard that gives par-

ents and students all the information they need to compare schools by value and affordability so that they can make the best choice. And any interested parent, by the way, who's out there can check it out at whitehouse.gov.

Now, in the end, that's what this is all about: giving our kids the best possible shot at life; equipping them with the skills, education that a 21st-century economy demands; giving them every chance to go as far as their hard work and God-given potential will take them.

That's not just going to make sure that they do well, that will strengthen our economy and our country for all of us. Because if their generation prospers, if they've got the skills they need to get a good job, that means businesses want to locate here. And it also means, by the way, they're well-equipped as citizens with the critical thinking skills that they need in order to help guide our democracy. We'll all prosper that way. That's what we're fighting for. They're the ones who are going to write that next great chapter in the American story, and we've got to make sure that we're providing that investment.

I am so proud of every single teacher who is here who has dedicated their lives to making sure those kids get a good start in life. I want to make sure that I'm helping, and I want to make sure that the country is behind you every step of the way.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:28 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Kasim Reed of Atlanta, GA; and Mary McMahan, teacher, College Heights Early Childhood Learning Center in Decatur, GA.

Statement on Senator Frank R. Lautenberg's Decision Not To Seek Reelection *February 14, 2013*

Frank is a steadfast champion of the people of New Jersey. Throughout his time in the Senate, Frank has fought tirelessly for workers, veterans, members of our military and their families, and immigrants, and he contin-

ues to make extraordinary contributions to our Nation's safety and the health and welfare of our citizens. His service in World War II is a testament to his character and deep commitment to public service. I look forward to

working with Frank on critical issues before us these next 2 years, and Michelle and I wish him and Bonnie all the best.

NOTE: The statement referred to Bonnie Englehardt Lautenberg, wife of Sen. Lautenberg.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Giorgio Napolitano of Italy February 15, 2013

President Obama. Well, I want to extend the warmest greetings to my good friend, President Napolitano, on a return visit to the White House. I think it's entirely appropriate the day after Valentine's Day, since we know that St. Valentine was associated with Italy, that we had a chance to express our love for the Italian people and my high regard for President Napolitano.

He has been an extraordinary leader not just in Italy, but also in Europe. We've had occasion to meet many times in which we have expressed again and again the importance of the transatlantic relationship and the deep and abiding friendship and connection and bond between the Italian people and the American people.

And obviously, we constantly talk about the extraordinary connection that derives from the tradition of Italian Americans making enormous contributions to the United States. President Napolitano has been so gracious in talking about his memories of the role that America played in liberating Europe and instituting the kinds of democratic practices and traditions that have served both sides of the Atlantic so well for so many years.

I want to thank the people of Italy for their enormous contributions to the NATO alliance. Italy is one of our biggest contributors in Afghanistan and makes enormous sacrifices. They welcome and host our troops on Italian soil. The economic bonds between our two countries are very significant. And in all this, President Napolitano has shown himself to be a visionary leader who has helped to guide and steer Europe towards greater unification, but always with a strong transatlantic relationship in mind.

The last point I would make is that President Napolitano has also just been a good personal friend, a tremendous host to my family

when they visited Italy. You should know, Mr. President, that one of the few things that my daughters asked me after I was reelected was, does this mean we can go back to Italy again? So I confirmed to them that any excuse we can find to visit Italy, we shall return, hopefully.

And this will give us an opportunity to not only visit, but also to talk about some important issues, including the world economy. I announced at the State of the Union this week my interest and intention in pursuing a U.S.-European Union free trade agreement, which I know is something of great interest to the President. I'll be interested in hearing from him how he anticipates the elections and government formation in Italy and what implications that has for the larger European project. And I'm sure we'll have a chance to talk about some national security issues as well.

But my main message is to say, thank you for your extraordinary service, and I'm so glad that we had an opportunity to visit once again before you move on to even better things—I assume they're at least having more fun than politics.

President Napolitano. Thank you very much. I don't need to say how deeply touched I am by the generous appreciation we just heard of my long public service in the interest of Italy, of our alliance, of our common cause. And I am grateful to President Obama for inviting me to pay a farewell visit at the White House and for giving me the opportunity of an exchange of ideas before I conclude my Presidential mandate.

I am sure that we will be able today to express a common sense of confidence in the future of Italy and of U.S.-Italy relations, more generally speaking, in the future of our joint commitment to advance global peace, democracy, and human rights.