

Statement on the Death of Harvey L. “Van” Cliburn, Jr.
March 3, 2013

This week, we mark the passing of Van Cliburn, one of the most talented pianists of the last century and a musical artist of rare distinction. At the young age of 23, Mr. Cliburn swept the world off its feet with his winning performance at the first International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, and he quickly became a beloved ambassador of American culture around the world, especially in the former Soviet Union. His music transcended

the challenges of international politics and contributed to an unlikely thaw in cold war relations. He was truly a man of his moment. Like every President since Harry Truman, I enjoyed the privilege of hearing Mr. Cliburn play, and I am confident that the enduring beauty of his art will sustain his legendary status for years to come. Michelle and I send our thoughts and prayers to Mr. Cliburn’s loved ones.

Remarks on the Nomination of Ernest J. Moniz To Be Secretary of Energy, Regina McCarthy To Be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and Sylvia Mathews Burwell To Be Director of the Office of Management and Budget
March 4, 2013

All right. This is a serious group. *[Laughter]* Everybody, have a seat, have a seat.

Well, good morning, everybody. This afternoon I’ll hold my first Cabinet meeting of my second term. And there will be some new faces, and there will be some familiar faces in new jobs. But there will also be some seats waiting to be filled on a permanent basis. And today I’m announcing my plan to nominate three outstanding individuals to help us tackle some of our most important challenges.

One of those challenges is building on the work that we’ve done to control our own energy future while reducing pollution that contributes to climate change. And few people have played more of a role in addressing these issues than current Secretary of Energy Steven Chu. Steven has helped us to speed the transition to more sustainable sources of energy. He’s given more of our brightest young scientists the opportunity to pursue the ideas that will shape our future. So I could not be more grateful to Steve for the incredible contribution that he’s made to this country.

And now that he’s decided to leave Washington for sunny California, I’m proud to nominate another brilliant scientist to take his

place, Mr. Ernie Moniz. So there’s Ernie right there.

Now, the good news is that Ernie already knows his way around the Department of Energy. He is a physicist by training, but he also served as Under Secretary of Energy under President Clinton. Since then, he’s directed MIT’s Energy Initiative, which brings together prominent thinkers and energy companies to develop the technologies that can lead us to more energy independence and also to new jobs.

Most importantly, Ernie knows that we can produce more energy and grow our economy while still taking care of our air, our water, and our climate. And so I could not be more pleased to have Ernie join us. And he will be joined in that effort by my nominee to lead the Environmental Protection Agency.

Over the last 4 years, Lisa Jackson and her team at the EPA have helped us to reduce emissions of the dangerous carbon pollution that causes climate change, put in place the toughest new pollution standards in two decades. Lisa is now ready for a well-deserved break. And I want to very much thank Bob Perciasepe, who’s not only been a great Deputy Administrator, but has also been acting as

the Acting Administrator. So please, Bob—everybody give Bob a big round of applause.

As we move forward, I think there is nobody who can do a better job in filling Lisa's shoes permanently than my nominee who's standing beside me here, Gina McCarthy.

Now, you wouldn't know from talking to her, but Gina is from Boston. [*Laughter*] And one of her proudest moments was yelling "Play ball!" at Fenway Park before a Red Sox game. But Gina has got plenty more to be proud of. As a top environmental official in Massachusetts and Connecticut, she helped design programs to expand energy efficiency and promote renewable energy. As Assistant EPA Administrator, Gina has focused on practical, cost-effective ways to keep our air clean and our economy growing. She's earned a reputation as a straight shooter. She welcomes different points of views. I'm confident that she's going to do an outstanding job leading the EPA.

So these two over here, they're going to be making sure that we're investing in American energy, that we're doing everything that we can to combat the threat of climate change, that we're going to be creating jobs and economic opportunity in the first place. They are going to be a great team. And these are some of my top priorities going forward.

But as President, one of the things you learn very quickly is that it's not enough just to talk a big game; the real test is whether your priorities are reflected in a budget. And that's where the rubber hits the road. That's where my third nominee comes in.

Since I took office, Jeff Zients has served as America's first Chief Performance Officer and the Deputy Director of the management—Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget. He's made our Government more efficient. He's saved taxpayers a lot of money. He's stepped in as Acting Director of OMB not once, but twice, including leading up to the fiscal cliff. So there's no question that Jeff's skill and versatility have served the American people very well. I expect it will continue to serve us well in the future.

In the meantime, I am confident that my nominee for OMB Director, Sylvia Mathews

Burwell, is the right person to continue Jeff's great work.

In the 1990s, when she was, what, 19— [*laughter*]—Sylvia served under Jack Lew as Deputy Director of OMB, part of a team that presided over three budget surpluses in a row. Later, she helped the Gates Foundation grow into a global force for good, and then she helped the Walmart Foundation expand its charitable work. So Sylvia knows her way around a budget.

But as the granddaughter of Greek immigrants, she also understands that our goal when we put together a budget is not just to make the numbers add up. Our goal is also to reignite the true engine of economic growth in this country, and that is a strong and growing middle class; to offer ladders of opportunity for anybody willing to climb them.

Sylvia's mom is here. And I—Sylvia loves to talk about her parents growing up in West Virginia and the values that they instilled in her as educators. And I think that reflects everything that Sylvia now does. And so I'm absolutely confident that she's going to do a great job at OMB. And those values are especially important to remember now, as we continue to try and find a way forward in light of the budget cuts that are already starting to cost us jobs and hurt our economy.

As I said before, the American people are resilient. And I know that Jeff and Sylvia will do everything in their power to blunt the impact of these cuts on businesses and middle class families. But eventually, a lot of people are going to feel some pain. That's why we've got to keep on working to reduce our deficit in a balanced way, an approach that's supported by the majority of the American people, including a majority of Republicans. And I'm confident that we can get there if people of good will come together.

So I want to thank Steve and Lisa and Jeff once more for their outstanding service, for all the great work that they've done in this administration over the last several years. I want to thank Ernie, Gina, and Sylvia, and their families, for agreeing to take on these big roles.

I hope the Senate will confirm them as soon as possible, because we've got a lot of work to do and we cannot afford delay. But I can promise you that as soon as the Senate gives them the go ahead, they're going to hit the ground running and they're going to help make America a stronger and more prosperous country.

Remarks Prior to a Cabinet Meeting *March 4, 2013*

Well, this is my 17th meeting with my Cabinet; the first one in a second term. And obviously, we've got some familiar faces, we have some new faces, we have some familiar faces in new positions. I want to make sure that I say thank you to all of you for the work that you've already done and the work that you're going to be doing.

I want to welcome Jack Lew, former Chief of Staff and OMB Director and now Secretary of the Treasury. We're thrilled to have him in that position. I want to welcome Mr. Chuck Hagel, who's in the position of Secretary of Defense. And to all of you, I appreciate everything that you've done.

Obviously, we're going to be spending some time talking about the potential impact of the sequester on all the agencies and missions across the board. It is an area of deep concern, and I think everybody knows where I stand on this issue. We are going to manage it as best we can, to try to minimize the impacts on American families, but it's not the right way for us to go about deficit reduction.

It makes sense for us to take a balanced approach that takes a long view and doesn't reduce our commitment to things like education and basic research that will help us grow over the long term. And so I will continue to seek out partners on the other side of the aisle so that we can create the kind of balanced approach of spending cuts, revenues, entitlement reform that everybody knows is the right way to do things.

In the meantime, we're going to do our best to make sure that our agencies have the support they need to try to make some very difficult decisions, understanding that there are go-

So thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:27 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Cleo Mathews, mother of Director-designate Burwell.

ing to be families and communities that are hurt and that this will slow our growth. It will mean lower employment in the United States than otherwise would have been.

But we can manage through it, and we're going to rely on the outstanding leadership of all these agencies to make sure that we do whatever it is that we need to get done to help America's families.

Now, my agenda obviously is broader than just the sequester, because I laid out both in the Inauguration and during the State of the Union a very robust agenda to make sure that we're doing everything we can to grow this economy and to help families thrive and expand their opportunities. We want to make sure we've got a growing middle class and more ladders of opportunity into the middle class.

So, in addition to talking about budget issues, we're also going to spend some time talking about making sure that we have comprehensive immigration reform done. And I want to again thank Members of Congress who on a bipartisan basis are moving forward on that agenda. We're going to have the opportunity to talk about initiatives like early childhood education that can have an enormous impact on our kids and, ultimately, our growth and productivity. We'll have a chance to hear from Joe and other members of the Cabinet about progress in reducing gun violence in this country.

So one of the things that I've instructed not just my White House, but every agency is to make sure that, regardless of some of the challenges that they may face because of sequestration, we're not going to stop working on behalf of the American people to make sure that