

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

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we're doing everything we can to continue to grow this economy and improve people's prospects. All right.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:08 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Joe Biden.

Statement on the Death of President Hugo Chavez Frias of Venezuela *March 5, 2013*

At this challenging time of President Hugo Chavez's passing, the United States reaffirms its support for the Venezuelan people and its interest in developing a constructive relationship with the Venezuelan Govern-

ment. As Venezuela begins a new chapter in its history, the United States remains committed to policies that promote democratic principles, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

Statement on Senate Action To Block the Nomination of Caitlin J. Halligan To Be a Judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit *March 6, 2013*

I am deeply disappointed that despite support from a majority of the United States Senate, a minority of Senators continues to block the nomination of Caitlin Halligan to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. Nearly 2½ years after being nominated, Ms. Halligan continues to wait for a simple up-or-down vote. In the past, filibusters of judicial nominations required "extraordinary circumstances," and a Republican Senator who was part of this agreement articulated that only an ethics or qualification issue—not ideology—would qualify. Ms. Halligan has always practiced law with the highest ethical ideals, and her qualifications are beyond question. Furthermore, her career in public service and as a law enforcement lawyer serving the citi-

zens of New York is well within the mainstream.

Today's vote continues the Republican pattern of obstruction. My judicial nominees wait more than three times as long on the Senate floor to receive a vote than my predecessor's nominees. The effects of this obstruction take the heaviest toll on the DC Circuit, considered the Nation's second highest court, which now has only seven active judges and four vacancies. Until last month, for more than 4 years, the court has always had at least 8 active judges and as many as 12. A majority of the Senate agrees that Ms. Halligan is exactly the kind of person who should serve on this court, and I urge Senate Republicans to allow the Senate to express its will and to confirm Ms. Halligan without further delay.

Remarks on Signing the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 *March 7, 2013*

The President. Thank you, everybody! Thank you. Well, please, everybody, have a seat. Have a seat.

I want to thank all of you for being here. I want to thank Secretary Salazar, my great

friend, for letting us into the building. [*Laughter*] Make sure everybody picks up their stray soda cans and stuff afterwards. [*Laughter*] I want to thank Attorney General Holder for joining us. He's doing a great job.