

ators to see if there were smarter ways to grow our economy and reduce our deficits than the arbitrary cuts and the so-called sequester that recently went into place. We had an open and honest conversation about critical issues like immigration reform and gun violence, and other areas where we can work together to move this country forward. And next week, I'll attend both the Democratic and Republican Party meetings in the Capitol to continue those discussions.

The fact is, America is a nation of different beliefs and different points of view. That's part of what makes us strong and, frankly, makes our democratic debates messy and, a lot of times, pretty frustrating. But ultimately, what makes us special is when we summon the ability to see past those differences and come together around the belief that what binds us together will always be more powerful than what drives us apart.

As Democrats and Republicans, we may disagree on the best way to achieve our goals, but I'm confident we can agree on what those goals should be: a strong and vibrant middle class; an economy that allows businesses to grow and thrive; an education system that gives more Americans the skills they need to compete for

the jobs of the future; an immigration system that actually works for families and businesses; stronger communities and safer streets for our children.

Making progress on these issues won't be easy. In the months ahead, there will be more contentious debate and honest disagreement between principled people who want what's best for this country. But I still believe that compromise is possible. I still believe we can come together to do big things. And I know there are leaders on the other side of the aisle who share that belief.

So I'll keep fighting to solve the real challenges facing middle class families. And I'll enlist anyone who is willing to help. That's what this country needs right now, and that's what you deserve.

Thanks so much.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:35 p.m. on March 8 in the State Dining Room at the White House for broadcast on March 9. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 8, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 9.

## Remarks at the Gridiron Club Dinner March 9, 2013

Before I begin, I know some of you have noticed that I'm dressed a little differently from the other gentlemen. Because of sequester, they cut my tails. My joke writers have been placed on furlough. [Laughter] I know a lot of you reported that no one will feel any immediate impact because of the sequester. Well, you're about to find out how wrong you are. [Laughter]

Of course, there's one thing in Washington that didn't get cut: the length of this dinner. Yet more proof that the sequester makes no sense. [Laughter]

As you know, I last attended the Gridiron dinner 2 years ago. Back then, I addressed a number of topics: a dysfunctional Congress, a looming budget crisis, complaints that I don't

spend enough time with the press. It's funny, it seems like it was just yesterday. [Laughter]

We noticed that some folks couldn't make it this evening. It's been noted that Bob Woodward sends his regrets, which Gene Sperling predicted. [Laughter] I have to admit this whole brouhaha had me a little surprised. Who knew Gene could be so intimidating? Or let me phrase it differently: Who knew anybody named Gene could be this intimidating? [Laughter]

Now, I know that some folks think we responded to Woodward too aggressively. But hey, when has—can anybody tell me when an administration has ever regretted picking a fight with Bob Woodward? What's the worst that could happen? [Laughter]

But don't worry. We're all friends again in the spirit of that wonderful song. As you may have heard, Bob invited Gene over to his place. And Bob says he actually thinks that I should make it too. And I might take him up on the offer. I mean, nothing says "not a threat" like showing up at somebody's house with guys with machine guns. [Laughter]

Now, since I don't often speak to a room full of journalists, I thought I should address a few concerns tonight. [Laughter] Some of you have said that I'm ignoring the Washington press corps, that we're too controlling. You know what, you were right. I was wrong, and I want to apologize in a video you can watch exclusively at [whitehouse.gov](http://whitehouse.gov). [Laughter]

While we're on this subject, I want to acknowledge Ed Henry, who is here—who is the fearless leader of the Washington press corps now. And at Ed's request, tonight I will take one question from the press. Jay, do we have a question? [Laughter] Surprisingly, it's a question from Ed Henry. [Laughter] "Mr. President, will you be taking any questions tonight?" [Laughter] I'm happy to answer that. No, Ed, I will not. [Laughter]

I also want to recognize David Corn. He's here from Mother Jones magazine. He brought his iPhone. So, Bobby Jindal, if you thought your remarks were off the record, ask Mitt Romney about that.

I have to say, I thought Bobby was incredibly funny this evening. I thought he was terrific. Amy Klobuchar was sparkling and fantastic and fabulous. I am worried about Al Franken though. [Laughter] How do you start off being one of the original writers for "Saturday Night Live" and end up being the second funniest Senator in Minnesota? [Laughter] How the mighty have fallen. [Laughter]

Now, I'm sure that you've noticed that there's somebody very special in my life who is missing tonight, somebody who has always got my back, stands with me no matter what, and gives me hope no matter how dark things seem. So tonight I want to publicly thank my rock, my foundation. Thank you, Nate Silver. [Laughter]

Of course, as I begin my second term, our country is still facing enormous challenges. We have a lot of work to do.

[At this point, the President took a sip of water.]

That, Marco Rubio, is how you take a sip of water. [Laughter]

As I was saying, we face major challenges. March, in particular, is going to be full of tough decisions. But I want to assure you, I have my top advisers working around the clock. After all, my March Madness bracket isn't going to fill itself out. [Laughter] And don't worry, there is an entire team in the Situation Room as we speak, planning my next golf outing, right now at this moment. [Laughter]

But those aren't the only issues on my mind. As you are aware—as has been noted this evening—we've had to make some very tough, huge budget cuts, apparently with no regard to long-term consequences, which means I know how you feel in journalism. [Laughter] I've been trying to explain this situation to the American people, but clearly I am not perfect. After a very public mixup last week, my communications team has provided me with an easy way to distinguish between "Star Trek" and "Star Wars." Spock is what Maureen Dowd calls me. Darth Vader is what John Boehner calls me. [Laughter]

Of course, maintaining credibility in this cynical atmosphere is harder than ever, incredibly challenging. My administration recently put out a photo of me skeet shooting, and even that wasn't enough for some people. Next week, we're releasing a photo of me clinging to religion. [Laughter]

I'm also doing what I can to smooth things over with Republicans in Congress. In fact, these days, John McCain and I are spending so much time together that he told me we were becoming friends. I said: "John, stop. Chuck Hagel warned me how this ends up." [Laughter]

It took a while, but I'm glad that the Senate finally confirmed my Secretary of Defense. And I have to say, I don't know what happened to Chuck in those hearings. I know he worked

hard; he studied his brief. And I even lent him my Presidential debate team to work with him. [Laughter] It's confusing what happened.

But all these changes to my team are tough to handle, I've got to admit. After 9 years, I finally said goodbye to my chief speechwriter, Jon Favreau. I watched him grow up. He's almost like a son to me, he's been with me so long. And I said to him when he first informed me of his decision, I said, "Favs, you can't leave." And he answered with three simple words: "Yes, I can." [Laughter] Fortunately, he did not take the prompter on his way out. That would have been a problem. [Laughter]

With all these new faces, it's hard to keep track of who is in, who is out. And I know it's difficult for you guys as reporters. But I can offer you an easy way of remembering the new team. If Ted Cruz calls somebody a Communist, then you know they're in my Cabinet. [Laughter]

Jack Lew is getting started on his new role as Treasury Secretary. Jack is so low key, he makes Tim Geithner look like Tom Cruise. [Laughter] Don't worry, everybody, Jack signed off on that joke, or a 5-year-old drew a Slinky. [Laughter] I don't know which.

Another big change has been at the State Department. Everybody has noticed that obviously. And let's face it: Hillary is a tough act to follow. But John Kerry is doing great so far. He is doing everything he can to ensure continuity. Frankly, though, I think it's time for him to stop showing up at work in pantsuits. It's a disturbing image. [Laughter] It really is. I don't know where he buys them. He is a tall guy. [Laughter]

And even though I'm just beginning my second term, I know that some folks are looking ahead to bigger things. Look, it's no secret that my Vice President is still ambitious. But let's face it, his age is an issue. Just the other day, I had to take Joe aside and say, "Joe, you are way too young to be the Pope." [Laughter] "You can't do it. You got to mature a little bit." [Laughter]

Now, I do want to end on a serious note. I know that there are people who get frustrated with the way journalism is practiced these

days. And sometimes, those people are me. [Laughter] But the truth is, our country needs you and our democracy needs you.

In an age when all it takes to attract attention is a Twitter handle and some followers, it's easier than ever to get it wrong. But it's more important than ever to get it right. And I am grateful for all the journalists who do one of the toughest jobs there is with integrity and insight and dedication—and a sense of purpose—that goes beyond a business model or a news cycle.

This year alone, reporters have exposed corruption here at home and around the world. They've risked everything to bring us stories from places like Syria and Kenya, stories that need to be told. And they've helped people understand the ways in which we're all connected: how something that happens or doesn't happen halfway around the world or here in Washington can have consequences for American families.

These are extraordinary times. The stakes are high and the tensions can sometimes be high as well. But while we'll always have disagreements, I believe that we share the belief that a free press—a press that questions us, that holds us accountable, that sometimes gets under our skin—is absolutely an essential part of our democracy.

So I want to thank everybody for not just a wonderful evening—and, Chuck, I want to thank you for your outstanding presidency—but I also just want to thank you for the work that you do each and every day. And in the words of one of my favorite "Star Trek" characters, Captain James T. Kirk of the USS *Enterprise*, "May the force be with you." [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:03 p.m. in the grand ballroom at the Renaissance Washington, DC Downtown Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Bob Woodward, associate editor, Washington Post; Edward M. Henry, chief White House correspondent, Fox News, in his capacity as president of the White House Correspondents' Association; White House Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney; Gov. Piyush "Bobby" Jindal of Louisiana; 2012 Republican

Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney; Nathaniel R. Silver, statistician and polling analyst, and Maureen B. Dowd, columnist, New York Times; Sen. R. Edward “Ted” Cruz; former Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner; actor Tom Cruise; former Secretary

of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; and Chuck Todd, chief White House correspondent, NBC News, in his capacity as president of the Gridiron Club and Foundation Washington, DC. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Remarks at a Meeting of the President’s Export Council March 12, 2013

*The President.* I want to get back to the official business at hand. But I did want to stop by. First of all, I just want to say thanks to the PEC for the unbelievable work that you guys have done and the extraordinary leadership that you’ve provided to our team and the administration as we’ve tried to promote exports all around the world. And I’m glad to see that we’ve got a couple of our outstanding Senators here as well who, I know, care deeply about exports because their States benefit from exports. We all do.

And I assume that part of these charts was Becky going over, the progress that we’ve made over the last several years, so I won’t reiterate it. The good news is we are well on our way to meeting a very ambitious goal that we set several years ago to double U.S. exports. And what we know is, is that a lot of the growth, a lot of the new jobs that we’ve seen during the course of this recovery, have been export driven.

What’s also encouraging is it’s been coming from a whole variety of sectors. Obviously, our agricultural sector has always been strong, and it’s gotten even stronger. But what we’ve also seen is, is that our manufacturing base, our high-tech, our services across the board, we’re seeing significant increases. And the question now becomes, how do we sustain this momentum?

Part of it is making sure that we get in place strong trade deals. And having ratified, with the help of a number of our legislators, the Panama, Colombia, and most significantly, South Korean trade deals, we’ve now been moving aggressively on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a high-standards trade regime that we think can advantage U.S. companies and U.S.

workers because it sets a bar that ensures that trade is fair and free. And for those of us who abide by high labor standards and high environmental standards, obviously being able to lock in those kinds of high standards in the fastest growing region of the world and the most populous region of the world can yield enormous benefits and help to generate billions of dollars in trade and millions of jobs.

As I announced at the State of the Union Address, we’re also going to be launching an effort to lock in a EU-U.S. trade deal as well. And already, Europe is our largest trading partner—the EU as a whole—and we think that we can expand that even further. And some of this has to do with us being able to break down some existing barriers across the Atlantic to U.S. products and services, but some of it also has to do with smoothing out differences in regulatory approaches, just trade frictions that arise that are unnecessary that are—carries over from earlier periods. And we think just as the TPP can be an enormous boost to U.S. trade and growth, that our trade with Europe can expand substantially and that will advantage U.S. companies and U.S. businesses.

But in order for us to do this, we’re going to need the help of industry and labor and all the parties that are represented here. One of the things that we’ve also been trying to do during the course of this process is to make sure that it’s not just the Xeroxes and the Dow Chemicals that are benefiting from this, although we want our Fortune 100 companies to be selling as much as possible. They also have a whole lot of suppliers, so small businesses stand to benefit immensely from this process. We actually think that there’s room for small and medium-