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helped to fight alongside on the causes that are so important. But with Melanne leaving on, we've got some big shoes to fill. So today I am very pleased to announce that I will be nominating Cathy Russell as our next Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues.

Now, Cathy is a longtime advocate for women, for justice, for fairness. She's worked on preventing violence against women here and around the world. Throughout my first term, she's served as chief of staff to Dr. Jill Biden. She's worked tirelessly alongside Michelle and Jill to make sure that our military families get every single benefit and bit of assistance that they so richly deserve and have earned. I'm certain that Jill will miss Cathy, but I know she joins me in saying that we could not be prouder of Cathy's hard work and her advocacy. And we know that she's going to be a powerful voice on behalf of women and girls around the world. So thank you, Cathy, for your continued service.

It's women like Cathy, like Jill, like Amanda, like Michelle, like all of you, that inspire so much progress each and every day. And I've got to tell you, all of you inspire me to make sure that I'm doing everything that I can as President to carry on that progress and to do everything we can to ensure equality and opportunity for all women. Just last week, I was proud to sign the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women's Act, a law, by the way, that Cathy helped to make possible in the first place: securing for women the protections and the services to help them live their lives free from fear of violence and free to pursue their own measure of happiness.

And that's what everybody deserves in this country, the opportunity to make of their lives what they will, no matter who they are, what they look like, whether they are boys or girls, women or men. That's why I ran for President in the first place: to put the same rights and opportunities within the reach of all of our daughters and sons. And while there's still a lot of work to be done, I'm confident that we can reach that goal, that we can make sure that every single door is open, every dream is within reach—for Malia, for Sasha, for your daughters, for your granddaughters—to make sure that they never feel like there are barriers in front of them, and that if they work hard, they can make it.

So I want to thank all of you for your incredible advocacy. I could not be prouder of you. I'm glad that you had a chance to join us. I understand that we had some great panels earlier today, and I expect this conversation and, more importantly, the work will continue for many years to come.

So thank you very much, everybody. Enjoy the reception.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:04 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jackson, MS, resident Amanda McMillan, plaintiff in an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission sex discrimination lawsuit against the Forrest City Grocery Co.; Dolores C. Huerta, cofounder, United Farm Workers; Lily Ledbetter, former employee, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. plant in Gadsden, AL; and Tamika Catchings, forward, Women's National Basketball Association's Indian Fever. The proclamation of February 28 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Videotaped Remarks on the Observance of Nowruz
March 18, 2013

Dorood. As you and your families come together to celebrate Nowruz, I want to extend my best wishes to this new spring and new year. Around the world, and here in the United States, you're gathering at the Nowruz table to give thanks for loved ones, reflect on your blessings, and welcome all the possibilities of a new season.

As I have every year as President, I want to take this opportunity to speak directly to the people and leaders of Iran. Since taking office, I've offered the Iranian Government an oppor-

tunity: If it meets its international obligations, then there could be a new relationship between our two countries, and Iran could begin to return to its rightful place among the community of nations.

I have no illusions about the difficulty of overcoming decades of mistrust. It will take a serious and sustained effort to resolve the many differences between Iran and the United States. This includes the world's serious and growing concerns about Iran's nuclear program, which threatens peace and security in the region and beyond.

Iran's leaders say that their nuclear program is for medical research and electricity. To date, however, they have been unable to convince the international community that their nuclear activities are solely for peaceful purposes. That's why the world is united in its resolve to address this issue and why Iran is now so isolated. The people of Iran have paid a high and unnecessary price because of your leaders' unwillingness to address this issue.

As I've said all along, the United States prefers to resolve this matter peacefully, diplomatically. Indeed, if—as Iran's leaders say—their nuclear program is for peaceful purposes, then there is a basis for a practical solution. It's a solution that would give Iran access to peaceful nuclear energy while resolving once and for all the serious questions that the world has about the true nature of the Iranian nuclear program.

The United States, alongside the rest of the international community, is ready to reach such a solution. Now is the time for the Iranian Government to take immediate and meaningful steps to reduce tensions and work toward an enduring, long-term settlement of the nuclear issue.

Finding a solution will be no easy task. But if we can, the Iranian people will begin to see the benefits of greater trade and ties with other nations, including the United States, whereas if the Iranian Government continues down its current path, it will only further isolate Iran. This is the choice now before Iran's leaders.

I hope they choose a better path for the sake of the Iranian people and for the sake of the world. Because there's no good reason for Iranians to be denied the opportunities enjoyed by people in other countries, just as Iranians deserve the same freedoms and rights as people everywhere.

Iran's isolation isn't good for the world either. Just as your forbearers enriched the arts and sciences throughout history, all nations would benefit from the talents and creativity of the Iranian people, especially your young people. Every day that you are cut off from us is a day we're not working together, building together, innovating together, and building a future of peace and prosperity that is at the heart of this holiday.

As you gather with family and friends this Nowruz, many of you will turn to the poet Hafez, who wrote: "Plant the tree of friendship that bears the fruit of fulfillment; uproot the sapling of enmity that bears endless suffering."

As a new spring begins, I remain hopeful that our two countries can move beyond tension. And I will continue to work toward a new day between our nations that bears the fruit of friendship and peace.

Thank you, and *Eid-eh Shoma mobarak*.

NOTE: The remarks were recorded at approximately 1 p.m. on March 15 in Building 371 at Argonne National Laboratory in Lemont, IL.

Statement on the Resignation of Acting Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Commerce Rebecca M. Blank

March 18, 2013

I want to thank Dr. Blank for her hard work and exceptional service on behalf of the American people. Over the past 4 years, I have asked Becky to take on several roles at the Department of Commerce, and in each one, she has distinguished herself as a steady leader and a vital member of my economic team. A tireless advocate for American businesses, Becky has