

And we've got to make sure that we're supporting that next generation of dreamers and risk takers, because if we are, things will be good. They leave me with extraordinary optimism. They leave me hopeful. They leave—they put a smile on my face. And I am absolutely convinced that if this Academy and the successors who become members of this Academy are there at the center and the heart of our public debate, that we'll be able to continue to use the innovation that powers our economy and improves our health, protects our environment and security, that makes us the envy of the world.

So I want to thank you on behalf of the American people. And I want to make sure

that you know that you've got a strong supporter in the White House.

God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Ralph J. Cicerone, president, National Academy of Sciences; Sara Volz, student, Cheyenne Mountain High School in Colorado Springs, CO, and her parents David and Pattye Volz; Payton Karr and Kiona Elliott, students, Northeast High School in Oakland Park, FL; and Jack Andraka, student, North County High School in Crownsville, MD. He also referred to the President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology (PCAST).

Remarks on the Nomination of Anthony R. Foxx To Be Secretary of Transportation April 29, 2013

The President. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat.

Audience members. Good afternoon.

The President. Ray LaHood has said that being the Secretary of Transportation is the best job he ever had in public service. And that's fitting, because Ray may be the best Secretary of Transportation that the Nation's ever had.

From the day that he was sworn in, Ray has fought tirelessly to rebuild America's infrastructure, creating good jobs that strengthen the economy and allow us to better compete in the global economy. Over the past 4 years, thanks to Ray's leadership, we've built or improved more than 350,000 miles of road, enough to circle the world more than 14 times. We've upgraded more than 6,000 miles of rail, enough to go coast to coast and back. We've repaired or replaced more than 20,000 bridges and helped put tens of thousands of construction workers back on the job. And that's all due in no small part to Ray LaHood's leadership.

So every American can thank Ray for his dedication to make our transportation system not just stronger, but also safer. When it comes to his focused attention on the dangers of distracted driving, for example, it's saving lives.

And on a personal note, Ray LaHood has been a good friend of mine for many years. Before he served in my Cabinet, we served together in Congress. He's a Republican; I'm a Democrat. These days, that sometimes keeps folks apart, but what always brought Ray and I together was a shared belief that those of us who serve in public service owe their allegiance not to party, but to the people who elected them to represent them.

And it helps that we're from the same State. Ray is from Peoria; I'm from Chicago. But we both love the State of Illinois, and we both get out there on the golf course—and we're not that good—[laughter]—but we don't take ourselves too seriously. He is a good man and has been an outstanding public servant and a model for the kind of bipartisan approach to governance that I think we need so badly in this town.

So, Ray, on a personal level, I could not be more grateful to you for your service and for your friendship.

Now, unfortunately, for us, but fortunately for them, Ray is now looking forward to spending more time with his wife Kathy and their family, especially a whole gaggle of grandchild-

dren. And so today I'm proud to announce my intent to nominate another impressive leader to carry on his great work at the Department of Transportation: the mayor of Charlotte, my friend from North Carolina, Mr. Anthony Foxx.

Anthony's life reflects the values he learned growing up in West Charlotte, where he was raised by his single mom and his grandparents. I should add, by the way, that his grandmother is here, and she informed me that she worked here in the White House in the Truman administration. So she's just coming back to—she's just coming back for a visit. And so the values that they instilled in them was to take pride in hard work, to take responsibility for your actions, to take care of your community. And over the past 3½ years, those values have helped Anthony become one of the most effective mayors that Charlotte's ever seen.

When Anthony became mayor in 2009, Charlotte, like the rest of the country, was going through a bruising economic crisis. But the city has managed to turn things around. The economy is growing. There are more jobs, more opportunity. And if you ask Anthony how that happened, he'll tell you that one of the reasons is that Charlotte made one of the largest investments in transportation in the city's history.

Since Anthony took office, they've broken ground on a new streetcar project that's going to bring modern electric tram service to the downtown area. They've expanded the international airport. And they're extending the city's light rail system. All of that has not only helped create new jobs, it's helped Charlotte become more attractive to business.

So I know Anthony's experience will make him an outstanding Transportation Secretary. He's got the respect of his peers, mayors and Governors all across the country. And as a consequence, I think that he's going to be extraordinarily effective. One of the things that Ray taught me in watching him do his job is that establishing personal relationships with mayors and Governors and county executives makes all the difference in the world, because transpor-

tation is one of those things that—it's happening on the ground.

And the Federal Government has got to be responsive and has to understand what it's like when you're a mayor or a Governor or a county executive trying to get these projects up and running, which also means that we have the potential of continuing to streamline our approvals and get rid of some—sometimes difficulties in permitting that slow projects down, because we want to get people back to work and we want to get this country moving.

So I am absolutely confident that Anthony is going to do an outstanding job. I want to thank his mom and grandma and lovely wife and two good-looking kids for being willing to serve as well. And I hope that the Senate confirms him quickly because we've got a lot of work to do.

Our top priority as a nation right now is doing everything we can to grow our economy and create good jobs and rebuild opportunity for the middle class. And one of the best ways we can do that is to put more Americans back to work rebuilding our infrastructure.

So that's why, in my State of the Union Address, I proposed a Fix-It-First program to put more people to work as soon as possible on our most urgent repairs. And to make sure taxpayers don't shoulder the entire burden, I've also proposed a partnership with the private sector. But Congress has to step up, fund these projects. They need to do it right away.

We need to modernize the infrastructure that powers our economy. We need more high-speed rail and Internet and high-tech schools and self-healing power grids and bridges and tunnels and ports that help us ship products all around the world stamped with three proud words: Made in America. That's how we're going to attract more businesses. That's how we're going to create more jobs. That's how we're going to stay competitive in this global economy.

So to Ray LaHood and his entire family, I want to thank you for just doing an extraordinary job. To Anthony and his family, I want to thank you guys for agreeing to serve. And I know that today's announcement is not the biggest thing that Anthony's family's got going on in the next week, because tomorrow is

Anthony's birthday. [Laughter] So we're happy that we can kick off the celebration here at the White House.

And with that, what I'd like to do is ask both of them to say a few words, starting with our outstanding current Secretary of Transportation, Mr. Ray LaHood.

The President's News Conference April 30, 2013

The President. Good afternoon—or good morning, everybody. I am here to answer questions in honor of Ed Henry [Fox News], as he wraps up his tenure as president of the White House Correspondents' Association.

Ed, because of that, you get the first question. Congratulations.

Q. Thank you, sir, I really appreciate that. And I hope we can go back to business and being mad at each other a little bit. [Laughter]

The President. I'm never mad at you.

Q. Okay, good. Thank you, I appreciate that.

The President. You may be mad at me. [Laughter]

Syria

Q. I'm not. A couple of questions on national security. On Syria, you said that the red line was not just about chemical weapons being used, but being spread, and it was a game changer. It seemed cut and dry. And now your administration seems to be suggesting that line is not clear. Do you risk U.S. credibility if you don't take military action?

And then on Benghazi, there are some survivors of that terror attack who say they want to come forward and testify—some in your State Department—and they say they've been blocked. Will you allow them to testify?

The President. Well, first of all, on Syria, I think it's important to understand that for several years now, what we've been seeing is a slowly unfolding disaster for the Syrian people. And this is not a situation in which we've been simply bystanders to what's been happening. My policy from the beginning has been that President Asad had lost credibility, that he at-

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Laura Foxx, mother, Mary Foxx, grandmother, Samara Foxx, wife, and Zachary and Hillary, children, of Secretary-designate Foxx.

tacked his own people, has killed his own people, unleashed a military against innocent civilians, and that the only way to bring stability and peace to Syria is going to be for Asad to step down and to move forward on a political transition.

In pursuit of that strategy, we've organized the international community. We are the largest humanitarian donor. We have worked to strengthen the opposition. We have provided nonlethal assistance to the opposition. We have applied sanctions on Syria. So there are a whole host of steps that we've been taking precisely because, even separate from the chemical weapons issue, what's happening in Syria is a blemish on the international community generally, and we've got to make sure that we're doing everything we can to protect the Syrian people.

In that context, what I've also said is that the use of chemical weapons would be a game changer, not simply for the United States, but for the international community. And the reason for that is that we have established international law and international norms that say when you use these kinds of weapons, you have the potential of killing massive numbers of people in the most inhumane way possible, and the proliferation risks are so significant that we don't want that genie out of the bottle. So when I said that the use of chemical weapons would be a game changer, that wasn't unique to—that wasn't a position unique to the United States, and it shouldn't have been a surprise.

And what we now have is evidence that chemical weapons have been used inside of Syria, but we don't know how they were used, when they were used, who used them. We