

So I want to thank Mary Jo, Richard, and their families once again for agreeing to serve. And now I'd like to invite them to say a few words, starting with Mary Jo.

Chair-designate White. [Inaudible] Thank you, Mr. President, for the confidence that you have placed in me and the faith that you've shown in me by nominating me to be the next Chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission. I'm deeply, deeply honored.

If confirmed by the Senate, I look forward to committing all of my energies to working with my fellow commissioners and the extremely dedicated and talented men and women of the staff of the SEC to fulfill the agency's mission to protect investors and to ensure the strength, efficiency, and the transparency of our capital markets.

The SEC, long a vital and positive force for the markets, has a lot of hard and important work ahead of it. I would welcome the opportunity to lead those efforts and to build on the work of Chairman Mary Schapiro and Chairman Elisse Walter, who I'm very honored is present today.

And finally, and most importantly, I want to thank my husband John White, who is here today, on what is our 43d wedding anniversary—

The President. Today?

Chair-designate White. Today—for his strong support of me in seeking to engage in this very significant and challenging public service.

Thank you very much.

The President. Thank you. Richard.

Director Cordray. Thank you, Mr. President, for the confidence you've placed in me and our team at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. We understand that our mission is to stand on the side of consumers—our mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, sons and daughters—and see that they're treated fairly.

For more than a year, we've been focused on making consumer finance markets work better for the American people. We approach this work with open minds, open ears, and great determination.

We all thank you and the Congress for the opportunity and the honor to serve our country in this important way. Thank you.

The President. Well, I just want to thank again Mary Jo and Richard for their willingness to serve. These are people with proven track records. They are going to look out for the American people, for American consumers, and make sure that our marketplace works better: more transparently, more efficiently, more effectively. So I again would urge the Senate to confirm both of them as quickly as possible.

And I also want to express congratulations to the Whites for their anniversary. If I had known, we would have maybe rolled out a cake or something. [Laughter] But have fun.

Chair-designate White. Thank you.

The President. I hope you enjoy it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:38 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House.

Statement on the Opening of United States Armed Forces Combat Units to Women

January 24, 2013

Today, by moving to open more military positions—including ground combat units—to women, our Armed Forces have taken another historic step toward harnessing the talents and skills of all our citizens. This milestone reflects the courageous and patriotic service of women through more than two centuries of American history and the indispensable role of women in

today's military. Many have made the ultimate sacrifice, including more than 150 women who have given their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan: patriots whose sacrifices show that valor knows no gender.

Earlier today I called Secretary of Defense Panetta to express my strong support for this decision, which will strengthen our military,

enhance our readiness, and be another step toward fulfilling our Nation's founding ideals of fairness and equality. I congratulate our military, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for the rigor that they have brought to this process. As Commander in Chief, I am absolutely confident that—as with the repeal of “don't ask,

don't tell”—the professionalism of our Armed Forces will ensure a smooth transition and keep our military the very best in the world. Today every American can be proud that our military will grow even stronger with our mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters playing a greater role in protecting this country we love.

Statement on Procedural Rule Changes in the Senate *January 24, 2013*

In my State of the Union last year, I urged Congress to take steps to fix the way they do business. Specifically, I asked them to address the fact that a simple majority is no longer enough to pass anything—even routine business—through the Senate. And today I am pleased that a bipartisan group of Senators has agreed to take action.

Too often over the past 4 years, a single Senator or a handful of Senators has been able to unilaterally block or delay bipartisan legislation for the sole purpose of making a political point. At a time when we face critical decisions on a whole range of issues—from preventing further gun violence, to reforming our broken immigration system, to getting our fiscal house in order and creating good-paying jobs—we cannot afford unnecessary obstruction. And I am hopeful that today's bipartisan agreement will

pave the way for the Senate to take meaningful action in the days and weeks ahead.

I also want to thank leaders in Congress for changing the Senate rules in an effort to resurrect the longstanding tradition of considering consensus district court judicial nominations on a more routine basis. After being approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee, my judicial nominees have waited more than three times longer to receive confirmation votes than those of my predecessor, even though the overwhelming majority of my nominees have been confirmed with little, if any, dissent. These months of unnecessary delay have threatened our judiciary. Today's reforms are a positive step towards a fairer and more efficient system of considering district court nominees, and I urge the Senate to treat all of my judicial nominees in the same spirit.

Remarks on the Appointment of Denis R. McDonough as White House Chief of Staff *January 25, 2013*

Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to the announcement of one of the worst kept secrets in Washington. [*Laughter*]

As President, I rely on an extraordinary team of men and women here at the White House every single day. And I rely on my Chief of Staff to keep up with them—and our entire Government—making sure that we're all moving in the same direction, making sure that my priorities are being carried out and that our policies are consistent with the commitments that I've made to the American people, and that we're delivering progress to the American

people. As I said earlier this month, I could not be more grateful to Jack Lew for his amazing service, first as our OMB Director, then at the State Department, and ultimately, as my Chief of Staff.

As he prepares for his confirmation hearings and the challenge of leading our Treasury Department, I am pleased to announce my next Chief of Staff, and a great friend to me and everybody who works here at the White House, Mr. Denis McDonough.

Now, I have been counting on Denis for nearly a decade, since I first came to