

local governments, and to do everything that we could to improve the issue of gun safety and to make our communities safer.

But as we've indicated before, the only way that we're going to be able to do everything that needs to be done is with the cooperation of Congress. And that means passing serious laws that restrict the access and availability of assault weapons and magazine clips that aren't necessary for hunters and sportsmen and those who—responsible gun owners who are out there. It means that we are serious about universal background checks. It means that we take seriously issues of mental health and school safety.

We recognize that this is an issue that elicits a lot of passion all across the country. And Joe and my Cabinet members who have been involved in this have been on a listening session over the last several months. No group is more important for us to listen to than our law enforcement officials. They are where the rubber hits the road.

And so I welcome this opportunity to work with them, to hear their views in terms of what will make the biggest difference to prevent something like Newtown or Oak Creek from happening again. But many of them also recognize that it's not only the high-profile mass shootings that are of concern here, it's also what happens on a day-in-day-out basis in places like Chicago or Philadelphia, where young people are victims of gun violence every single day. That's why part of the conversation that

we're going to be having today relates not only to the issue of new laws or better enforcement of our gun laws, it also means what are we doing to make sure that we've got the strongest possible law enforcement teams on the ground? What are we doing to hire more cops? What are we doing to make sure that they're getting the training that they need? What are we doing to make sure our sheriff's offices in rural counties have access to some of the resources that some of the big cities do in order to deal with some of these emergencies?

So I'm looking forward to a robust conversation. I know that this is not a shy group, mainly because they're dealing with life-and-death situations every single day. But I'm very grateful to them for their participation. This is a representative group. It comes from a wide cross-section of communities across the country. And hopefully, if law enforcement officials who are dealing with this stuff every single day can come to some basic consensus in terms of steps that we need to take, Congress is going to be paying attention to them and we'll be able to make progress.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:28 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan; Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr.; Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano; and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius.

Remarks Honoring the 2012 National Basketball Association Champion Miami Heat

January 28, 2013

The President. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, today I am honored to welcome a little up-and-coming basketball team—[laughter]—to the White House called the world champion Miami Heat.

Now, for many of teams that come here, this is a lot of cameras in one place. It's a little overwhelming. [Laughter] But for the Heat, this is what practice looks like. [Laughter] This is

normal. I know this is the first trip for some of these players, but a few of them were here a couple of years ago for a pickup game on my birthday.

Now, I'm not trying to take all the credit, Coach, but I think that it's clear that going up against me prepared them to take on Kevin Durant and Russell Westbrook. [Laughter] It sharpened their skills. It gave them the com-

petitive edge that they needed. And I think part of the reason they came back today is they want another shot at the old guy. [Laughter]

But first, I have to congratulate the Heat on their well-earned title. This team traveled a long road to get to where they are. In 2011, the Heat got all the way to the finals only to come up short. But when you fall, the real test is whether you can ignore the naysayers, pick yourself up, and come back stronger. And that's true in basketball, but it's also true in life. That's exactly what these guys did.

Instead of getting down, they got better. Dwyane Wade worked on his core. LeBron learned some post moves from Hakeem. Shane Battier came on board. They became a more complete team. They got to know each other better and trust each other more. And they became more fun to watch.

In game four against the Thunder last year, we saw LeBron carried off the floor with cramps, only to come back a few minutes later and hit a dagger of a 3-pointer to put the Heat ahead. During game six, we saw him pull off one of the greatest performances in basketball playoff history, dropping 45 points, and he had a scary look in his eye. [Laughter]

We saw Dwyane Wade, the heart and soul of this team, continue to do whatever it takes to win, including leading the team in blocks. And at the postgame press conferences, he dressed well enough to land himself in GQ magazine. [Laughter] Show them your kicks here, Dwyane. [Laughter] If any of you can pull this off—[laughter]—other than Dwyane Wade, let me know. We saw Chris Bosh get injured, but get healthy right at the perfect time and do outstanding work throughout the rest of the playoffs.

And it wasn't just the Big Three. Mike Miller could barely walk. Mike, you look better now. [Laughter] You looked broke down last year—[laughter]—but still hit seven 3-pointers in the final game. I don't know how he did it because he could not walk. He looked like an old man. [Laughter] Mario Chalmers earned himself a nickname from Dwyane Wade that I'm not allowed to repeat. [Laughter] But he did a great job.

Shane Battier, as always, played impeccable defense, hit big threes. Juwan Howard—Grandpa—became the first member of the Fab Five to win a ring. And Coach continually set the tone and kept these guys motivated the entire way.

So that team mentality—with everybody doing their part—is what finally put the Heat over the top. And it's especially impressive when you think about everything they've had to deal with over the last few years. This team inspired a lot of passions on both sides. And I'm just talking about their dance moves now. [Laughter] We saw that video, LeBron. [Laughter]

But even though I'm a little disappointed that the Bulls didn't make it, I do want to congratulate the Heat for a well-earned championship. LeBron said, "It's about damn time." And I want to thank them for taking the time this afternoon to spend with wounded warriors at Walter Reed, because you guys are heroes to them, but they are heroes to all of us.

And let me just say one last thing about these guys, and I mentioned this as we were coming in. Now, there's a lot of focus on what happens on the court, but what's also important is what happens off the court. And I don't know all these guys, but I do know LeBron and Dwyane and Chris. And one of the things I'm proudest of is that they take their roles as fathers seriously. And for all the young men out there who are looking up to them all the time, for them to see somebody who cares about their kids and is there for them day in, day out, that's a good message to send. It's a positive message to send, and we're very proud of them for that. So the—[applause].

So congratulations again to the Miami Heat. And now we are going to take a picture that makes me look very short. [Laughter] I'm accustomed to it, but first I'm going to ask Coach to say a few words. Thank you, Coach.

Head Coach Erik Spoelstra. Well, on behalf of Micky Arison, Pat Riley, the entire Miami Heat organization, and our families, we want to thank you for your hospitality today to be in the White House and also to be inspired by the great men and women of the Walter Reed

Hospital. We are honored and truly, truly humbled to be here.

Because we actually hope that this team serves as an inspiration to the Nation of what a group can do when you come together and sacrifice your egos for a greater goal, to come together with a real hardhat work ethic, and to be able to persevere through adversity and a whole heck of a lot of criticism—[laughter]—and still be able to accomplish the ultimate dream.

The President. Fantastic. Thank you so much.

Forward LeBron James. Am I supposed to say something?

The President. Hey, you can if you want. It's your world, man. [Laughter]

Mr. James. I mean, on behalf of myself and my teammates, we just want to thank you—to piggyback what Spo' said—for the hospitality, for allowing us to be, I mean, in the White House. I mean, we're in the White House. [Laughter] I mean—and Coach said—and the Prez said this real casual. So I mean, we're kids from Chicago and Dallas, Texas and Michigan

and Ohio and South Dakota—[laughter]—Miami. I mean—and we're in the White House right now. This is like, "Hey, mama, I made it." [Laughter]

Guard Dwyane Wade. All I've got to say is, we've got a 10-day contract left?

The President. Yes.

Mr. Wade. Pick my man up. [Laughter]

The President. You guys could use a shooter. [Laughter]

Mr. Wade. My point guard. [Laughter]

The President. Thank you. Thank you. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:44 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Kevin Durant, forward, and Russell Westbrook, point guard, NBA's Oklahoma City Thunder; Shane Battier, Chris Bosh, Mike Miller, and Juwan Howard, forwards, and Mario Chalmers, point guard, Miami Heat; and Hakeem Abdul Olajuwon, former center, Houston Rockets. Mr. Spoelstra referred to Micky Arison, general manager, and Pat Riley, president, the HEAT Group.

Statement on Congressional Passage of Funding for Hurricane Sandy Recovery Efforts January 28, 2013

I am pleased that Congress took bipartisan action to provide funding for the communities in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, and other Eastern States devastated by Hurricane Sandy. For the families working to put their lives back together, every day without relief is one day too many. So while I had hoped Congress would provide this aid sooner, I applaud the lawmakers from both parties who helped shepherd this important package through.

My administration remains committed to supporting our State and local partners and bringing every resource to bear as we help our neighbors rebuild. And we will continue to

work closely with Governors and mayors to ensure this money is used appropriately. To date, we have already provided over 3 billion in aid to help recovery efforts, including hundreds of millions of dollars that have gone directly to families and businesses impacted by the storm. Brick by brick, block by block, our communities are being made whole again. And we will not rest until the job is done. Again, I commend Congress for giving families and businesses the help they deserve, and I will sign this bill into law as soon as it hits my desk.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 152.