

close these loopholes, then there's no reason we should use the savings that we obtain and turn around and spend that on new tax breaks for the wealthiest or for corporations. If we're serious about paying down the deficit, the savings we achieve from tax reform should be used to pay down the deficit and, potentially, to make our businesses more competitive.

Now, I think this balanced mix of spending cuts and tax reform is the best way to finish the job of deficit reduction. The overwhelming majority of the American people—Democrats and Republicans, as well as Independents—have the same view. And both the House and the Senate are working towards budget proposals that I hope reflect this balanced approach. Having said that, I know that a full budget may not be finished before March 1, and unfortunately, that's the date when a series of harmful automatic cuts to job-creating investments and defense spending—also known as the sequester—are scheduled to take effect.

So if Congress can't act immediately on a bigger package, if they can't get a bigger package done by the time the sequester is scheduled to go into effect, then I believe that they should at least pass a smaller package of spending cuts and tax reforms that would delay the economically damaging effects of the sequester for a few more months until Congress finds a way to replace these cuts with a smarter solution.

There is no reason that the jobs of thousands of Americans who work in national security or

education or clean energy, not to mention the growth of the entire economy should be put in jeopardy just because folks in Washington couldn't come together to eliminate a few special interest tax loopholes or Government programs that we agree need some reform.

Congress is already working towards a budget that would permanently replace the sequester. At the very least, we should give them the chance to come up with this budget instead of making indiscriminate cuts now that will cost us jobs and significantly slow down our recovery.

So let me just repeat: Our economy right now is headed in the right direction, and it will stay that way as long as there aren't any more self-inflicted wounds coming out of Washington. So let's keep on chipping away at this problem together, as Democrats and Republicans, to give our workers and our businesses the support that they need to thrive in the weeks and months ahead.

Thanks very much. And I know that you're going to have a whole bunch of other questions. And that's why I hired this guy, Jay Carney—[laughter]—to take those questions.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:16 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Erskine B. Bowles and Alan K. Simpson, Co-chairs, National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform.

Statement on the 20th Anniversary of the Family and Medical Leave Act *February 5, 2013*

Twenty years ago today, the Family and Medical Leave Act became law, and we took a groundbreaking step forward for America's workers and families. Before the FMLA, taking time off to care for yourself or a family member may have meant risking a job or derailling a career, especially for women, who often faced discrimination and stereotypes in the workplace. But this law helped level the playing field by extending protections to both women and men so that more workers could

meet their responsibilities to themselves and their families without jeopardizing their livelihood.

Two decades later, we should take pride in the law's success, and I am proud of the work my administration has done to expand the FMLA's protections to military families and airline workers. But we also know there is still more work to do. Not all employees are covered by the law, and oftentimes workers cannot afford to take unpaid leave. So as we mark this anni-

versary, let us also recommit ourselves to the values that inspired the law and redouble our efforts on behalf of fairer workplaces and healthier, more secure families.

Statement on the Resignation of Subra Suresh as Director of the National Science Foundation February 5, 2013

We have been very fortunate to have Subra Suresh guiding the National Science Foundation for the last 2 years. Subra has shown himself to be a consummate scientist and engineer, beholden to evidence and committed to upholding the highest scientific standards.

He has also done his part to make sure the American people benefit from advances in technology and opened up more opportunities for women, minorities, and other under-represented groups. I am grateful for his service.

Remarks on the Nomination of Sarah M.R. “Sally” Jewell To Be Secretary of the Interior February 6, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody. Please have a seat. Everybody’s so formal—[laughter]—or maybe it’s just after lunch. Well, good afternoon, everybody.

Ken Salazar likes to say that the Department of the Interior is actually the Department of America. Other members of my Cabinet may not entirely agree with that statement, but you can see where he’s coming from. The Secretary of the Interior is in charge of overseeing 500 million acres of public land—including places like Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon—and protecting our natural heritage for our children and our grandchildren and their children to come.

But the job also requires keeping an eye on America’s future and making smart decisions about how we create jobs and help businesses grow and put ourselves on a path towards energy independence. And that’s not always an easy balancing act, but with enthusiasm and skill and dedication, that’s exactly what Ken Salazar has done over the last 4 years.

We were just reminiscing a little bit. I’ve known Ken since we were both running for the Senate together and became the only two incoming Democrats in our Senate class. Pete Rouse remembers this. It was a lonely time. [Laughter] We actually lived in the same building when we first arrived in Washington. And,

Ken, you’ll recall it was a little discouraging because basically everyone else who lived there was 20 or 25. [Laughter] So we were the two geriatrics in this building.

But I came to appreciate quickly not just his friendship—which, if you’ve got Ken Salazar as a friend, you’ve got a real friend. Not only did I come to appreciate his jump shot—he is surprisingly quick on the court—[laughter]—but also his patriotism and his belief that we’ve got a responsibility to care for the land with which we’ve been blessed.

And it’s not surprising that Ken feels this way; after all, his ancestors were living here before the *Mayflower* set sail. As he explains it—and relevant, as we are working to get immigration reform passed—his family did not cross the border, the border crossed them. [Laughter] And that’s why, when I needed somebody to lead Interior, I didn’t have to look very far.

Since being confirmed, Ken has cracked down on waste. He’s improved the management of the Department to make it work better for the American people. He has ushered in a new era of conservation for our land, our water, and our wildlife. He’s established 7 new national parks, 10 new national wildlife refuges. He has opened more public land and water for safe and responsible energy production, not just gas and oil, but also wind and solar,