

think back to whatever inspired each of us to say, maybe I can give something back, maybe I can make a difference, maybe my purpose here on Earth is not just thinking about what's in it for me, but thinking about what's in it for the broader community—for my neighborhood, for my State, for my country—if we keep that in mind every single day, I have no doubt that we will continue the extraordinary progress that we've made already.

And as a byproduct of doing that good work and keeping that focus, I would expect that Nancy Pelosi is going to be Speaker again pretty soon.

All right? So thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:49 p.m. at Lansdowne Resort and Spa. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Xavier Becerra, in his capacity as chairman, and Rep. Joseph Crowley, in his capacity as vice chair, of the House Democratic Caucus; and Rep. Steven J. Israel, in his capacity as chairman, and Rep. James E. Clyburn, in his capacity as national mobilization chair, of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

Remarks at an Armed Forces Farewell Tribute in Honor of Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Virginia February 8, 2013

The President. In the years between the world wars, a young married couple in Italy packed up what few belongings that they had and boarded a boat for a new world. They passed under the Statue of Liberty and went through the lines of Ellis Island.

Carmelo and Carmelina Panetta had no money and spoke little English. But they had a dream of a better life. They worked hard. They went west to California. They started a family and taught their sons that if they studied and worked, if they gave back to this country, that they, too, could share in America's promise.

Today we pay tribute to their son Leon Panetta, a man who hasn't simply lived up to the American Dream, but has helped to protect it for all of us.

Leon, our presence here today—Members of Congress, Deputy Secretary Carter, General Dempsey and the members of the Joint Chiefs, service secretaries, and the men and women of the greatest military that the world has ever known—all this is a reflection of our personal appreciation to you and the gratitude of a nation that you have helped to keep strong and to keep free.

By the time I came to office, Leon Panetta was already regarded as one of our Nation's finest public servants, with an extraordinary career across more than four decades. He and

Sylvia had settled into the good life: their beautiful Monterey, their beloved walnut farm. Now, Leon will deny it, but I hear he was growing restless; he wanted less time on the tractor and enjoying good weather and more time in the office; less time in California, more time in Washington, interacting with the West Wing and Members of Congress. Who wouldn't? [*Laughter*] And so we gave him his wish.

Leon, I'll always be grateful that you agreed to return to public service. And, Sylvia, I am so grateful that you put up with him. Your leadership of the CIA will forever be remembered for the blows that we struck against Al Qaida and perhaps the greatest intelligence success in American history: delivering justice to Osama bin Laden.

By then, Leon had every right to expect that he could return home. And I'll admit that when we first asked him to stay on and lead the Pentagon, his answer was simple: No. [*Laughter*] But I kept asking. I am persistent; that's how Michelle married me. I just kept at it. And it is a testament to Leon's patriotism, to his sense of duty, that he agreed to serve on this one last tour.

And perhaps it was the memory, during World War II, of his parents opening up their homes to GIs headed for the Pacific. Perhaps it

was because Leon served himself, as a young lieutenant in the Army. Perhaps it was the experience of watching his youngest son deploy to Afghanistan. What we do know is this: As our Nation's 23d Secretary of Defense, every action Leon Panetta has taken, every decision that he has made, has been with one goal in mind: taking care of our sons and our daughters in uniform and keeping America safe.

And just think of the progress under his watch. Because we ended the war in Iraq and are winding down the war in Afghanistan, our troops are coming home and next year our war in Afghanistan will come to an end. We've put the core of Al Qaida on the path to defeat, and we've been relentless against its affiliates. Because we have a sacred obligation to our troops—to take care of them like they've taken care of us—we're improving treatment for our wounded warriors, stepping up support for our military families, and doing more than ever to help our newest veterans transition to civilian life, and that includes the jobs our veterans need as we do some nation-building here at home.

Because we believe in opportunity for all Americans, the tenure of Secretary Leon Panetta, this son of immigrants, this first-generation American, will be remembered for historic progress in welcoming more of our fellow citizens to military service; for the formal and final repeal of "don't ask, don't tell"; for opening combat roles to our incredible women in uniform; in short, for making our military and our Nation that much stronger.

Because we forged a new defense strategy, we'll be better prepared for the future, better prepared to meet the threats that we face without larger military footprints, better prepared against cyber attacks, better prepared to advance our interests in the Asia-Pacific region, and after more than a decade of war, better prepared for the broadest range of contingencies.

Keeping us prepared will be the mission of my nominee to be the next Secretary of Defense: a combat veteran with the experience, judgment, and vision that our troops deserve, Chuck Hagel.

And since we are now just weeks away from deep, automatic cuts to Federal spending, including defense, let me say this: There is no reason—no reason—for that to happen. Putting our fiscal house in order calls for a balanced approach, not massive, indiscriminate cuts that could have a severe impact on our military preparedness.

So here today, for the sake of our prosperity, for the sake of all these men and women in uniform and all their brothers and sisters in uniform that they represent, now is the time to act, for Democrats and Republicans to come together in the same spirit that Leon Panetta always brought to public service: solving problems, not trying to score points; doing right for the country, not for any particular political agenda; sustaining our economic recovery; balancing budgets—Leon knows something about it—but also maintaining the finest military in history.

Leon, this, too, will be part of your legacy, for no one has raised their voice as firmly or as forcefully on behalf of our troops as you have. You've served with integrity and decency and grace. You're a reminder of what public service ought to be. You've led with heart, and you've led with humor. Indeed, they say that you've never seen our wounded warriors smile as wide or heard them laugh as loud as when they get a visit from their Secretary of Defense. And whatever the challenge, Leon, you always give it to us straight, sometimes in words that can't be repeated here in public. [*Laughter*]

Today we want to make sure to thank Sylvia and the entire Panetta family for sharing their husband, their father, and their grandfather with the rest of us, for sharing Bravo, the First Dog of the Pentagon. Sylvia, Leon's service has also been your sacrifice. And we promise, this time, he really is coming home.

Leon, from your first day in uniform until today, your dedicated service to America has spanned nearly 50 remarkable years. And as you review these fine troops one last time, as you return home and walk your farm, know that the grand arc of your life speaks to our larger American story. For you can say with confidence and with pride that you've fulfilled

the hopes that brought Carmelo and Carmelina Panetta to these shores all those years ago. You've made them proud. You've helped to keep alive the American Dream for not only your children and grandchildren, but for all of our children and grandchildren. And for that, we will be eternally grateful.

So, Leon, as your parents would say, *grazie*. God bless you, and God bless these United States of America.

Ladies and gentlemen, our Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta.

Secretary Panetta. Thank you very much. Mr. President, I'm deeply touched by your moving words about me, about my family, more importantly, about the men and women who serve in the Department of Defense. All of us are truly honored by your presence, and I thank you.

[At this point, Secretary Panetta continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]

It has been the honor of my life to have served in the position as Secretary of Defense. And wherever I go and whatever I do, I will thank God every day for the men and women in this country who are willing to put their lives on the line for all of us. They have responded to the call of the bugle with courage and with selfless dedication to country. My prayer, as I leave, is that we all have the same courage and dedication to protecting our Nation: the United States of America, the home of the free and the brave.

God bless America, God bless you, and God bless the men and women in the Department of Defense.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:18 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. James Panetta, intelligence analyst, U.S. Naval Reserve, son of Secretary Panetta; and former Sen. Charles T. Hagel. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Panetta.

Statement on the Observance of the Lunar New Year *February 8, 2013*

Michelle and I send our warmest wishes to all those who will be celebrating the Lunar New Year this Sunday, February 10th. Here in America and around the world, people of Asian and Pacific Islander descent will welcome the Year of the Snake. In Chinese tradition, the snake represents wisdom and a thoughtful approach to tackling the challenges before us,

principles that I hope will continue to guide us as we perfect our Union and create a more just and equal future for every American. Our challenges may be great, but our diversity and the traditions that thrive here give us the strength to meet them. To everyone celebrating the Lunar New Year, I wish you peace, prosperity, and good health and fortune.

The President's Weekly Address *February 9, 2013*

Hi, everybody. Over the last few years, Democrats and Republicans have come together and cut our deficit by more than \$2.5 trillion through a balanced mix of spending cuts and higher tax rates for the wealthiest Americans. That's more than halfway towards the \$4 trillion in deficit reductions that economists and elected officials from both parties say we need to stabilize our debt. I believe we can

finish the job the same way we started it, with a balanced mix of more spending cuts and more tax reform. And the overwhelming majority of the American people agree, both Democrats and Republicans.

Now, my preference, and the preference of many Members of Congress, is to do that in a balanced, comprehensive way, by making sensible changes to entitlement programs and