

ing these decisions was simple: Who is going to do the best job in securing America? These two leaders have dedicated their lives to protecting our country. I'm confident they will do an outstanding job. I urge the Senate to confirm them as soon as possible so we can keep our Nation secure and the American people safe.

And so, Chuck and John, congratulations.

And with that, I want to invite each of these leaders on stage to say a few words, starting with Mr. Leon Panetta.

*[At this point, Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta, Secretary-designate Hagel, Acting Director of Central Intelligence Michael J. Morell, and Director-designate Brennan each made brief remarks. The President then continued his remarks as follows.]*

Well, these are four outstanding individuals. We are grateful to all of them. I want, in particular, to thank Mike Morell and Leon Panetta for their extraordinary service. And I just want to repeat: I hope that the Senate will act on these confirmations promptly. When it comes to national security, we don't like to leave a lot of gaps between the time that one set of leaders transitions out and another transitions in. So we need to get moving quickly on this.

Final point I will make: One of the reasons that I am so confident that Chuck Hagel is going to be an outstanding Secretary of Defense and John Brennan is going to be an outstanding Director of the Central Intelligence Agency is, they understand that we are only success-

ful because of the folks up and down the line in these respective institutions, the folks on the ground who are oftentimes putting their lives at risk for us and are oftentimes at great remove from Washington and its politics.

To have those who have been in the field, who have been in the heat of battle, who understand the consequences of decisions that we make in this town and how it has an impact and ramifications for everybody who actually has to execute our national security strategies, that's something invaluable. It will provide me the kinds of insights that I need in making very difficult decisions, but it will also mean that these folks are going to be looking out for the people who work for them. And that's something that, I think, in these leadership positions is absolutely critical.

So I'm looking forward to working with these two gentlemen. They are going to be outstanding.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:15 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sylvia M. Panetta, wife of Secretary Panetta; Mary Beth Morell, wife of Acting Director Morell; Thomas Hagel, brother, and Lilibet Ziller Hagel, wife, of Secretary-designate Hagel; and Kathy Pokluda Brennan, wife of Director-designate Brennan. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Panetta, Secretary-designate Hagel, Acting Director Morell, and Director-designate Brennan.

## Memorandum on the National Flood Insurance Program *January 7, 2013*

*Memorandum for the Secretary of Homeland Security*

*Subject:* National Flood Insurance Program

I have reviewed your request for approval to issue notes to the Secretary of the Treasury in excess of \$20.725 billion, but not to exceed

\$30.425 billion, for the National Flood Insurance Program and am hereby granting approval for you to do so.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum.