

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